

**GENDER STEREOTYPE AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN
NIGERIA: A STUDY OF ONUORA NZEKWU AND MICHAEL
CROWDER'S *EZE GOES TO SCHOOL*, CHINUA ACHEBE'S
CHIKE AND THE RIVER, EDDIE IROH'S *WITHOUT A SILVER
SPOON* AND MAI NASARA'S *THE MISSING CLOCK***

BY

LAURA, HARUNA-BANKE

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that I Laura Haruna-Banke MA/ARTS/0010/ 2009-10 have solely undertaken this research, which is the out come of my original work and has not been presented to any tertiary institution of fulfilling the partial requirements for the award of degrees

CERTIFICATION

We certify that this thesis title, Gender Stereotypes and Children’s Literature in Nigeria: A study of Onuora Nzekwu and Michael Crowder’s *Eze Goes to School*, Chinua Achebe’s *Chike and the River*, Eddie Iroh’s *Without a Silver Spoon* and Mia Nasara’s *The Missing Clock* has been duly presented by Laura Haruna-Banke MA/ART/0010/2009-10 of the faculty of art, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and has been approved by the Examiners.

Prof. Abubakar Tanimu
Major Supervisor

Date

Prof. Abubakar Tanimu
Chairman Supervisory Committee

Date

Dr. Abubakar Aliyu Liman
Head of Department

Date

Prof. A. A Joshua
Dean Post Graduate School

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Haruna-Banke, and mysiblings whose support has been a major source of encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

The persistent imbalance of gender representation in children's literature has become an issue. The stereotypes and worldview embedded in children's books have become accepted knowledge, and such deep-seated socialized thinking has created barriers that prevent authors from implementing their egalitarian beliefs. The study contends that a huge imbalance exist in the presentation of gender in children's literature and therefore investigates the proposition that: despite the positive attributes that typify children's literature in Nigeria, the literature is gender biased, gender stereotypes in children's literature in Nigeria enhance gender inequality by imparting notions that privilege masculinity and downgrade femininity, and that gender bias exist in content, language, and pictures in a number of children's literatures and reinforces the building and maintaining of biases towards the female genders. This study therefore, analyses imbalance in gender relations in selected children's books in Nigeria. In doing this, the study uses the following as basis for discourse: underrepresentation of the female in language, content and pictures leading to gender inequality, and the effect of stereotype on the choices children make. The study found out that children's literature in Nigeria is gender bias and displays imbalances in the representation of textual characters and as a result there exist the absence of dynamic and positive female characters in the literature produced for the younger ones.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This research examines the relationship between gender stereotype and children's literature in Nigeria. The study explores the significance of this relationship to the role of literature as a signifying practice which reveals the contents, structures, and processes that entrench or encode the notion of gender disparities or discrimination in children, thereby aiding gender bias in society. In addition to being one of the favourite choices for reading among children, children's literature is central to childhood development beyond the traditional notions of literacy and learning. In this regard, children engage with stories in the form of books, films and media, and from these they learn ways to interpret their world and develop models for participating in their culture, in addition to navigating the complexities of the contemporary world. Furthermore, children's literature like all cultural productions for children is a parallel educational universe in which one can see glimpses of the future. It constructs and impacts children's developments, sense of identity, and visions of the world. It creates ambitions and aspirations, models taste and values. It is a potentially world changing form of literature. Studying children's literature means, studying both one's heritage and legacy (www.kidyounotpodcast.com, www.deakin.edu.au/art). The issues in the study of children's literature revolve around the character moulding of the child which the authors of children's literature have reflected in the themes of their writings. Lending credence to this Emenyonu (1998:6) states that:

Carefully crafted and programmed children's literature would teach morals, satisfy inherent curiosity and excite

imagination in children culminating in properly adjusted,
well-socialized adulthood.

In other words, the study of children's literature in Nigeria is tantamount to a commitment to a socio-cultural crusade, to a literature that is relevant to the environment of the children, containing messages of didacticism and morality which are for the mental and psychological well-being of children in their unique circumstance. This is viewed in the themes of folktales, fantasy, reality and other varieties of the literature. In addition, the educational development of children is significant at preparing them for the challenges of the future. To this end, literature for children aims at developing and promoting techniques and attitudes that will lead to creativity, originality, divergent and convergent thinking. Besides all the aforementioned, however, this study is premised on the assumption that children's literature in Nigeria is gender biased and displays imbalances in the representation of its characters which implicitly gives children messages of what their gender roles are, and gives limitations to what they are capable of. In essence, these messages can stunt the growth of their dreams and manipulate their minds to believe that they must act in an 'appropriate' way in the society. This is in addition to the fact that children develop their values and beliefs of their culture through stories and literature books, therefore, when they are repeatedly given stereotypical messages, their choices of what they want to become or accomplish is limited. The biased views of themselves and those around them prevent them from doing activities that best suit their personalities and capabilities.

This study is also premised on the assumption that children's literature has become increasingly important in the literary circle where reading materials for the young and its production are viewed with more seriousness around the world. It is from these literary materials that they will learn many of their values, learn to interact with others, think about the world around them, and form their gender identities. Thus because today's girl and boy will

become tomorrow's woman and man, their nurture, upbringing and education are very vital to the society in which they are born. It is in this light that this research concerns itself with the kinds of messages that society and literary materials throw at them as well as the effect of such on their perception and judgment and therefore, adopts that children need to be sensitive to literature materials in order not to fall into accepting everything literature presents to them.

In conceptual terms, and according to Amanda Credaro (1999:1), there has been debates on what constitutes children's literature; these debates are in the areas of books written by children, for children, and books chosen for children which are partly responsible for the various definitions of children's literature. Hanson Kate (1998:1) recommends that an appropriate definition is "...the material created for and read, viewed and heard by children, that has imaginative element". Nana Wilson-Tagoe (1992:18) defines children's literature as material produced largely with a child's interest and needs in mind, one that deals honestly with children, portrays them candidly and in medium to which they can respond with imagination and pleasure. Despite the problems of definition, Peter Hunt (1999) identifies two recurring themes in tracing its history: children's literature is a constant battle of pleasure and instruction; it is a site of multiplicity and intertextuality that absorbs and assimilates anything it likes. For the purpose of this research, the definition by E.B. Ikhigbonoareme (1992:62) which accommodates the recurring themes of pleasure and instruction by Hunt will suffice. "Children's literature is a genre that caters for the educational and entertainment needs of the child. It includes books for children containing short stories- folktales etc, to be read, acted or listened to, they are books that children read to satisfy their spiritual, emotional and intellectual needs; irrespective of their contents, such books should provide pleasurable and instructional values to children. This kind of literature has to fill the vacuum of curiosity in their lives by being specially designed to motivate the vital task of acculturation at their impressionable age. Thus it has to be aesthetically appealing while projecting a didactic stimulus of the children's

environment. Children's literature is sub-divided due to the divergent interests of children age 0-18". However, the criteria for the division are as vague as the criteria for defining children's literature.

The concept of gender stereotype according to the *Gender Dictionary* (1996:3) refers to "the constant portrayal of women and men occupying social roles according to traditional division of labour in a particular society. Such gender stereotype works to support and reinforce the traditional gender division of labour, by stereotyping it as "normal" and "natural"". The authors of the children's books selected for this study, Achebe Chinua, Mai Nasara, Nzekwu and crowder and Iroh Eddie, have perpetuated this in their works as reflected in *Chike and the River*, *The missing Clock*, *Eze goes to School* and *Without a Silver spoon* by creating a huge imbalance between the male and female gender in different areas of activities, thereby, enhancing gender inequality in the Nigerian society. Some scholars have however, refuted the idea of "normal" and "natural" based on their definitions of the concept of gender. For example the *Gender Dictionary*, (1996:3) states that:

Gender as a concept goes beyond the biological sexual characteristics and also encompasses the socially defined sex roles, attitudes and values which communities ascribe as appropriate for one sex or the other. What defines gender therefore, is not only what one sees in front of one, the sex one was born with, but it is also how one thinks, feels, acts, and reacts in some situations. It is how one was raised to be, and how one shaped oneself to become, as one grew up. It is a fascinating blend of biological, psychological, and sociological features.

Judith Lorber (2001:257-259) submits that:

Gender is a social creation, a product of human inventiveness adopted for its usefulness in allocating reciprocal rights and responsibilities as well as work task. This social creation in

societies did not separate subsistence labour and child care, women did both; and many of these societies were egalitarian or possibly even women dominated, given women's important contribution to food supply and their evident role in the procreation of valued children. Accidentally or deliberately, but in any case probably quite gradually, gender got inextricably built into stratification and inequality, producing a subordinate group, "women", whose labour, sexuality, and childbearing could be exploited.

In her observation, Lorber noted that unequal distribution of power, property, and prestige between women and men is a part of the structure of modern societies; as a result of these unequal distributions, gender statuses are inherently unequal, and gendering continues to produce inequality. That, "the subordination of women is an intrinsic part of the modern social order, not because men are naturally superior or dominant (if they were, there would be no subordinate men) or because women bear children, (if that were true, no mother would ever be a leader in the society) but that the subordination of women persist because, it produces a group that can be exploited as workers, sexual partners, child bearers, and emotional nurturers, in the market place and in the household". Lorber's stance is summed as saying that gender is the positioning of women and men in the society. It is the consideration of dissimilar interest between men and women. The foregoing definitions are vital for this research in the sense that, they have described at length the stance taken about gender as a social construct rather than as a biological factor. It is against this background that this study intends to study this assumption and the sequence surrounding it.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Gender stereotypes are a part of any given culture. They are present virtually every where; in schools, playgrounds, work places, homes and even in literature books for children (www.freetobefoundation.org/2009:1). This is why the phenomenon has been given

much attention. It is an issue which has engaged the attention of researchers. This research contends that a huge imbalance exists in the presentation of gender in children's literature and therefore, investigates the propositions that:

- Despite the positive attributes that typify children's literature in Nigeria, the literature is gender biased.
- Gender stereotypes in children's literature in Nigeria enhance gender inequality by imparting notions that privilege masculinity and downgrade femininity.
- Gender bias exists in content, language, and pictures in a number of children's literatures and reinforces the building and maintaining of biases towards the female genders.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to critically examine the relationship between gender stereotype and children's literature in Nigeria. Selected authors of children's literature books are used to demonstrate how in diverse ways, they have perpetuated gender imbalance between male and female in their works thereby, encouraging gender inequality in the society. The specific objectives of this research are therefore, to show that:

- There is a correspondence between stereotypical messages and children choices, and what they become or accomplish later in life.
- The selected texts for this study by their content, language, and pictures propagate gender stereotypes and under-represent the female.
- The feminist literary criticism is suitable for the analysis of gender stereotypes in children's literature.

1.4 Justification of the Study

Children's literature books are a powerful force in the lives of children. The richness

and diversity which typifies literature for children means that children have a lot to gain. Besides being an important resource for developing children's skills through socialization, children's literature plays a significant part in transmitting a society's culture to children; however, it is observed that gender bias is prevalent in contemporary children's literature. Viewed against this background, this study becomes significant as it focuses on studying children's literature in view of gender stereotypes. It is on this basis also that the feminist literary criticism which plays an important role in the discussion of issues relating to the male and female gender, critically concerning itself with their traditional roles, culture, stereotypes and patriarchy, objectification and oppression of the female is relevant in the discussion of the topic. The choice of novels is necessitated by the belief that, the novel form is flexible and accommodates a larger amount of details and offers in many significant ways, greater opportunities than verse or drama forms.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study limits its scope to selected novels which includes Nzekwu and Crowder's *Eze goes to School* (1963), Eddie Iroh's *Without a Silver Spoon* (1981), Chinua Achebe's *Chike and the River*, and Mai Nasara's *The Missing Clock* (2010).

1.6 Methodology

The methodology for this study is research oriented; the study depends largely on primary texts and secondary sources. The primary texts include the selected texts for this research while the secondary sources include such materials as books, and journal articles. The internet being a good provider of valuable materials is also sourced. Thus the core materials for this study are Nzekwu and Crowder's *Eze goes to School* (1963), Eddie Iroh's *Without a Silver spoon* (1981), Chinua Achebe's *Chike and the River*, (1966) and Mai Nasara's *The Missing Clock* (2010), while the theoretical perspective for the study is the feminist literary criticism.

1.8 Review of Related Literature

As a consequence of many different women's movements, there has been a growth in the awareness of the way women are portrayed in children's literature. There is a growing collection of research in not only the way females are portrayed compared to males, but also the number of times females appear in leading roles, the messages these images propose, and how children respond to these messages. Through the lens of children's literature, history has shown itself to their study of the frequency of males to females. In their research of children's literature in 1940s to the 1980s, they discovered an increase in the representation of females. However, there are still discrepancies in the way these female characters are portrayed. Personality characteristics and the activities engaged by such females in children's literature are still predominantly stereotyped. Even the literature characterized as 'non sexist' was shown to still portray female characters in female stereotypic personalities and activities when compared with literature categorized as 'sexist' in a study by Amanda B. Diekman and Sarah K. Murnen (2004).

Carol Adams and Rae Laurikietis (1976:2) explain the distinction between male and female sex role through examples taken from children's books, the adult roles of females include: mother, aunt, and grandmother, whereas the adult roles for males include: father, uncle, grandfather, postman, farmer, fisherman, a shop owner, policeman, builder, and driver. A clear difference can be seen with this example in the limited variety of roles played by women in books compared to the vast majority of roles played by men. Adams and Laurikietis reveal other possible underlying messages including maidens and princesses who usually must wait passively for a prince to save them and change their lives, non of the female do anything worthwhile, happy ending are those where marriage was the outcome, men are independent and brave and do all the brain work, and the most important decision a woman can make is who her future husband will be. The trivialization of the gender roles of females

present in children's literature has been shown by Adams and Laurikietis to increase sexist beliefs and behaviours.

The messages produced by children's literature are important for a number of reasons including the fact that children learn the values and beliefs of their culture through the transmission of stories and tales. Literature revealed that their identity and self-esteem could be affected by negative portrayals of their gender (Gooden and Gooden, 2001:89). Jan Ochman's(1996) study on children self-esteem found that girls had a greater increase in self-esteem if they heard stories about an achieving girl rather than an achieving boy. Boys showed a comparable pattern; this implies that if children hear stories about strong competent boys, but not girls, boys are most likely to experience an increase in self-esteem, whereas the girls' self-esteem will not improve. Because of the damage of self-esteem girls may not believe that they can do a variety jobs and may limit themselves.

Most research exploring gender messages in children's literature texts have analyzed differences in the presence of male and female characters particularly in texts directed at mixed audiences. Scholars have paid attention to the presence of girls in relation to boys; and their findings reveal a consistent under-representation of girls in children's literature (Hamilton et al 2006:355, Weitzman et al. 1972:103). In their Pioneering examination of gender representation in children's award winning picture books in the 1960s, and in America, Weitzman et al (1972:103) found that female characters were considerably under-represented both in the titles of books and as their main characters; they noted that girl characters were portrayed as passive, homebound supporters next to active boy characters and occupationally oriented men characters. They concluded that girls who wish to be more than placid and pretty are left without an accepted role alternative. Girls are not encouraged to aspire to any admirable position other than the traditional role carved out for them. This by extension becomes a deliberate act of stereotyping the female characters. Twenty first century

updates of their work however, have identified improvements in the presence of female characters in children's books, but the under-representation of girls and women persist (Hamilton et al 2006:40). Hamilton et al (ibid) noted that, although the ratio of male-to-female representation has improved since 1970s, males continue to disproportionately outnumber females in terms of book titles and main characters in Caldecott award-winning books. The above studies find that there are also important differences in representational contexts such as whether characters appear alone or in groups. Gooden and Gooden (2001:95) asserts that female characters were significantly less likely to appear alone in illustration than were male characters, a finding they regard as indicative of persistent gender inequality because, appearing alone is a marker of independence and autonomy, whereas, appearing in groups is thought to convey dependence, a stereotypical marker of traditional femininity. The above scholars have highlighted important points regarding how and in what different areas females are stereotyped; however, they are silent about what exerts influence, in the creation of gender stereotype in children's literature, which is also of primary concern in this study.

Hassan Kurfi (2006:152) in the article 'Patriarchy and Sexism in African literary and Cultural Thought' affirms to the various submissions that gender is stereotyped among children while finding its roots in the culture of a people. He states that it is in the process of socialization that the female creation is thought as inferior who is practically translated in cultural praxis. He also adds that young boys and girls are brought up gradually to understand and imbibe the meaning of "masculinity" and "femininity" and to appreciate that the concept of sexuality actually connotes more than merely the physical or biological differences the two sexes bear to each other adding that no one who grows up in a typical patriarchal society in Africa for instance, will fail to remember some of the heavily-loaded value assumptions his culture has fed him with as a menu of his cultural growth. These value-assumptions are represented in a rigidly Manichean division in which men and women are

differently ascribed qualities, allegedly natural” to their sexes. Kurfi illustrates that as a young boy growing up in Hausa society, he still remembers how apt and monstrously sexist is the rendition of his assured difference between the ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ in society: ‘Namiji Dutse, Mace Sakaina’. The male literally is a hard rock; woman a piece of fragile or breakable calabash. According to Kurfi, culture is responsible for gender stereotypes in the society, having instilled in its young such bizarre and fallacious ideas, the consequence is making them relate to each other with either fear or contempt. It can be deduced from Kurfi’s observation that, gender stereotypes is practiced under the influence of cultural and societal experiences. This research will examine how these influences are achieved.

More so, the issue of presence has been of considerable interest for researchers. Presence portrayal are not necessarily congruous. That is, greater presence of female characters does not imply more egalitarian portrayal. Clark et al (2003: 100) found in their fortyyears review of Caldecott award winning literature books in America that, the increased presence of girl characters was accompanied by greater gender stereotypes. That award winning books from the 1930s to 1950s had greater numbers of female characters, but the characters were portrayed more stereotypically than in the books from the 1940s to 1960s in which female characters were fewer in number; an indication that an increase in the number of girl characters in literature books does not necessarily solve the problem of stereotypes. Therefore it becomes clear from the finding that it is not about how much of females appear in books but how they are represented, and from the award winning books of from 1930s to 1950s it shows that females were under-represented despite their number, and so the stereotypes of females still persisted. This analysis reveals that, there is apparently a gap, which needs to be filled in this study.

Similarly, conclusions about stereotypical gender portrayal have been drawn from analysis of literature texts. Evans and Davies (2000:30-35) focused primarily on the portrayal

of male characters in elementary school text. Despite major policy shifts and publishers' own the guidelines, the scholars found that boy characters were consistently portrayed with stereotypical masculine qualities such as aggression and competitiveness. Girl characters on the other hand were significantly more likely to be portrayed as passive and emotionally expressive. Evans and Davies give information about efforts made by policy makers and publishers to help nip the girl character stereotypes in the bud. What this policy shifts and guidelines are, they have not stated clearly; but in spite of them, stereotypical activities remain consistent. This study examines the role of authors in nipping these stereotypes in the bud.

Heyward (1995:2) documented gender messages communicated at a Canadian high school for girls. She pointed to the school's athletic programme as that of stereotypically feminine approach to athletics. One of non- aggression and complicity; girls were encouraged to be gracious players rather than competitive winners. In contrast, Lesko (2001:11) has discussed hyper masculinity, marked by aggression and competitiveness that is cultivated through boys' participation in school athletic teams, particularly football. Similarly, Messner (2000) noted how aggression was fostered in the boys' youth soccer teams, he observed through the wide use of power oriented team names and mascots such as 'killer whales' and 'raptor attack'. No such aggressions in team names or mascot exist on the girls' teams. This kind of attitude we regard as to continueto situate gender inequality in place. However Lesko and Messner have not moved from stating their findings to what they think could be responsible for such and what may be for recommendations.

Kathleen Denny (2011:27-43) in 'comparing gender messages in girl scout and boy scout books', explores gender messages through an analyses of how gender is infused in the context and content of scout activities as well as in instructions about how the scouts are to approach these activities. Denny's findings revealed that first the aesthetics of the two handbooks different. That the boys' handbook is thick and squat like a novel, while the girls

handbook badge book are somewhat less thick but nearly twice the size. In addition, the layout of the boys' handbook is unadorned and straight forward with its mostly white pages and standard black font, in contrast, layout of the girls' handbook and badge book are playful. The pages and text are very colorful and there is a greater amount of diversity of images, graphics and illustration. The context in which the scouts are expected to take part in handbook activities communicates gender messages in powerful ways. Through the context of their activities, the scouts are exposed to a central tenet of stereotypical femininity and masculinity: assumptions about girls' orientation toward self' girls being offered proportionately more communal or others oriented activities than boys, who are offered proportionately more self oriented activities. The illustration given is that, 30%(n=427) of the girls' badge work activities are intended to take place in groups, whereas less than 20%(n=55) of the boys' activities are intended to take place with others.

The content of activities also communicates messages about gender stereotypes. Girls are more likely than boys to be offered activities involving art projects, while boys are more often presented with activities involving science projects. Girls' art activities make up 11% (n=156) of their total activities while boys' art activities make up approximately 6% (n=190), a statistically significant difference. Scientifically oriented activities, on the other hand make up 6% (n=18) of boys' activities- nearly three times as many. This finding reveals that the disproportionate and gendered distribution of art and science projects does align with the large body of research that finds girls being systematically derailed from scientific and mathematical pursuits and professions due to cultural beliefs and stereotypes about their relative ineptitude in these areas which indeed must be discouraged.

The content of the badge titles also conveys gender messages. Stereotypical messages about embellished femininity and stoic masculinity are communicated in the level of playfulness that characterizes the girls' and boys' badge titles. There is for instance, a significant difference in

the use of wordplay in boys' and girls' badge titles: 27% (n28) of girls' badge titles use playful literary techniques such as alliteration and puns, while 0% of boys' badge titles do so. Conversely, all 20 boys' badges (100%) have descriptive titles without using any playful wording. In addition, the boys' badge dealing with rocks and geology is called the geologist badge, while the comparable girls' badge is called the Rocks Rock badge. Boys' badge titles using more career-oriented language e.g. engineer, craftsman, scientist, whereas girls' badge titles often use playful language that has less of a career orientation e.g. sky search instead of astronomer or care instead of mechanics. This culminating into the belief that, when boys speak to others about their geologist badge, they have a legitimate career title to use and are likely to be taken more seriously in conversations than girls discussing their achievement of a rocks rock badge.

Furthermore, the content of the badge titles themselves, and the types of activities to which they refer, are the most explicitly gendered dimensions in the girls' handbook. Examples of badges that have to do with stereotypically feminine activities include caring for children, and looking your best. For activities about personal hygiene and healthy eating, the Looking Your best badge offers activities such as "color party" that ask the girls to "take turns holding different colors up to your face to decide which color looks best on you"(girls scout of the USA 2001:39). These badges are not offered in the boy scouts, the boys' fitness badge, the only one approximating a personal style badge offers activities such as completing a week long food diary and telling family member about the dangers of drugs and alcohol(boys scouts of America 2006:246-47). Denny's analysis of mindset in the hand books reveals multidimensional messages about gender. On one hand, through hand book activities and official statements, girls are being encouraged to cultivate a stereotypically gendered achievement approach- an "I'll try attitude. Boys' messages convey almost the opposite meaning. The boys' handbook encourages ascription through its official statements- an "I am"

attitude.

The girl and Boy Scout promises are said to be comparable in tone and objective. They are official statements published in the hand books that are recited at group meetings and are required to be memorized on entering the organization. They both reverence God, country and citizenship. There is however, a distinction between the words “try” and “promise” in the phrasing of the official statements. The girls are asked to “try” to accomplish the goals in the promise, while the boys are asked to “promise” to accomplish them. While this may seem only a minor stylistic difference, it mirrors other messages in the handbooks that encourage effort for girls and confidence and ability for boys. This dysfunction is further evident in the Boy scout Girl Scout laws. For example a section of the Girl Scout law reads, “I will do my best to be considerate and caring” while the Boy Scout law states that “a scout is courteous and kind”. Like “try” and “promise” the qualitative difference between “do my best to be” and “is”, is important; they both communicate the message that girls can try to do or become what boys are or can promise to be. These organizational texts are said to facilitate the development of an achievement attitude for girls (I will do my best) and an ascription attitude and a sense of entitled self assuredness for boys (I am). Denny wraps it up by quoting (Clark and Paechter 2007) as saying that, the official statements speak to expectations about traditional gender prescriptions because stereotypical masculinity involves the performance of an unabashed self assuredness that rejects the possibility of failure while stereotypical femininity involves the performance of an unassuming humility, downplaying the prospect of success.

Denny’s research is quite beneficial and contributory to this study, having touched on the diverse areas in which girls are constantly stereotyped as well as showing the huge imbalance that exist between the two genders, thereby, leading to inequality among them. However, this study thinks that the important first step in the effort to erode persisting gender inequalities that have been reported in the findings of almost all the critics in this study is to

address the issue of societal cultural practices which we believe exert more influence in the building and maintenance of gender structures.

While discussing the stereotypes of female characters in her article titled 'sexism in children's literature', Diane Gersoni (1977:2-4) defines sexism as "The unwarranted omission or stereotyping of female characters. (The word unwarranted is important because there are situations in life when it is reasonable that females will not be present.)" In affirming that children literature books are stereotypical she states: "That juvenile literature in the past has not featured authentic female characters is very well known by now. We have an impressive collection of critical studies documenting sexism in text books and in trade books. These studies come from both sides of the Atlantic ocean and have zeroed in on basal (basic) readers : Caldecott medal books; folk and fairy tales; Newberry medal books and other novels; biographies; children's encyclopedias; social studies; history and literature text books". Similarly, she finds in many studies which have been clearcut and statistically significant that in both textbooks and trade books male characters clearly outnumbered female characters; dress was stereotyped, males were depicted in a broader range of geographic locations, males were more often shown outdoors, females were usually passive, docile, fearful and dependent while males were curious, aggressive, independent and striving, Linguistically, it was found that the pronoun "he" was used indiscriminately in referring to both females and males. What is particularly striking in the above findings is in Gersoni's definition of sexism in which she finds the word unwarranted as important because she feels that, there are some situations in life when it is reasonable that females will not be present. This research debunks all cultural practices associated with and that fuel gender bias.

Singh Manjari (1998:80) acknowledges in "gender issues in children's literature" that bias exist in the content, language and illustrations of a large number of children's books (Jett-Simpson & Masland 1993). This bias he observes, may be seen in the extent to which a gender

is represented as the main character in children's books and how that gender is depicted. Manjari noted that numerous studies analyzing children's literature find the majority of books dominated by male figures and has backed this up by showing some examples: Ernst (1995) did an analysis of titles of children books and found male names represented nearly twice as often as female names. She also found that, even books with female or gender neutral names in their titles frequently revolve around a male character. Many classics and popular stories where girls are portrayed usually reflect stereotypes of masculine and feminine roles. Adding that, such gender stereotypes are prevalent not only in mainstream children books, but also in Newberry and Caldecott medal winners. In the manner of portrayal Fox (1993:84-88) noted that, children's books frequently portray girls as acted upon rather than active. Girls are represented as sweet, naïve, conforming, and dependent while boys are typically described as strong, adventurous, independent, and capable (Ernst 1995; Jett-Simpson & Masland 1993). "Boys tend to have roles as fighters, and rescuers, while girls in their passive role tend to be caretakers, mothers, and princesses in need of rescuing, and characters that support the male figure" (Temple 1993). Often, girl characters achieve their goals because others help them, whereas boys do so because they demonstrate ingenuity and or perseverance. "And if females are initially represented as active and assertive, they are often portrayed in a passive light toward the end of the story. Girl characters that retain their active qualities are clearly the exception" (Rudman 1995).

Junmin Kuo (2005:1) in his article 'Teaching ESL/EFL students to recognize gender bias in children's literature' in Japan observes that, studies on gender stereotypes in children's literature appeared as a consequence of the women's movement in the early 1970s (Louie 2001). At that juncture, even a number of books awarded by Newberry award or Caldecott award honors were still replete with traditional and passive female roles. Kuo noted that, these children's books investigated from feminist perspectives fall into two categories: the first being

sexist books in which female characters are largely recognized and accepted through “their domestic accomplishments, their timidity of soul, and their gentle appearance and manners”. The second category comprising of “cop-out” books which implicitly express gender bias only by a crucial line paragraph or the last chapter. Studies show that many of these books are still popular and commonly used in the contemporary classroom. And that after three decades of research studies in Japan since the 1970s such an insensitive mentality toward sexual imbalance is still present in contemporary children’s literature (Ernst 1995, Evans 1998, Fox 1993, Louie, 2001, Tepper and Cassidy 1999). Examples of female representations can be seen in the fairy tales of *Snow White*, *Rapunzel*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *the little Mermaid*, thereby affirming the stereotypical nature of children’s books. Kuo (2005:2) further observes that, under such circumstances, a great many writers have become more aware of the gender issues in their books. For example, Mem Fox (1993) attempts to increase the number of female characters in her books, and points out that many of her books are intentionally dominated by main characters who are girls, female animals or dynamic elderly women. Ernst(1995) however, explicitly indicates that, the purposeful treatment and balance of female/male characters in a story, while admirable, is not a realistic standard for all children’s literature, and that, it is impossible to maintain, given the volume and variety of books in the trade book market every year. Nevertheless, she suggests that books like Fox’s can be used and considered in the classroom to offer teachers different perspectives on gender issues and help them enrich their reading materials and discussions.

From Ernst’s view point, it would be more realistic and especially important to come up with more books with strong female characters who are active, inventive and in charge of their destinies thus placing more emphasis on the quality of female roles, rather than intentionally having many books dominated by female characters who are girls or animals. This study subscribes to this stance by Ernst.

In the article, “Study Finds Huge Gender Imbalance in Children’s Literature” Janice McCabe (2011:1-5) illustrates how new research in America reveals that male characters far outnumber females, pointing to ‘symbolic annihilation of women and girls’; she illustrates that from the very *Hungry Caterpillar* to *the Cat in the Hat*, *Peter Rabbit* to *Babar*, children’s literature books are dominated by male central characters, New research has found that the gender disparity is sending children a message that “women and girls occupy a less important role in society than men or boys”. Janice McCabe, a professor of sociology at Florida State University noted that, looking at almost 6,000 children’s books published between 1900 and 2000, males are central characters in 57% of children’s books published each year, with just 31% having female central characters. Male animals are central characters in 23% of books per year, while female animals star in only 7.5%. Also that, published in the April issue of *Gender & society*, the study “Gender in Twentieth-century children’s Books” looked at Caldecott award winning books, the well known US book series Little Golden Books and extensive books listing the catalog; Just one Caldecott winner (1985’s *Have You Seen My Duckling?*) has had a standalone female character he ward was published in 1938. Books with male animals were more common across the century than those with female animals. And although the female gender disparity came close to disappearing by the 1990s for human characters in children’s books, with a ratio of 0.9 to 1 for child characters, and 1.2 to 1 for adult characters, it remained for animal characters, with a significant disparity of nearly 2 to 1. The study found that in the 1930s to 1960s the period between waves of feminist activism, exhibits greater disparities than earlier and later periods. The messages conveyed through representation of males and females in books contribute to children’s idea of what it means to be a boy, girl man or woman, the disparity points to the symbolic annihilation of women and girls, and particularly female animals in 20th century children’s literature; thereby suggesting to children that, these characters are less important than their male counterparts. The disproportionate

numbers of male in central roles may encourage children to accept the invisibility of women and girls and to believe they are less important than men and boys, thereby, reinforcing the gender system. The study shows that even gender-neutral animal characters are frequently labeled as male by mothers reading to their children, which only exaggerates the pattern of female under-representation. The persistent pattern of disparity among animal's characters may reveal a subtle kind of symbolic annihilation of women disguised through animal imagery.

Former children's laureate in the United Kingdom Ann Fine, believes that it is not only an absence of female central characters which is a problem in children books, but how the women are represented when they do appear. Fine said that, 'more worryingly in recommended books for boys is that there is a heap of fantasy and violence, very little humor, and hardly family novels. If boys are offered such narrow view of the world, and don't offer them novels that show them dealing with normal family feelings, they will begin to think this sort of stuff is not for them'. (www.guardian.co.uk 2011:2). Interestingly, this article also gives an extensive analysis on gender disparity, the disproportionate number of males to female characters in children books its effects of making girls and women almost invisible thereby reinforcing the gender system. This study explores factors responsible for such disparity which will be an important variable in the gender dynamics of which these girls and women mentioned have become victims.

Townsend (1965:138-44) observes in the article 'Novels for Boys and Girls', that, the great English novelists, have sought and found their readers among men and women alike. But that, at lower levels of adult fiction there has been until quite recently a fair distinction between books which were aimed primarily at men and those intended mainly for women. Men he says like to regard themselves as adventurous, outdoor creatures and adventurous outdoor books must be written for them; adding that there were also domestic and romantic stories which were considered especially suitable for the weaker sex. The division still exists to some extent,

partly through tradition and partly because there are, after all genuine differences between masculine feminine tastes. But men and women he observes now spend more time together and meet as equals; the area of shared interest widens and that of separate interest, dwindles, and roughly the same development have taken place among boys and girls consequently, in children's literature.

Yet in another article 'Domestic Dramas' Townsend (ibid:76) observes that, the Victorian English speaking world was very much a man's world. In the reading classes, that is, mainly middle and above- it was man's work and pleasure, or at any rate man's dream to build a nation or empire, win wars, pioneer newly won territories, or develop industrial or commercial wealth. Woman's place remained in the home; the feminine virtues were piety, domesticity, sexual submission and repression. Books for boys and girls reflected this division in intensified and romanticized forms. For boys there was the life of action on land and at sea, the world of Henty or Oliver Optic. For their sisters there was girls' literature which Edward Salmon said in 1888:

Enables girls to read something above mere baby, and yet keeps them from the influence of novels of a sort that should be read only by person capable of a discreet judgment... while it advances beyond the nursery, it stops short of the full blaze of the drawing room.

Townsend's articles, shows a glaring indication of a play of long standing traditions which have gradually moved from affecting the disparity among men and women to also affecting boys and girls; which is not far from what this study dwells on.

The focus on stereotypes towards females in children's literature has increased since the 1970s (Matlin Margaret 2004); There is a growing field of research focusing on examining and challenging the traditional roles, characteristics, and idealistic physical appearance that

females have been portrayed in literature. Fairy tales for example have been revised by authors such as Zipes in his book *Don't be on the Prince* (1986), and more recently, Barbara Walker in her book *Feminist Fairy Tales* (1996), (Ochman Ian 1996). Although one may still find a beautiful princess and a handsome prince in these tales, the twist may come when the princess saves the prince or simply decides to leave him behind and actively fulfill her own dreams of becoming a warrior. To this end therefore Teya Cherland (2006) submits that at a time when men and women are viewed as equals by much of the population, it is crucial that the stories children are exposed to reflect the variety of paths offered to them in real life. Thus it is important for females to be portrayed in different roles than what was viewed as traditional so as to reflect the options females have before them.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The relevance of a theory in approaching a research problem lies in the ability of such a theory to clearly explain the nature of the problem and then, enhance a better understanding of the phenomenon. This study looks at the feminist literary approach which plays an important role in the discussion of issues relating to the male and female gender. It critically concerns itself with their traditional roles, culture, stereotypes and patriarchy, objectification and oppression of the female. The choice of this theory is necessitated by the benefits that this study stands to derive from it, considering its fundamental tenets and assumptions. According to Judith Lorber, (2001:1)

Feminism is a social movement whose goal is raising the status of women. In many times and places in the past, men and women have proclaimed woman's capabilities and have tried to better woman's social position. As an organized movement however, feminism rose in the nineteenth Century in Europe and America.

But from this point on, the discourse has undergone several changes, development and expansiveness. Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia (201.2) states that:

Feminist literary criticism is informed by feminist theory, or by the politics of feminism. Its history has been broad and varied, from classic works of nineteenth Century women authors such as George Eliot and Margaret Fuller to cutting-edge theoretical work in women's studies and gender studies by "third-wave" authors. In the most general and simple terms feminist literary criticism before the 1970s, in the first and second waves of feminism was concerned with the politics of women's authorship and the representation of women's condition within literature.

As a theory, Barry Peter (1995:21) says that:

The women's movement of the 1960s was not of course the start of feminism. Rather it was a renewal of an old tradition of the right and action already possessing its classic books which had diagnosed the problem of women's inequality in society and in so many cases proposed solutions. These books include Mary Wolistonecraft's *A vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), *Virginia Woolf's A Room of one 's Own* (1929), Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1978), Elaine Showalters's *A literature of their own*(1977) and *The origin of the Family* (1884) by Friedrich Engels.

Subscribing to the above Lisa Tuttle (1986:184) defines feminist theory as "asking "new questions of old texts". She cites the goals of feminist criticism as: to develop and uncover a female tradition of writing, interpret symbolism of women's writing often ignored by the male point of view, rediscover old texts, resist sexism in literature and increase awareness of sexual politics of language and style". According to Barry, (ibid) the feminist literary criticism is the direct product of the women's movement of the 1960s. This movement was in important ways literary from the start in the sense that it realized the significance of the images of women

promulgated by literature and saw it as vital to combat them and question the authority and their coherence: In this sense, the women's movement has always been crucially concerned with books and literature, so that feminist criticism should not be seen as an offshoot or a spin-off from feminism which is remote from the ultimate aims of the movement, but as one of its most practical ways of influencing everyday conduct and attitudes. The concern with 'conditioning and socialization' underpins a crucial set of distinctions, that between the terms "feminism", 'female', and 'feminine'. As Toril Moi (1985) explains, the first is 'a political position', the second 'a matter of biology', and the third 'a set of culturally defined characteristics' particularly in the distinction between the second and third of these lies much of the force of feminism. According to Barry (1995: 122) the representation of women in literature, was felt to be one of the most important form of socialization, since it provided the roles which indicate to women and men what constituted acceptable versions of the feminine and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations. Feminists pointed out for example, that in nineteenth Century fiction very few women work for a living, unless they are driven to it by dire necessity. Instead, focus of interest is on the heroine's choice of marriage partner, which will decide her ultimate social position and exclusively determine her happiness and fulfillment in life, or lack of these.

Thus in feminist criticism in the 1970s, the major effect went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural mind set in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality. Critical attention was given to books by male writers in which influential or typical images of women were constructed. The criticism which undertook this work was both combative and polemical. In the 1980s in feminism as in other critical approaches, the mood changed and underwent several changes and developments. Firstly, feminist criticism began to draw upon the findings and approaches of other kinds of criticism-Marxism, structuralism, and linguistics. Secondly, it switched its focus from attacking

maleversion of the world to exploring the nature of the female world and outlook and reconstructing the suppressed records of female experience. Thirdly, attention was switched to the need to construct a new canon of women's writing by rewriting the history of the novel and of poetry in such a way that neglected women writers were given prominence.

Such distinct phases of interest and activity seem characteristics of feminist criticism. Elaine Showalter for instance described the change in the late 1970s as a shift of attention from 'andro-texts' (books by men) to 'gynotexts' (books by women) she coined the word gynocritics in her essay "Toward a Feminist Poetics", which is the historical study of women writing and meaning the study of 'gynotexts'. The subjects of gynocriticism are 'the history, styles, themes, genres and structure of writing by women: the psychodynamics of female creativity, the trajectory of the individual or collective female career, and the evolution of laws of a female literary tradition. A major division within feminist criticism has concerned disagreement about the amount and type of theory that should feature in it, What is usually called the 'Anglo-American' version of feminism has tended to be more skeptical about recent critical theory than have the 'French' feminist. They have adapted and adapted a great deal of post-structuralist and psychoanalytic criticism as the basis of much of their work. The Anglo-Americans maintain a major interest in traditional critical concept like theme, motif and characterization, they seem to accept the conversation of literary realism and treat literature as a series of representations of women's lives and experience which can be measured and evaluated against reality. Subscribing itself to the 'Anglo-American version, this study therefore adopts and accepts the treatment of literature as a series of representations of the experiences of the female in the analysis of selected texts. The American critic Elaine Showalter is usually taken as the major representative of this approach but others are Sandra Gilbert, Rachael Brownstein and others. (<http://www.centreforthebook.org.za2009>).

Elaine Showalter's *A literature of their Own* describes three stages in history of

women's literature and also proposes a similar model of the growth of feminist theory. The first is an androgynist poetics, next, a feminist critique and female aesthetic, accompanied by gynesisic poststructuralist feminist criticism and gender theory. Androgynist poetics having roots in mid-Victorian, a woman's writing of imitation contends that the creative mind is sexless and the very foundation of describing a female tradition in writing was sexist. Critics of this vein found gender as imprisoning or believed that gender had a bearing in the content of writing, which according to Joyce Carol Oates is actually culture-determined. However, from the 1970s on, most feminist critics reject the genderless mind, arguing that imagination cannot evade the conscious or unconscious structures of gender. Gender is part of that culture which Oates says serves as inspiration. Such a position emphasizes the impossibility of separating the imagination from a socially, sexually, and historically positioned self. This movement of thought allowed for a feminist critique as critics attacked the meaning of sexual difference in a patriarchal society. Images of male-wrought representation of women (stereotypes and exclusion) came under fire as was the division, oppression, inequality and internalized inferiority for women. The female experience then began to take on positive affirmations

According to Showalter, (1997) literary history has seen three phases of gynocriticism. Until the Twentieth century, the female literature tradition was constructed in a way that images and values of the ideal feminine was done from the patriarchal oppression that identified the woman as the 'other'. During the twentieth century, there was a reaction to the patriarchy of previous times which protested the ideology of the feminine. The most recent development is the female criticism, where a female identity is sought free from the masculine definitions and oppositions. The recognition of a distinct female canon and the development of the female 'reader' are fundamental aspects of gynocriticism. In her attempt to free women from the male dominated literary tradition Showalter proposed a separate model of feminist literary theory rejecting inevitability of male models by recalling the history of women's

writing to the present. She divides her model into feminist critique, which exposes woman as a reader, and gynocritics which presents the woman as a writer. As a reader the feminist traces out the images and stereotypes of the women exposed in the male texts. As a writer on the other hand the woman is a producer of textual meaning with themes, genres, history and structure of literature. This in essence is the female model of writing being independent of male values and norms. Showalter contends that women are different in terms of nature, race, culture and nation and thus can be universally studied. She claims that women too have their tradition, that women's writing in the past was overlooked and undervalued by male critics. And so to make the literature of women different and special there is the need to reconstruct the past of literary history of women by dividing the three stages of women writers. Thus feminine phase (1840-1880), the feminist phase (1880-1920), and the female phase (1920 to the present). In spite of her attempts, she has been criticized by recent feminists for being essentialist, following too closely along the lines of Sigmund Freud and new criticism, and leaving out lesbians and women of colour, (Friedman 1998). However, others are of the opinion that gynocriticism is a literary criticism that is relatively new and continues to evolve. Until the patriarchal ideology of the female is resolved and gender inequality and social subjugation are neutralized, then it remains necessary to review and examine the female literary canon.

The female aesthetic arose expressing a unique female consciousness and feminine tradition in literature as it celebrated a female approach in the interpretation of women's texts. It spoke of a lost mother tongue, and of a powerful but neglected women's culture. Writers like Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, emerging out of the Victorian period and influenced by its writings were the first women to recognize this. In contrast the French feminism which is more overtly theoretical in the sense that it takes as its startingpoint the insights of major post-structuralists especially Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), Michael Foucault (1926-1984) and

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)). For them, the literary text is never primarily a representation of reality or a production of a personal voice expressing the minutiae of personal experience. These theorists often travel through detailed treatments of major philosophical issues of this kind before coming to the literary text itself. Major figures include Kristeva Julia, Helen Cixous and Luce Irigaray. The French feminist discussed this mother tongue calling it *l'écriture féminine*, accessible to men and women alike but representing female morphology. *l'écriture féminine* sought a way of writing which embodied the female thereby, fighting the subordinating style of classification. There are problems with the female aesthetic. Its fans avoided defining exactly what constituted the style of *l'écriture féminine*, arguing that any definition would categorize it as a genre under the linear patriarchal structure. Its ambiguity defied identification as part of its identity. Some feminists and women writers could feel excluded by the surrealism of the female aesthetics and its stress on the biological forms of female experience which as Showalter says also bears close resemblance to sexist essentialism. Lastly, the female aesthetics was charged with racism as it referred to racial or class differences between women.

Gynocritics which developed alongside the female aesthetics attempted to resolve some of these problems by arguing that women's literature lay as the central concern for feminist criticism. One branch of gynocriticism sought to revise Freudian structures and take the edge off of an adversarial methodology of criticism. These criticisms emphasize a pre-Oedipal phase wherein the daughter's bond to her mother inscribes the key factor in gender identity. Matrilineal values resolve inter generational conflicts and build upon a female tradition of literature rather than the struggle of Oedipus.

Post structuralism eventually influenced the course of feminist criticism with the idea of motherless as well as fatherless text. It argues that the female experience, as it relates to texts only occurs in the feminine subjectivity of the reading process, adding that 'gynesis' or

'gynetic disruptions' occur in texts when the reader explores the textual consequences and representation of the feminine and that these considerations or interruptions in the discourse indicate a consideration or interruption of the patriarchal system. Lastly, are the most recent developments of an over-arching gender theory which considers gender both male and female as a social construction upon biological difference. Gender theory proposes to explore ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system and as many advantages opening up the literary theory stages and bringing in questions of masculinity into feminist theory. Taking gender as fundamental analytic category brings feminist criticism from the margin to the center, though risks depoliticizing the study of women (The Free Encyclopedia, 2012).

According to Avis C., (www.csun.edu/1986) all the feminist theories share some common assumptions and values. The assumptions of the feminist theories are that women are oppressed therefore; they must focus on the centrality, normality and importance of women's experience. Publications such as *Ain't I a Woman* (1982) and *The Changing Woman* (1980) by Bell Hooks highlight this. The feminist theorists also as part of their assumptions believe that gender is socially constructed and the analysis of gender should include the larger socio-cultural context. The social construction feminist theory which is a contemporary theory extensively discusses this with scholars such as Lorber Judith (1994), R.W. Connell (1987), Barbara Risman (1998) and Judith Butler (1990) as crusaders. It is assumed that the term 'family' supports women's oppression because it contains class, cultural and heterosexual biases. And finally, that social change and methodological approaches should be value committed while women need to succeed and change the oppression. The major themes of feminist theories are oppression and liberation.

In this study, the concept of feminist literary theory is deployed from the views of various thoughts who fundamentally regard feminist literary theory as a phenomenon which

attempts a deconstruction of male bias as regards the question of dominance and stereotypes of the female. The male's concern with institutionalizing patriarchy which thrives on culture, therefore, necessitated their denigration and control of the female. To accomplish this task, the male sought to dominate the female through their writings in the most effective means of oppression. This research sees this oppression as being fueled by cultural practices. Consequently, this study is premised on the view that the way in which the selected writers have explored the manner of representation of the female can be contextualized within the feminist framework. These texts are evaluated under the ambience of feminism because they expand the frontiers of the female and bear both direct and indirect imprints of the female experience in patriarchy. Although feminist theory is expansive, diverse and complex it is significant especially in shedding light on the multidimensional trope of the discourse on Nigerian society and the female experience. Its discursive ramifications derive its essence in privileging particular methods of problematic as a way of subverting some of the assumptions and stereotypes of the society about the female gender.

In the interpretation of the texts, feminist literary theory attempts to project them in a manner that they (texts) subvert the oppressive tendencies of the male by interrogating the unequal relationships between the male and female. Broadly therefore, feminist literary theory is primarily directed at recognition of women's oppression as well as an examination of what contributes to the maintenance of that oppression in addition to a futuristic vision of equality. The implication of this is the construction and remaking of the image of the female in the context which emphasizes their distinctiveness. This reconstruction thus takes the form of textual representations, which beyond its semiotic meaning attempts the 'recovery' of the past in a way that counters the construction of the female in male textuality.

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CHAPTER TWO:

The Development of Children's Literature

The development of children's literature in relation to this study is fundamental in the sense that a genre is better understood through its literary history. This history gives a holistic understanding of the core of the literature. For example it aids the knowledge of the emergence as well as varieties, themes, and writers of children's literature while showing its link to the children's literature of Nigeria and Africa, having had their roots in the literature of the west. According to the Columbia Encyclopedia (2011:1), the earliest of what came to be regarded as children's literature was first meant for adults. Among this ancient body of oral literature were myths and legends created to explain the natural phenomena of night and day and the changing seasons. Ballads, sagas, and epic tales were told by the fire side or in courts to an audience of adults and children eager to hear of adventures of heroes. Many of these tales were later written down and are enjoyed by children today. Most of the literary genres of adult literature appear in children's literature as well. Fiction in its various forms: contemporary realism, fantasy and historical fiction, poetry, folktales, legends myths and epics all have their counterparts in children's literature. Non-fiction for children includes books about the arts and social, physical, biological and earth sciences, biography, and autobiography. In addition, children's books may take the form of picture books in which visual and verbal texts form an interconnected whole. Picture books for children include storybooks, alphabet books, counting books, wordless books, and concept books.

2.1 Children's Literature as a Genre

Concerning the theory of genres, the Greeks are of the opinion that the type of person an author is would be directly responsible for the type of poetry he writes. The Greeks also believed that, certain metrical forms were suited only to certain genres. However, since the late 18th Century literary critics have been trying to find a theory of genre that would be more

commensurate with the realities of individual texts within genres. The evolution of genre took many twists through the 19th and 20th Centuries. It was heavily influenced by the deconstructionist thought and concept of relativity. In 1980, the instability engendered by these two new models of thought came to a head in a paper written by Jacques Derrida titled, “The Law of Genres” in which he first articulates the idea that, individual text participates in rather than belong to certain genres. He does this by demonstrating that the “mark of genre” is not itself a member of a genre or type. Thus the very characteristic that signifies genre defies classification. The Free Encyclopedia (March, 2009:43). It can be deduced from Derrida’s postulation that a text does not strictly belong to a single genre; it can rather fall in the category of more than one genre.

In 1986, Ralph Cohen published a paper in response to Derrida’s thoughts titled, ‘History and Genre’. In this article Cohen argued that genre concepts in theory and in practice arise, change, and decline for historical reasons. And since each genre is composed of text that accrues, the grouping is a process not determinate category. Genres are open categories; each member alters the genre by adding, contradicting or changing constituents, especially those of members most closely related to it. The process by which genres are established always involves the human need for distinction and interrelation. Since the purposes of critics who establish genre vary, it is self-evident that the same text can belong to different groupings of genres and serve different generic purposes. This stance is in agreement with Derrida as well as that of Simmons (1994:145) which posits that, in its use in the language of literary criticism, the concept of ‘genre’ proposes that particular groups of texts can be seen as parts of a system of representation a creed between writer and reader. For example a work such as Aristotle’s *Poetics* isolates those characteristics which are to be found in a group of dramatic texts which are given the generic label ‘tragedy’. The pleasure which an audience derives from watching a particular tragedy emanates in part from its fulfilling certain requirements stimulated by

expectations arising from within the form itself. But each particular tragedy cannot be reduced simply to the sum of its generic parts. It is possible to distinguish tragedies by Sophocles, Shakespeare, or Edward Bond, yet at the same time to acknowledge that they all conform in certain respects to the narrative and dramatic expectations of the category 'tragedy'. Each example therefore repeats certain characteristics which have come to be recognized as indispensable features of the genre, but each one also exists in a relationship of difference from the general rule. The same kind of argument may be advanced in relation to particular form of poetry, or novel. The concept of genre helps to account for the particular pleasures which readers/spectators experience when confronted with a specific text. It also offers an insight into one of the many determining factors which contribute to the formation of the structure and coherence of any individual text, (The free Encyclopedia March, 2009:14).

On the basis of the above positions, the discussions on the key factors that qualify children's literature as a genre proceed. Traditionally, genres are divided into sub-genres. Literature for example is divided into three basic kinds, the classical genres of the ancient Greece, poetry, drama and prose. Poetry may then be sub-divided into epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry. Subdivisions of drama include the foremost comedy and tragedy, while comedy itself has sub-genres including farce, comedy of manners, burlesque and satire. Dramatic poetry for instance might include comedy, tragedy, melodrama, and mixtures like tragicomedy. Non-fiction can cross many genres but is typically expressed in essays, memoir, and other forms that may or may not be narrative but share the characteristics of being fact-based, artistically rendered prose. However, conventionally, this categorization has been altered. Modern times have defied all that is fixed and rigid about the genre, making it rather accommodating and flexible.

In the same manner of division, children's literature is divided into drama, poetry, and fiction (prose). Fiction is subdivided into adventure, animals, comics, fables, fairy tales,

fantasy, and folktales. Others are high fantasy, historical fiction, legend, myth, tall tales and science fiction. Poetry is subdivided into nursery rhymes, verse, ballad, and epic. Others are songs and rhythm. Drama on the other hand is broken down into theatre, film, video, opera, comedy, and tragedy. In children's literature, beside poetry, drama and prose there include other subgenres such as music, subdivided into popular, classical blues and country; dance is subdivided into folk dance, ballet, modern, tango and twist. Non-fiction is subdivided into biography, auto-biography, history and geography.

Conventions are traditional method or styles found in a genre. They could be considered 'stereotypes' of that genre. For instance, science fiction is expected to be set in the future, and has futuristic events, technological advances and futuristic ideas; realistic fiction is expected to contain a story about people who could pass as real, struggling through real life situations and /or real world events, (The Free Encyclopedia March, 2009:18). In other words conventions can be referred to as the customary way of doing things. Similarly, according to Daniel Chandler (2009:30) "genres create order to simplify the mass of available information; creating categories promotes organization instead of chaos. Jane Feuer on the other hand has divided ways to categorize genres into different groups. The first is aesthetic, by using this method one can organize according to certain sets of characteristics, and so the overall work of the artist is not disparaged by generalization. The second classification method is convention, it uses its own culture to help classify".

Children's literature is one genre that is categorized and identified through its convention and aesthetics. The following are considered as conventions of children's literature: Firstly, it is simple and straight forward, it focuses on action, and subtle psychological events are often implied through narration and common action; it is also about childhood and expresses a child's point of view. Furthermore, the literature is optimistic, hope being the vital dimension of children's books. Children's literature tends towards fantasy, often implies a

symbolic defiance of our knowledge of reality and represents the potentials that lie below the surface in each of us. In addition, it is a form of pastoral idyll celebrating the joys and innocence of rural life close to nature and in the company of friends. The literature also views an idyllic world; it is didactic as it has traditionally been seen to attempt to educate children. Its universal theme is teaching children that, despite boredom, home is a place to be rather than the dangerous world outside. Repetition is a common feature of children's literature, repeating task is a basic method of education which is a common trait of oral literature; repetition with variations of words, phrases, situations and narrative patterns are common in the literature. Finally, children's literature balances the idyllic and the didactic, combining the two approaches while dealing with opposing ideas such as home vs. away, communal concern vs. self concern and good vs. evil.

Dealing with the subject of children's literature should begin with a critical look at its history. As a matter of fact, the mass of modern-day top-quality children's books is a product of the past. This means that children's literature has developed out of the efforts and missteps that had been made earlier, thus, when studying literature of the young reader it is imperative to consider questions like where and how it took its origin, what its source was and where it is going. Only by viewing the past with the knowledge of today while examining the present with certain amount of historical information, can one be in the position to judge. One of the most influential factors in literature is the culture in which it is produced. Any author, conscious of this or not is a product of the culture she/he lives in, and in this way, literature can be seen as a mirror of society. In particular children's literature reflects the conflict and controversy in its society on the subject of moral standards and lifestyle. Just as the image of children changed from century to century so did the content of books directed at the young reader (Townsend 1996:60). On the basis of the postulation by Townsend, it can be summed up that, authors presentation of stereotypes is a simply mirroring the society.

Related to this postulation is Myers' (1988:42) argument about how historicist ideas could be applied to children's literature. Myer argues that historicism of children's literature integrates text and socio-historic context, demonstrating on the one hand how extra- literary cultural formations shape literary discourse and on the other, how literary practices are actions that make things happen. Historicism would also want to know how and why a tale or poem came to say what it does, what the environing circumstances were, and what kinds of cultural statements and questions the work was responding to. It would also examine a genre's critical history including how it got inscribed or deleted from the canon. Both positions agree that, the examination of a text or genre can not be done without history; in other words textual analysis and history are inseparable. The literary history of children's literature reveals that every era had a peculiar factor that was responsible for the emergence of children's literature; these factors have to do with the concept of childhood, forged from a potent relationship between ideas and technologies within a frame of social, political, and economic needs. The different theoretical boundaries of childhood were born out of the need to argue for a definition of childhood thus, the nature, purpose or function, and how the notion of the child is used in the society. This definition was to form the framework for the rise of children's literature. From the classical times to the present day, the general factors responsible for the emergence of children's literature are those of social, cultural, religious, philosophical, developmental and educational needs, (The Free Encyclopedia January, 2011:91).

In the Greek and Roman eras: 50 B.C.-A.D. 500 there was the cultural need for children to be trained for adult life, as a result they were meant to listen to and read adult literature. Because children were viewed-as miniature adults, they had nothing that amounted to a childhood culture and consequently, the classical literature really had nothing that could be considered a children's book in the sense of a book to give pleasure to a child. Because there were very few works composed for children, they borrowed from stories they enjoyed listening

to along side adults-Greek and Roman myths and epic such as the Iliad, the Odyssey, and Aesop's Fables. This is buttressed by Hunt's (1995:11) observation that "before 1700, prose and poetry that had been created for children were mainly collections of moral, religious and academic instructions (Bible, the psalms, catechism, and the rules for children's behavior). The term children's literature would therefore have referred to manuals of conduct, character and theology".

In the Middle Ages: 500-1500, Bingham and Scholt 1980:21, observe that children were not highly valued, at least not by present day standards. They were thought of as adult members of the family, and personal affection was secondary to the family's economic well being. The Children of the poor spent most of their day laboring and consequently few of them could read. The need for the society to produce a substantial body of children's literature brought about recognizing the existence of children as an important and distinct category of reader with separate needs and interest; this consequently gave rise to the need to introduce religious tales and biblical stories so as to set example for children for a didactic purpose as well as the introduction of romantic tales and legends, while creating a mixture of realism and fantasy. Another factor was the need to increase books for children which were rare and precious, through the introduction of the printing press. But for this introduction, amusing books written for children would have been economically and psychologically impossible. Children could have listened to adult works such as *Beowulf*, *Song of Roland*, *El Cid*, *King Arthur*, and, *Robin Hood*. Though manuscript written in mnemonic rhyme existed, they were strictly for instruction, not entertainment.

Several developments during the Renaissance prompted a range of social changes that began to pave way for a genuine literature for children: The development of the 'New World' created wealth and opportunity that spawned a new middle class of merchants who had the time and means to pursue education thereby, resulting to mass education (ibid, 1980). There

was emphasis on spiritual and intellectual development, as schooling became important for a puritan child's upbringing, there was the need to give lessons for proper behavior for boys, and finally the need to keep interest in traditional tales alive during the puritan movement. These significant factors brought about certain developments: the most significant being the invention of the movable-type printing press that made it possible to print books in quantities, thereby increasing literacy and dissemination of knowledge, the crusades of the eleventh and twelfth Centuries opened trade routes and introduced new educational books into Europe which in turn furthered knowledge and literacy. Such books include *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* by John Comenius (1658), being the first children picture book, and *New England Primer* (1690-1886), being the most famous early school book. There was also the emergence of chapbooks (small cheaply made books containing fairy tales). As children in particular became more literate, more books were printed for them though, nearly all were school books of morals or manners, such as the book of Martyrs, an anti-catholic work with bloody scenes of violent deaths, and the books' aim was essentially didactic. Childhood during the Renaissance was not a time of innocence, and Comenius showed life as it really was in all its war, torture, disease, and deformities (Hunt 1995:34).

In the seventeenth Century, two factors redefined childhood: the rise of Puritanism and John Locke's philosophy of *tabula rasa*, or the mind as a blank slate. Puritanism placed an emphasis on the individual's own salvation, which required that, even children needed to read and understand the Bible. Children in particular were viewed as young souls to be saved or, more probably, to be damned. The puritans directed a good deal of literature at children in hopes of preparing them for death and rescuing them from hellfire. While their children were not appreciated and understood according to present day notions, puritans were very much concerned with their children, especially their spiritual lives (Bingham and Scholt 1980:1). As a result, authors such as James Janeway, Abraham Chear, and John Bunyan wrote "*godly godly Books*" about

children facing death and hell. The first book published in America for children as recorded by Hunt (2001), was John Cotton's *Spiritual Milk for Boston* (1641), which was eventually included as the most dominant American text. While the first widely distributed texts for children were by puritan writers, these texts were not really 'literature' but still more instruction written for children. In 1693, John Locke published his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in which he argued that, the child was not corrupt at birth but was a blank page (tabula rasa) waiting to be taught and filled and modeled. This shift in philosophy prompted a change in the concepts of childhood. Locke advocated a milder form of teaching in which children should be given "some easy pleasant book", indeed, by the end of the Century; the child became a new creature altogether (Hunt 1995:36).

The eighteenth Century is commonly regarded as the decade in which both the English novel and the English children's book were born (Townsend 1996:71). Changes in philosophical thoughts as well as the rise and growing refinement of the middle class allowed children to become more sheltered and more innocent. In addition, as the novel (which was generally viewed as more sophisticated fiction) began to replace more 'unsophisticated' fantastic tales, a space for children's literature was created. John Newberry (1713-1767) did more than any one at the time to take advantage of this space and essentially created the genre known as children's literature. Newberry's *Pretty Pocket Book* (1744), which pays tribute to the 'Great Mr. Locke', was the first significant publication for children that sought both their edification and enjoyment. It was also one of the first commercial, mixed-media texts that contained pictures, rhymes, and games. According to Hunt (1995 :55), while Newberry wrote many children's books, his greatest significance is that he developed the children's side of publishing business so that this class of book could be seen as worth the artistic and financial investment usually devoted only to adult books. France's Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712-1778) influence on children's literature in which he emphasized proper moral development of the child, gave

rise to the writings of moralistic tales mostly done by women. He is comparable to Locke such that while Locke wanted a rational and more liberal approach to education, Rousseau's text *Emile* described raising a boy in naturalness and simplicity. Rousseau advocated the language of the 'noble savage', the unspoiled nature of the child, while Locke argued that, children were the tabula rasa upon which ideas could be impressed. Rousseau countered by saying that, children developed at their pace and on their own terms. However, though Locke's and Rousseau's philosophies seem opposed, they both highlight the role of children's books in the creation of childhood (Townsend 1996:73). Rousseau's influence also paved way for the revival of folktales which produced the first written version of folktale- *Tales of Mother Goose* by Charles Perrault in France (1697) and translated to English in 1729; Grimm's Nursery and household tales in Germany (1812) which inspired a flurry of folktales collecting throughout Europe; in addition Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tales in Denmark (1835) became the first modern folktales.

In the nineteenth Century otherwise referred to as the Golden age of children's literature in Europe, childhood became more valued and children's books became more respectful towards the child and less didactic. While the didactic side of children's literature could still be seen in some works, there was a gradual move away from heavy moralizing as seen in Edward Lear's *A Book of Nonsense* (1846) and John Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River* (1851), as well as in the publication of the Grimm's folktales and Hans Christian Anderson's stories (Hunt 1995). There was the rise of modern fantasy which consequently brought on board talented writers who wrote entertaining stories for children: *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll (England), which was the first masterpiece of modern fantasy (breaking the bonds of didacticism); *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) by L. Frank Baum (U.S), this was the first classic U.S modern fantasy for children; *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901) by Beatrix Potter, this was the early important modern picture storybook in English.

Besides the rise of modern fantasy in the century, there was the rise of realistic stories such as *Little Women* (1868) by Louisa May Alcott (U.S) which became the early family story of great popularity (girls' story)' and *Treasure Island* (1881) by Robert Louis Stevenson (England) being a famous classical adventure stories (boys' story). These books jettisoned all moral attitudes which previous writers for children thought proper to maintain. And as a total liberation from didacticism, they broke the rules for children's writing by blurring traditional rules of right and wrong.

Children's literature is very much a cultural construct that continues to evolve over time. Shifts and changes in the genre basically account for the growth and development that has taken place since its emergence, with the historical patterns and stages of development being basically the same in all children's literature (Shavit 1986:1). Shavit's (1986:17) record accounts that, prior to the development of public education and free libraries in the late nineteenth Century, children literature tended to be limited to the middle and upper classes. A children's book at the time reflected the ideologies of the culture in which it was written and embodies that period's assumptions about children and appropriate behavior. Consequently, children's literature more often embodies adult concerns and concepts of childhood rather than topics children might choose for themselves. This attitude was however, to change when the literature began to cater for the needs of all categories of children as the assumption about children also became dynamic over time.

At the beginning of the nineteenth Century, fairy and folk tales were considered inappropriate reading materials for children especially among the middle class. Puritans viewed them as a form of witchcraft and both Locke and Rousseau warned against their frightening aspects, preferring stories of daily life. The puritans provided children with religious and moral education; to this effect, they created a large body of children's books. The most extreme example is Janeway's *A Token for Children*, being an exact account of the

conversation, *Holy and Exemplary lives and joyful Deaths of several young children* (1672) in which multiple deathbed scenes present children who are physically weak but spiritually strong.

What was peculiar to the development of children's literature was its linkage to the educational system. Though the emergence of children's literature can be described as a long process that began more than half a century before it became a distinct field in the publishing world by the middle of the eighteenth Century, it was its link to the educational system that enabled its growth. The development of the notion of childhood for example in western society and the special attention it paid to children's needs such as clothes, toys, games and books was primarily the result of the radical change in educational system which during the seventeenth Century passed from an apprenticeship system, did not demand the use of books as learning tools, but the school system regarded them as indispensable means for child education. Thus, this new system enlarged the number of readers, as tradesmen, middle and upper classes, previously put to apprenticeship were now sent to school where they were taught to read.

Various educational ideologies responded to the demands of the new reading public which in turn was a by product of the revolutionary innovation of the school based system and consequently determined the framework for the first canonized children's books. In addition to ideological response is the far reaching influence that philosophers and their philosophical views had on the development of children's books. They, alongside their followers translated the philosophical views into action that eventually produced children books; their works laid the foundation for almost all canonized children's literature, whether in England, Germany, France or the United States. As a result, the following universal can be proposed: unlike adult literature, canonized children's literature began to develop in response to the needs of the educational system, the result which is the strong grip of the educational system on children's literature and the major part it played in its formation.

Since the religious establishment was in the best position to supply necessary facilities demanded by the newly recognized need for schools, the religious system initially monopolized it. Their motivation in advancing the idea of general literacy lay in the belief that every person should be able to examine scriptures by himself, this was in addition to the stress laid on morals. The idea was that through books the child would be regulated along the paths of learning and godliness. Consequently, children were given ABC books that included the alphabet, Lord's Prayer, the creed and the Ten Commandments. Later on however, the puritan establishment was eventually forced to accept amusement as one of the books component at the beginning of the eighteenth Century in order to increase the book's appeal. And so the scope of children's reading interest developed beyond the puritan literature, particularly as new models of writing for children based on different educational views entered the scene of canonized literatures.

Another level of growth was with the moralist school of education which developed during the age of reason and was based on the writings of Locke and Rousseau. This gradually overtook the place of the puritan approach to educational philosophy and took its place at the center of the canonized literature for children. The tenet of the moralist is that the child was born 'tabula rasa' and thus began his life in a state of innocence; therefore, the task of education became targeted toward shaping the child and determining his future as a man. For this reason, education was allotted a major place in man's life like never before prior to this age in the history of children's literature; this is in addition to a large demand for books that arose resulting in a new found encouragement for children's writers. Another change that the philosophy, belief and writings of Locke and Rousseau fostered was making schools to consider books as the most appropriate vehicle to integrate their call for amusement and instruction.

The prominent change in the children's literature system was not just in the result of

the revision of existing models but the creation of new ones. There are three of such models: the moralist model which was deeply rooted in Rousseauan tradition, the instructive model based on Rousseau and Locke's view and the animal story supported primarily by Lockean view. The Rousseauan moralist model was a translation from an educational model into a literary one. He suggested the dialogue as an important educational tool and writers inspired by him used dialogue as a basic tool in their work. Rousseau's views were integrated into religious framework as religious writers believed that knowing nature is a step along the child's way to knowing God. Watts the most prominent figure in this group of writers wrote in his *Treatise of Education* that if children know that God made "the Heavens and Earth, the Birds, and the Beast, and the Trees, and Men and Women" they "could be instructed in a way of easy reasoning in some of the most evident and necessary duties they owe to the Great God they see not" (Pickering 1981:18-19). Secondly, the instructive model was a sort of textbook of nature studies, geography, or history, disguised into fiction thus combine instruction with amusement, it was intended to replace boring textbooks and utilize the child's leisure time constructively. One of such is *Parley's Series* (1827) which tells about travel, history, nature and art.

The third model which is the animal story is distinguished from its earlier versions of the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries in its consistent use of imagery. This was first hinted at by Locke's attitude toward Aesop's Fables and Reynard's the Fox. The idea of imaginary animals as main characters in children's books presented the moralist with a dilemma; their prohibition on imaginary characterization initially precluded the integration of animal talk families in books. The solution was to be again found in Locke's ideas as he contended that, the fable constituted the best reading material for children, consequently, a new distinction between the fable in which the eighteenth Century animal story was contained and the fairy tales was formulated (Pickering 1981:40-104). The legitimating and the main concentration of

the animal story were not on a specific animal itself but on a relationship between that animal and the children. It was believed that a child's attitude toward an animal revealed his real personality-what he was and what would become of him. And so in order to construct this relationship, animal story was built upon a series of events describing children's behavior towards animals or pets, good behavior invariably led to decent and moral life while bad behavior led to eventual death of a child. This tenet became the leading theme in all children's animal stories of the time and appears repeatedly in several texts. This type of didactic animal story combining religious and educational views was very popular at the end of the eighteenth Century and the beginning of the nineteenth. There was however, to be a decline later of these stories toward the middle of the nineteenth Century when the opposition between fables and fairies gave way to the insertion of the imaginative model into the children's system in which animals did not appear in children's books. The eighteenth Century model was replaced by a new one in which animals constituted the main figures of nineteenth and twentieth Century children's books. Apparently, the pattern of development in children's literature indicates that the educational system not only served as the framework for the creation and legitimating of children's literature but also determines the stages of development. And as Pickering (1981:20) observes, "This fact can account for the recurring pattern typical to all beginnings of canonized children's literature".

Another shift in the history of children's literature accounting for growth is in the Victorian children's literature which reflected the culture's separate spheres for men and women with different types of books written for girls and boys. Thus, stories for girls were often domestic and celebrated the family life such as Alcott's *Little Women* or Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903), stories for boys such as Twain's *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and its sequel *Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) encouraged boys to have adventures. The Victorian literature developed the character of the

good and bad boy as adventure stories such as Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), and Kipling's *Kim* (1901) became popular genre for boys while girls were encouraged to read moralistic and domestic fiction such as Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877). In addition, the era is considered a golden age for book illustration and picture books; most children books in the first half of the nineteenth Century were illustrated with woodcuts or printed on wood blocks and hand colored, but later innovations in printing allowed for widespread use of color. And by the 1850s there were productions of brilliant picture books and illustrated texts.

Prior to the twentieth Century, most children's literature embodied a white ideology that was reflected in both the text and illustration; but from the 1920s on; there have been attempts to provide a more multicultural approach to children's literature. W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Brownies Book* (1920-1921) was the first African children's magazine; it featured stories, poems, and informational essays by authors such as Langston Hughes and Jessie Fauset. Over time publishers became more concerned with multiculturalism and issues of diversity. Notable African-American writers such as Ana Bontemps, Lucille Clifton, Mildred Taylor, Virginia Hamilton, and Asian-American writers including Laurence Yep, Allen Say and Ken Mochizuki have changed the once all-white world of children's literature. Consequently there arose varieties of writings from different cultures.

Another change is with contemporary children's literature which has become segmented in terms of age appropriateness. The founder of the Ban Street College of Education began to produce picture books intended for children under the age of six. *The Runaway* (1941) and *Goodnight Moon* (1947) are some of Brown's best picture books for the very young. The new found interest in age specific material led to the creation of the widely used *Dick and Jane readers* (1930-1965). Another segment of books are the pop-up books, and shaped books that provided compelling stories for preschoolers. The adolescent segment also appeared but as a

separate genre from children's literature which appealed to and explored the lives of older children. Belonging to this category are Beverly Cleary's *Ramona Series* (1955) Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964) and Judy Blume's problem novels such as *Are you There God?* All have attracted readers too old for picture books.

Shifts giving rise to media adaptation of children's books as films or as television series has become an increasingly important aspect of children's literature. Popular television series have been based on books such as Wilder's *Little House series* and Marc Brown's *Arthur Adventure series*. Walt Disney has dominated the field of film adaptation of children's texts into cinema, beginning with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), being the first feature-length animated film. Disney is best known for animated films based on fairy tales and has produced a number of live-action films such as *May Poppins* (1964) as well as animated features based on Carlo Collodi's *The Adventure of Pinocchio* (1882); White's *The Sword in the Stone* (1939) and Fleming's film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). To this end however, Peter Hunt (1995:10) contends that "film adaptations often change if not revise the original text, that it complicates the meaning of a children's text when children are more familiar with a text through viewing a media adaptation than through reading a book".

Closely related to the above factor is technology advancement which caused book publishers to begin competing with cable and satellite television movies, video games, multimedia products and the internet for the leisure time of their traditional customers. For instance in 2003, a growing number of books were available to consumers in electronic formats; in addition to the largest online book sellers like Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com, retailers like e-Book Mall offered more titles as e-Books which consumers could download electronically. Even publishers like Penguin marketed a number of titles in this manner. The Google Inc. also launched the Google Book Search with the ultimate goal of scanning every book in the world in order to make them searchable and free of charge

by individuals around the globe. With the growth of the internet, text book publishers established web sites that provided online learning resources that were tied into their print products. Scott Foreman, a subsidiary of Pearson Plc created the Know Zone, an interactive online environment that linked classroom work for elementary and middle school students with home study.

The emergence of awards for children books (the earliest was the Newberry Medal) in 1922 in the U.S. which prompted the writings of great works in the field was also a factor responsible for the growth of the genre, in addition, the study of children's literature which began in the last quarter of the twentieth Century raised the status of the literature and prompted publishing of books.

2.2 Classical Writers of Children's Literature

The Gale Encyclopedia of Education (2002:2-10) states that there are a lot of classic stories in children's literature. Classic because they have endured and have continued to find readers from generation after generation, and because they are rich in themes and situations that make children's literature distinct and important; e.g. tension between the desire for independence and the need for love and approval; between the challenge of growing up and the temptation to keep things exactly the way they are; and also between the liberating power of fantasy and the sobering constraints of reality. Classics invite serious contemplation of important human issues in a context of sustained imaginative ventures that display surpassing variety, originality, beauty, and care or craftsmanship. They have received the cooperative approval of adults and children and that they say something to, and about children that adults have wanted to say and continue to want to say, and that children listen to.

The classical writers of children's books include the Brothers Grimm who were the most popular influential folklorist to collect and publish folktales even though not the first to do so. They were responsible for the writing down and preserving of oral traditions in

Germany such as *Snow White*, *Rapunzel* and *Hansel and Gretel*. With the exception of Bible stories, no tale is probably more widely known than some of those that these two German scholars copied and put into print in the first decade of the 19th century. The Brothers Grimm were among the earliest students of European folklore to take what might be called a scholarly or scientific interest in the fairy tale. They were first, scholars and then writers for children, William who is the more poetic of the two, compiled, translated, and wrote about heroic legends, sagas, epics and ballads from the German past and from several other cultures as well. They both collected folktales from among their neighbors and relatives for their books. In addition, they persistently looked for people with a reputation for being skillful tellers of stories like the ones they had circulated orally all their lives. Their inquiries took them to kitchens, barnyards, taverns, and poorhouses. In writing down the stories, they tried hard to retain both the content and the manner of the tellers' renditions. They undertook the project not just because they found the stories interesting but because they were salvaging remnants of a rich tradition that they believed was in danger of being lost.

The title of the first collection was *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (*folktales for children and the home*) showing that the Grimms recognized that the tales would appeal to the young. By the standard of the 19th Century publishing, the book was a success from its first appearance selling out a first printing of one thousand within a few years. But it was with its translation into English that their truly extra ordinary popularity began. Sir Edgar Taylor, a London Lawyer translated and published the Grimms' stories as German popular tales in 1823, profusely illustrated with woodcuts by the famous English illustrator George Cruikshank. The popularity was instantaneous. Since then, their stories were translated into more than seventy languages including Vietnamese, Moldavian and Afrikaans and have become known in virtually every literate culture and some that are not literate. The universality of the Grimms' appeal suggests that they have touched ideas and feelings lying near the heart of the human

race.

Hans Christian Andersen is considered to be one of the world's greatest makers of fairy tales. He was born into an earthly Danish culture in which the telling of folktales was still a prominent feature of social life. In 1835 he wrote his first fairy tales-*The Tinder Box*, *Little Claus and Big Claus*, *Little Idah's Flowers*, and *The Princess and the Pea*. He was later to become the literary idol of parents and children the world over; he wrote 168 fairy tales and short stories several of them being traditional folktales retold with stylistic embellishments. He is often given credit for introducing to Danish literature an informal, idiomatic style that it had previously lacked. *The Tinder Box* and *The Princess and the Pea* are examples of Andersen's way with folklore, and *The Swineherd* gives a simple ironic twist to the folklore plot of a clever suitor winning a princess's hand. Other tales were taken from the literary sources and retold by Andersen-*Emperor's New Clothes* for example was taken from a skit by Cervantes. Finally, there are the tales that Andersen invented himself, often expressing his own yearnings for success, admiration, and love. *The Snow Queen* and *The Little Mermaid* are his most famous works of this kind using magic and fantasy and some folktale motifs. *The Steadfast TM Soldier* projects for example transferred into the lives of toys, a romantic tragic love story; *The Ugly Duckling* is an expanded animal fable with a moral particularly dear to Andersen's heart.

Charles Perrault also a classic tale writer though did not write much, have to his credit works such as *The Continuation of Sleeping Beauty* and the un-softened ending to *Little Red Riding hood*. Compared to others the world of Perrault's tales appears to be much more sophisticated than the peasant folk surroundings found in the tales of the Brothers Grimm or of Jacobs. Other tales by Perrault are *Puss in Boot* and *Mother Goose*, whose English translations were done in 1779 and became popular in England.

The first writers for children tried to catch the consciousness of youth which they did by experimenting with all kinds of mixture of hard facts, fantasy, whimsy, moralizing

instruction, humor, scolding, sentimentalizing and religiosity. They wrote cautionary tales, didactic novels and adventure stories as well as sentimental poetry, all of these inspired by the idea that childhood is a peculiar time of high spirit and innocence and freedom from care. These writers often sought directness of the oral story teller and this had important stylistic implications.

The theme of didacticism showed prominently in the 18th Century under the influence of Locke and Rousseau and was of an intellectual and moralistic variety as evidenced in the sober uplifting books of such authors as Thomas Day, Mary Sherwood, and Maria Edgeworth in England and in the United States by Samuel Goodrich and Martha Finley who wrote the Famous *Elsie Dinsmore* Series. In the 19th Century came the theme of Fantasy and Realism appearing in Anderson Hans's *The Snow Queen* and *The Little Mermaid*, another is *The Steadfast TM Soldier*, a romantic tragic love story with toy characters. Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), Barrie J.M.'s *Peter and Wendy* (1911), Frank Baum's *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) also belong to this category. Others are A.A Milne's *Winnie The Pooh* (1927), P.L. Traver's *Mary Poppins* (1934), J.R.R Tolkien's *The Rabbit* (1937), C.S. Lewis' *Narnia Series*, E.W. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), and *The Trumpet of The Swan* (1970). J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter, books of wizardry and magic* (1997) and also L'Engel's science fiction, *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), and also Carroll's *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* (1865) in England which are tale plays with logic that have given the story lasting popularity with adults as well as children.

Themes related to animal tales saw the rise In 1880, of Johanna Spyri's *Heidi in Switzerland* the sub title declared that it is a book for children and those who love children. Joel Chandler Harris wrote folk stories featuring animal characters speaking African-American dialect. In 1894 Rudyard Kipling published *The Jungle Book*, a collection of stories about a boy who lives in the jungle with animals that has been made into a series of animated

and live action film adaptations.

Socially relevant themes appeared in children's books from the 1960s through the 1990s; these themes treated subjects like death, drugs, sex, urban crisis, discrimination, the environment and women's liberation. S.E. Hinton's *The Outsider* (1980) and Robert Cormier's *I am the Cheese* (1977) are two novels that offer vivid portrayals of the sometimes unpleasant aspects of maturing. Not only are there larger numbers of talented writers and artists from many cultures at work for children, but the range of subject matter discussed in children's fiction has also been extended remarkably. Topics that were considered taboo only a short time ago are being presented in good taste. Young readers from ten to fourteen can read well-written fiction that deals with death, child abuse, economic deprivation, alternative life styles, illegitimate pregnancy, juvenile gang warfare, and rejected children. By the early twentieth century it had become more nearly true than ever before that, children may explore life through literature.

There are a number of awards presented to authors and illustrators of children's books, and these awards frequently aid readers in the selection of books. The most prestigious American awards are the Newbery Medal and the Caldecott Medal. The Newbery was established by Frederic Melcher in 1922; In 1938 he established the Caldecott Medal for the best picture book of the year, and the Newbery for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children. The winner is chosen by a committee of the association of Library Services to children (ALSC) of the American Library Association (ALA).

2.3 Children's Literature in Africa

Literature for children in Africa refers to literature written for African children, either in the vernacular or in a foreign language. Historically, children's literature in Africa can be traced to the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. According to Odaga (1985:1), during the pre-colonial period, African children's literature was basically oral; it was valued as

one of the major means by which societies educated, instructed, and socialized their younger members. With the introduction of formal education however, most of that which previously would have been considered oral literature-proverb, riddles, tales, taboos, legends was put down in print. Despite this, oral literature is not a thing of the past; in many African societies including Nigeria it is still active and alive. Much of it is still created daily; and it is constantly being adjusted to new development and continues to take on new dimensions.

During the colonial period, African children in government and missionary schools were introduced to children's literature that was alien to their experience. Literature for African children was usually written by European authors having European background and European characters. Literature at the time was alien to children because apart from its high literacy level, the work of art written by foreigners was either translated or simplified from the European adult literature with alien setting. Moreover, Schmidt (1987:39) observed that, the literature was aimed at Europeanizing and colonizing, rather than satisfying their need and interest. These books were freely imported into Africa and commonly used by African children, in and outside schools. In countries like Nigeria, children were familiar with books such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Snow White*, and *The seven Dwarves* that have western backgrounds and are based on western values. While some present moral teachings, children had to battle with new words, strange ideas, as well as foreign environment in the books. They would have been of more benefit to the children if they were placed side by side with books that had African background and cultural values, argued Odaga (op.cit:2).

From about 1920, a few books began to be written by West African authors both in English and in West African languages. These were published mostly by various literature bureaus and governments in Nigeria and Ghana. In Nigeria the most notable were: *Azundu* (1927) by William Baikie which became a major reader for most Igbo children who went to

school between the 1930s and the 1950s; *Omenuko* by Peter Nwana, *Ruwan Bagaja* (1971) (Booksgoogle.com) in two volumes, co-authored by the Nigerian National Merit Award Winner, Abubakar Imam, and D.O Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* (1931). In 1947 Cyprian Ekwensi's *Ikolo the Wrestler and other Igbo Tales* was published in London by Nelson.

In the 1950s at the approach of independence, there was a reorientation of the content and aims of education. School syllabuses began to be oriented towards local needs. Foreign examining bodies in West Africa were substituted by local examining syndicates. The new syllabuses demanded new reading materials. In Nigeria, the Regional Education Law of 1954 and the Eastern Regions Law of 1956 introduced universal free primary education in the respective region in January 1955 and January 1956. The modification of educational policies and changes in examination patterns created a situation which rendered inadequate the use of British school texts or their adaptations, and called for a distinct publishing programme. British publishing houses began to open offices in Nigeria and commissioned Nigerian authors to write books which were published locally. Part of this reorientation as Okafor (1992:52) observed, is the United Nations declaration of the rights for the children in 1959 which gave them a right to education. They will by this be taught general culture and literature, which is believed, transmits the children's cultural heritage best. Following this declaration of the United Nations, all the written work of art on African in 1960 featured African characters and values. It was from this time also that African children's literature began to be given the literary recognition and importance it long deserved in the history of African literature. Writing in 1987 about the changes which had occurred in African children's literature between Ghana's independence in 1957 and 1987, Mabel Segun (1992:27) cited Nancy Schmidt (1981):

In 1987 the typical children's book is markedly different from the typical children's book of 1957. It is written by an African

author, illustrated by an African artist, edited and published by Africa. The context is almost always African, usually specific to the African country or geographical region in which it is published. Folklore includes stylistic features of oral literature to the extent that this is possible in print. Illustrations depict African people in African settings and are more often in colour than they were in 1957. Although most books are didactic as they were in 1957, they were not single-mindedly didactic to the point of excluding creativity and stimulating reading for pleasure. Although some Europeans still write, illustrate, edit and publish books for African children, most of them live or have lived in Africa and are familiar with contemporary African life.

Most of the books published in Africa come from four countries: Nigeria, with about one hundred publishers, followed by Kenya, then Ghana and Cameroon. Ghana used to be second in publishing output but was affected by economic recession. Some publishing is done in Francophone West African countries such as Ivory Coast and Senegal and in Southern African Anglophone countries such as Zimbabwe where the young Zimbabwe Publishing House (ZPH) has been quite active since it was founded about two decades ago. The countries of Angola and Mozambique have one or two publishing houses which have been putting out bright picture books. Very little publishing is done in Gambia, Sierra Leone and other small African countries, whose small populations and poor economic base cannot sustain viable publishing programmes.

In the post-colonial independence period many African writers realized that some of the books read by children were still those inherited from the colonial experience and so, efforts were made to reverse this trend. One of such efforts is the recommendation of Chinua Achebe which was that, works produced for children should be relevant to African children, often through the adaptation of the folktale tradition as a valid form of instruction and

entertainment (Emenyonu 2002:585). The radio began to run children's programme known as "Children's playtime" on local and traditional topics both in English and vernacular. The scripts for these programmes were written by Nigerians. The radio idea and the people's comments became an encouragement to others who began to write for children. In Nigeria, people like Ekwensi and Tutuola had blazed the trail and they were both published and acclaimed. The products from Nigerian Universities joined in and their influences were felt in the field of children's literature. Soon, non University graduates took up their pens and the field seemed open to all.

African children's literature is designed in various ways to meet the different needs of the child. In a bid to give the child a personal identity in a continent which has been subjected to cultural imperialism through mass importation of foreign literature which Achebe calls 'poison'; authors such as Mabel Segun and Achebe have been committed through their works to reveal to the child his/her cultural heritage. While Achebe does so through his well written folktales such as *The Flute* and *The Drum* Segun uses character- building books such as *Olu and the Broken Statue* (1985), Asare in Ghana also does so through his fantasy, *The Brassman's Secret* and adventure book *Chipo and the Bird on the Hill*, as well as Meniru's *Unoma*. All of which contain cultural elements. In spite of the preponderance of folktales in the variety of African children's literature due to the inability of authors to write modern fantasy, there are still a few modern realistic stories such as Helen Ofurum's *Iheoma Comes to Stay* (1983). There is also *Stepping Out* (1988) by Cheryl Obele. Others are character-building stories such as Femi Oguntuase's *Scoundrels in Uniform* (1987), *God's Big Toe* by Nwachukwu Agbada (1987), and *A welcome for Chijioke* by Helen Ofurum. Fantasies written in Uganda and Ghana are *Siime's Handkerchief* and *The Dancing Joromi* written by Edreda Tuwangye and James Eboh Whyte respectively. Ekwensi's instructive fantasy is titled *Samankwe in the Strange Forest* (1975) while that of Segun Mabel is *The Twins and the Tree*

Spirits.

Historical fictional works include *The Boy Slave* (1966) and its sequel *The Return of Shettima* (1972) both written by Kola Onadipe. In addition are a few biographies that have been published for children by Longman, University press and Onibonoje in their series *Makers of African History, Makers of Nigeria and African Junior Literature*. Some of the subjects of the biographies are Uthman Dan Fodio, Bishop Samuel Ajai Crowder and Bashorun Oluyole. However, the one which comes closest to how biography should be presented to children is the one about Crowder by J. Milson. Two autobiographies have been written by Mabel Segun, *My Father's Daughter* (1965) and *My Mother's Daughter* (1986), the former being regarded as a classic.

Segun (1992:34) observes that “there is a great neglect of poetry and drama as they do not feature prominently in African children’s written literature, despite the fact that they permeate traditional life in the form of work and play songs, praise and ceremonial songs, guild chants, dirges and incantations. There are however, two anthologies of poems for primary school children collected from all over Africa and the diaspora. *Under the Mango Tree One and Two* by Mabel Segun and Meville Grant are remarkable for their adaptations from folklore and traditional poetry. Other collections are *Coconut Palms* by Ianna Solaruand *Magic Pot* by Pita Gnaivo”.

African children’s literature books are published in different African languages. Most African authors both for reasons of prestige and the economic advantages of writing in a world language prefer to write in the language of their country’s erstwhile colonial master. The famous writer, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, has revolted against this practice. His *Njamba Nene and the Flying Bus*, and *Njamba Nene’s Pistol* were written in Gikuyu. Ironically, they had been translated into English in order to be read by fellow Africans. Segun (ibid: 35) posits that, the answer to language incompetence is to train writers in the different languages of the country

and provide incentives for all those who are willing to help develop these languages. This, she observes is already being done in Nigeria. Furthermore, that most books in Nigerian languages are collections of folktales such as the *Tatsuniyoyi* published in 1929 and translated by Edgar Frank D. in 1937 (catalogue.hathitrust.org/record/006941062), *Akojopa Alo Ijapa Apa Kinni ati Apa Keji*(1983) by Adeboye Babalola. There is also a collection of Igbo poems *Okiri I*(1982) by J.C Maduekwe which makes delightful use of onomatopoeia, word play and tongue twisters. There is also the information picture book in Yoruba *Ise Awon Iya Ati Baba Nla Wa*(1982) and *Bikin Suna* in Hausa by Mamman Vatsa, *Tunde Ati Awon Ore Re* (1986) and *Yemi Da Bira* are by kola Akinlade. And there is *Birds of Our Land* by Virginia Dike.

As part of the development of African children's literature, Nigeria and other African countries have been making efforts to promote and sell their books in Europe and the USA, either individually or through the African Books Collective, a major initiative by Hans Zell Associates in Oxford, England. Considerable awareness about children's literature has been generated in Africa. In Nigeria, beside the Children's Literature Association of Nigeria (CLAN), a few other groups such as the Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN) the Nigerian National Section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) are working to develop and promote children's literature. CLAN has published a book on *Illustrating For Children* in addition to collaborating with the Association of Nigerian illustrators of books (ANIB) as a practical step towards improving the quality of illustrations in children's books. CLAN organizes conferences and makes awards, for example, in 1985, for illustrations and for best children's books published between 1976 and 1984; the 1979 International Book Fair at the University of Ife had as its theme 'Reading Habits of Children'. In 1985, the same Book Fair featured a special exhibition of books for young people. Macmillan publishers organized a children's literature competition and thereafter inaugurated the Macmillan Winners series of fiction for children aged 9 to 13.

Ghana children's literature Foundation and children's literature Company are also striving to promote children's literature in their areas. Furthermore, the need for documenting children's literature research and collecting children's books published in Nigeria for the purpose of such research led to the setting up of a Children's Literature Documentation and Research Center (CLIDORC) in Ibadan.

There is the establishment of annual prizes for children's literature. CLAN is known to give out prizes at Ife book Fair during the International Youth Year which is an annual event. There is also an annual prize in cash by the Nigerian Newsprint Manufacture Company (NNMC) at Oku Iboku. The Ibadan chapter of ANA also awards prizes for children literature just like the Ghana Association of Authors (GAA).

2.4 Children's Literature in Nigeria

Children's literature in Nigeria, written by indigenous creative writers, is relatively young and recent compared to adult literature. The reason for its youthfulness is obvious: during the struggle for independence, creative writers in their sincere efforts at helping the nation free herself from colonial domination, felt that their literary works should play an important role in awakening the nationalist and cultural consciousness of the Nigerian adults, who were at the forefront of this noble anti-colonial crusade. Thus children's literature was completely relegated to the background. The need to consolidate the hard-won independence was followed in quick succession, just seven years after independence by a very costly and gory civil war which again further distracted and postponed the attention of old and new generations of creative writers from giving children's literature its well deserved attention (Tunde Fatunde 1992:159).

According to Ezeigbo Akachi (2010:1) Children's literature was first imported to Nigeria from Europe the United Kingdom and later from the USA. This was during the colonial period by the missionaries, as children in schools were introduced to the literature of the west.

Similar to their counterparts in other parts of Africa, children read books written, edited, illustrated and published in Europe by people whose cultures differed considerably from those of the countries they were writing about. Most of the authors had little knowledge of the country Nigeria and the people in their books. Stereotyping and sensationalism were the order of the day, the books were meant for audience in their home countries who relished the thrill of reading about primitive, half-naked black people and the terrible things that went on in the 'dark Continent', such as cannibalism and human sacrifice. Folktales were mere summaries and their presentation lacked the vibrancy of oral traditional presentation with its refrains, use of proverbs, repetition and encouragement of audience participation. It will therefore, not be wrong to say that Nigerian children's literature developed under the influence of the western models. As time went on however, the influence became local. Many children's books written over the years have stories built around animals like the tortoise, hare, elephant, leopard, lion, dog, cock and others which originate from folkloric influence.

According to Virginia W. Dike of the department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka (2009), the beginning of written Nigerian children's literature, coincided with the attainment of independence in 1960. She observes that though a few titles like Cyprian Ekwensi's *Drummer Boy* and *The passport of Mallam Ilia*, were written some years earlier, they were not published until 1960. Dike further observed that the development of children's literature was motivated by the felt need for a literature that would more adequately reflect indigenous views and realities. It was also stimulated by the rapid expansion of education and the resulting market for supplementary reading materials.

Significantly, the first publishing houses in Nigeria to show a distinct bias for children's books was not a multinational but an indigenous one-Pilgrim books Limited, an amalgam of Andre Deutsch and the Daily Times publishing arm. New indigenous companies such as Onibonoje followed in the 1970s launching the Oniboneje book club. Onibonoje also

launched the *Junior African Literature Series* for young readers. Others include West Africa Book Publishers Limited in Lagos, an affiliate of Academy Press, which has published a highly illustrated series of children's books in English and Yoruba (the Atoka series). There is also a Fourth Dimension publisher in Enugu which published beautifully illustrated children's books by authors such as Chinua Achebe (*The Drum*: 1977 and *The Flute*: 1977), and Mamman J. Vatsa (*Children's Rhymes*: 1978). The early titles which concentrated on supplementary readers for the pre-adolescent age group in senior primary and junior secondary schools, were produced by the African Readers Library of the African Universities Press which, according to Dike came out with 34 titles between 1962 and 1988. Other series that came up later were the Nelson Rapid Readers (1965) and Evans Palm Library for Younger Readers (1968), Oxford University Press' Adventures in Africa (1968) and Evans Africa Library (1976). New indigenous publishing houses like Nwamife in Enugu also produced titles for children.

Development in children's literature in Nigerian was boosted particularly in 1970s and 1980s when Macmillan's Winners Series brought out its first title in 1978, followed by others such as the University Press Limited's Rainbow Series. These early works were mainly based on adventure stories in which the hero or heroes especially boys fell into danger and helped bring criminals to book. Examples are Achebe's *Chike and the River*(1966), Ekwensi's *Juju Rock*(1966) and *The Great Elephant Bird* (1965) Some had school stories as their subject-matter, with the young hero succeeding in gaining admission into school e.g., *Eze Goes to School*,(1971) by Nzekwu and Crowder and boarding school children playing their usual pranks e.g. *Tales out of School* by Nwankwo. Other famous children's authors who wrote for children between the 1970s and 1980s and some of their titles are *The Drum and The Flute* (1977) by Achebe, which are folktales, *My Father's Daughter* (1965) and *My Mother's Daughter* (1985) by Mabel Segun, are in the category of autobiography, *Emeka-Driver's*

Guard (1971) and Mammy water (1979) by Flora Nwapa are fantasies, *Without a Silver Spoon (1981) and Dan Fulani: Sauna and the Drug Peddlers (1986)* by Eddie Iroh treat themes of morality. More contemporary prolific children authors in the 1990s till date include Anezi Okoro, Olajire Olalonkun, Ifeanyi Ifoegbuna, Naiwo Osahon, Dapo Adeleke, and Peter Umez.

Children's literature in Nigerian has developed appreciably in the past fifty years. Between 1960 and 1980, book publishing flourished under the influence of a number of publishing companies that started different series like the African Universities Press' Reader's Library series among others earlier mentioned. By the late 1980s however, all the series disappeared after Nigeria's economy suffered a set back. But later at the beginning of the 21st century there was a revival. At present, most of the established publishing companies in the country produce story books for children. Among the big publishers of children's storybooks are Lantern Books (Literamed publications), University Press, Heinemann of Nigeria, Macmillan and Spectrum. Lantern Books is the biggest and most creative children's literature publisher in Nigeria today. The company has more than 300 titles (story books) and over 100 comic in print. The story books come under the following categories: Adventure series, Folk-Tales series, Health series, Fairy Tales, Bible stories Series and Heroes series. Apart from the big and established ones with a wide distribution network, there are the smaller but active publishing companies. Some of them are fairly new in the field but making very significant impact. Cassava Republic based in Abuja, Farafina based in Lagos are two most enterprising of the newcomers.

Children's literature in Nigerian is varied in scope and content and basically helps children search for ideas, truth, socially and culturally accepted patterns of behaviour and mainly provides them with emotional satisfaction, which will help their all-round development. According to Arbuthuod and Southerland (1972:54) "the genre has therefore, been classified under the groups of picture stories, fantasy stories, humorous books, folktales, fables, poetry,

animal stories, fairytales, realistic stories, adventurous and information books”. The different themes treated, include family life, the child’s unfolding and expanding social world-school days, birthday parties, festivals, life in the spirit world and inside water, animal world, and sibling rivalry. Others related to morality are courage, honesty, justice, gender balance or equity, loyalty to family and the community, perseverance, the reward for obedience, humility, greed, hypocrisy, crime and war. These themes are found in most folktales as well as in realistic stories based on experiences of ordinary life. Most writers of children literature use simple style. There is the use of clarity and good control of the structures of English language, the idea is to make the books as easy to understand as possible. There is the use of simple language, short sentences devoid of ambiguity. These books are also mostly didactic, with moral lessons incorporated in the narratives.

When the culture of writing serious literature began in earnest in Nigeria, there was very high expectation in creating high quality children’s books with relevant culture content that would help in the nurture, education and entertainment of the Nigerian child. After independence, many began to write for children, there were libraries that gave children the opportunity to borrow books and publishing companies willing to publish well-written books did so. Then came the civil war and things went bad until the late 1970s and 1980s that saw a revival in the publication of children’s books by Spectrum and others. But the economic downturn in the late 1980s forced many companies to move out of the country, making it difficult for writers to publish and so books disappeared from the bookshops dimming the bright prospects that were experienced in children’s literature in the 1960s.

Things however picked up again between 2005 and 2010 when many people started to write and both new and old companies revived their children’s literature series. Association of Nigerian authors (ANA) instituted prizes for children’s literature in collaboration with some corporate organizations, publishing companies and rich individuals to encourage the

production of manuscripts and books. The first children prize was ANA/Matatu prize. Others are ANA/ Atiku Abubakar prize for children's literature, Lantern Books prize, ANA/Fun time prize for children's literature. The most important children's book prize is the LNG's Nigerian prize for literature- the children category is awarded every four years. In 2007, Mabel Segun's *Readers Theatre and Akachi Ezeigbo's My Cousin Sammy* jointly won the first edition of this prestigious prize. And most recently, in October, 2011 Mai Nasara's *The Missing Clock* again won the LNG's Nigerian prize for the children's category of literature. The prizes mentioned have encouraged more people to write for children. Besides in recent times, many organizations and publishing companies regularly organize readings for their authors in schools and at book fairs. Example is the Town Hall Book Event organized by Lantern books in different cities. This project has been held in Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ilorin, Oshogbo, and at three different locations in Lagos. The huge benefit of this is that, children are imbibing the culture of reading at an early age.

Critics of children's literature in Nigerian have concerned themselves with issues such as specifications regarding the writings for children; issues of characters and situations, the growth and development, review of books as well as problems and prospects of children's literature in Nigerian. Critics of the genre though few in number, include notable literary artists such as Akachi Ezeigbo who has among other works on the problems and prospects of children's literature, and on writing and publishing for children. Others are Dike Virginia, Emenyonu Ernest, Nnolim Charles, Etim James, Agbasiere Julie, Anozie Sunday, Mabel Segun, Sam Ukala, and Teresa Meniru among others. Sam Ukala (1992:100) observes that, "critics of children's literature find nothing to say about plays for children. Osayimwense Osa, a prominent researcher in children's literature for example, does not mention any play in his pioneering, scholarly books *Foundation: Essays in Children's Literature and Youth Literature and Nigerian Youth Literature*". Acholonu, a notable critic and author of children's literature,

observes that “at the primary level ...the Nigerian child has little or nothing in the form of drama or play script, except, perhaps, Boniface Nzeako and Tess Onwueme’s co-authored collection, *The Children’s Way*”. Ukala (ibid:100) however states that “there are a few plays read by Nigerian primary school children, such as *The Incorruptible Judge*, *The Iroko man and the Woodcarver* by Olu Olagoke, and I.K Hoh’s *The Prodigal Brother*. More plays are popular with Nigerian secondary school children: Ene Henshaw’s *This is Our Chance*, *Medicine for Love*, Zulu Sofola’s *The Wizard of Law*, D. Phiri’s *The Chief’s Bride*, Ola Rotimi’s *The God’s are not to Blame*, Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel*, and Sam Ukala’s *The Slave’s Wife*”.Ukala (ibid: 101) posits that “the situation can partly be blamed on publishers who are quick to state the obvious fact that, novels or story books sell faster than plays”. He believes that, “Theatre associations such as Society of Nigerian Theatre Artist (SONTA) or the National Association of Nigerian Practitioners (NANTAP) and CLAN have a role to play. They could endow awards for good plays which could boost the writing of plays for children. Teachers and dramatists can also acquaint children with literary play to the extent that they crave to read a play at their leisure. And finally, education planners must provide the opportunity for the teachers to introduce primary schools children to plays”.

In a bid to generate considerable awareness about children’s literature in Nigeria, and to also find solutions to the problems plaguing it, literary bodies such as Children’s literature Association of Nigeria (CLAN), Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN), International Board on Books for Young people (IBBY), and the Association of Nigeria Authors (ANA) are all working to develop and promote children’s literature. CLAN has published a book on *Illustrating For Children* in addition to collaborating with the Association of Nigerian illustrators of books (ANIB) as a practical step towards improving the quality of illustrations in children’s books.

Children’s literature in Nigeria has had an interesting history before and since

independence in the 1960. It has had its hills and valleys, numerous problems bedeviling the scene but ultimately Nigerian children's literature has come a long way, considering the teeming number of writers that have emerged and the giant achievements made by writers like Ezeigbo, Achebe, Ekwensi among others who have succeeded in promoting Nigerian culture and tradition, within and outside the country. Writing and publishing for children has a bright future in Nigeria giving that so much educational change has taken place. With the advent of the Universal primary Education scheme, the New National Policy on Education, the free Education programme, the number of schools is increasing. And there is no gain saying that children's literature holds a lot of promise for both writers and publishers. No doubt this history has opened for us an insight into the term referred to as children's literature, that of Nigerian and of other parts of the world.

Children's literature in Nigeria is similar to those in other parts of the world as it is patterned to meet the educational, entertainment, and instructional needs of the child which is achieved through the varieties that exist such as folktales, fantasy, legend, adventure etc. However, children's literature in Nigeria similar to others in Africa becomes peculiar in the psychological, literary and cultural factors involved in its production. This peculiarity stems from the necessity to meet the needs of the child as the culture, environment and the background of the child demands, ultimately achieving for the child a separate and different world often free from the system of alliances that color and constrain human relations in the adult world. Books such as *The Drum and The Flute* (1977) by Achebe among others are folktales that meet these needs.

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CHAPTER THREE:

Under-Representation of the female in *Eze Goesto School and without a Silver Spoon*

In Africa, before women started expressing themselves in literature, they were, to a very large extent, represented through the eyes of male writers. This representation made the woman second to the man in all things: made her voiceless, stereotyped and reduced her to the background. Unfortunately, producers of children's literature continue to perpetuate this anomaly, hence there is a visible absence of positive or dynamic female characters in most of the literatures created for the younger ones. Bemoaning this male-centred slant in literary representation by male writers, Chioma Opara (1991:117) notes that:

The story of women has been inadequately and marginally told in African traditional literary canon. If history is an account of past events, the chronicle should be objective enough to transcend class, gender and racial prejudices....

Similarly Elaine Showalter (1997:15) states: "in many communities, femininity is constructed as inferior to masculinity, with patriarchy providing the basic ideology that uses sexuality as the foundation upon which social relationships between female and male are defined". By close reference to the selected texts, this chapter attempts to show how patriarchal assumptions and practices that perpetuate female inferiority and deeply rooted in culture, influence the portrayal of characters in children's literature. Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* (1972:13) defines patriarchy as 'the system of sexual relationship instituted in our social order whereby males rule females as a matter of birthright priority'. This presupposes that male superiority has been entrenched through patriarchy and our value system has ascribed inferiority to women.

As a concept, culture cuts across disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, political science, economics, sociology and even biology. Peggy O'Mara in the online *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2010:13) defines culture as:

The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations; the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also the characteristic features of everyday existence as diversions or a way of life; shared by people in a place or time. Culture is also the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize an institution or organization; the set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic.

This definition is quite broad and encapsulates the ideas and philosophies inherent in culture, the discipline notwithstanding. Odefula's (1998:42) definition is in agreement with O'Mara's in his use of the term "totality of the way of life". He states that, as the reality of human existence, culture may be viewed as the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their sustained efforts to confront the challenges of reproducing their material existence. As a result however, it involves a people's ways of doing the things they do, their conception of themselves, their values and belief systems which also gives them meaning, relevance and identity. For Linton (1945:23), "the culture of a society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation. It can be deduced from this definition the relationship between culture and those things that really matter to us as individuals and also influence our choice of conduct".

Reinforcing this perspective of culture, Worsley (1984:99) identifies at least two aspects and components of culture, namely: "cognitive and normative; while the cognitive aspect of culture tells us who we are and why we differ from others in addition to allocating to

us social categories premised on age, sex, gender and descent; the normative however, provides us the beacon or anchorage for channeling our actions according to prescribed standards inherent in our cultural milieu. Seen from this perspective, it is possible to contend that culture embodies all the activities that give a people their identity in relations with others with whom they necessarily have to relate in order to survive”. In this regard, culture may be considered as partly setting the basis for social differentiation and stratification within and between interacting groups. It is from this perspective that the concept of culture will be applied in this study.

Every Nigerian writer is a product of a given community, whose works may be influenced by the cultural practices of his community. Patriarchy is one of these cultural practices which emphasize the male power ideology of domination which survives on culture. Therefore, one finds in the works of authors, different kinds of messages, acceptable manner of behavior, etiquette, communication process, comportment, gender roles, respect and values etc.

The authors of children books are no exception to this belief. By their content, children books reflect the culture of the community where they are set. This cannot be over emphasized since such books “simply are a reflection of the minds of the generation that produced them” as observed by Gordon Kelly (1973:89-90). Gail Murray (1998:15) extends this by positing that there is a correspondence between the work of fiction and the cultural reality which the author is a part of:

There is the need to understand the critical connection between the creative works of fiction and the social and cultural reality of which an author is a part of. (The Free Encyclopedia, 2000).

Murray's position emphasizes the fact that there is a relationship between cultural productions like fiction and the social milieu of the author. It is against this background that this section of the study examines the under-representation of the female in Nzekwu and Crowder's *Eze Goes to School* and Iroh's *Without a Silver Spoon*. In the analysis, attempt is made to show how the children books selected for this research reflect and pattern either by their content, language or illustrations, the patriarchal assumptions inherent in Nigerian society.

3.1 *Eze Goes To School*-Plot Narration

The authors have arranged and narrated the different episodes in a chronological order; from Eze's first day at school, progressing to the realities and experiences he went through in order to cope with attending school to his success at the end of the story. They employ the use of simple language, the sentences are short and precise and the lexical terms very handy. Set in the Eastern part of Nigeria, the story captures the period around the Second World War. The title is informative, and gradually plays out as the story progresses. *Eze Goes to School*(1963) unveils the story of a boy who comes from a poor background, so poor that even though his parents are determined for him to acquire western education, money becomes an obstacle to achieving this dream. In the midst of this situation, fate becomes unkind to Eze, he loses his father, Adi Okonkwo at the beginning of his education to a Leopard that invades Ohia Hamlet. Okonkwo is on his way to the farm when without any signal, the Leopard pounces on him. He is a brave man but the Leopard is stronger, he dies from injuries he sustains from the attack. Even though all hopes seem lost with the occurrence, Eze passes through various huddles and finally makes it through the primary and secondary levels of education.

The death of Okonkwo Adi turns over a new leaf for the family, weighing heavily on Eze's education, his fees is hardly gotten since his father's wealth is squandered by the villagers in a bid to give him a befitting and heroic burial. Mr. Okafor is Eze's class teacher.

He takes a liking for Eze because of his intelligence, and he also decides to help Eze out of his predicament. Okafor makes Eze his houseboy so that he can help with his education; which makes Eze's mother very pleased. Eze becomes a beneficiary of the scholarship fund which is a contribution of parents in the village. He continued to progress steadily at school with the help of Okafor, his results coming out impressively. More help comes for Eze from the scholarship fund which is a suggestion from Wilberforce, a son of Ohia hamlet who is in the army. The scholarship fund is a contribution of parents in the village which their children will benefit from educationally and which Eze becomes a beneficiary. Because Eze performs well at the end of primary school, his community awards him a scholarship to proceed to secondary school at Onitsha.

Written in fifteen chapters the story of Eze grows steadily out of the different characters involved, with each one carrying the plot from one level of progressive action to the other. The character of Eze plays a significant role in arousing surprise, anxiety and sustained interest in the reader through the different levels of suspense in the narrative. The story of Eze is told from the third person narrative point of view with an effective and reliable narrator. The point of view through vivid description and dialogue helps in bringing out the themes in the story which are those of determination, hard work, and brevity. In addition, Nzekwu and Crowder have employed consistent and simple styles in their narration- simple sentences and accurate choice of words as well as the use of proverbs, e.g. "when you say a thing again and again, even the deaf will hear" (EGS p.14). These are all suitable for the type of literature.

According to Jean Kilbourne (2007:3) the problem of gender stereotypes lies with our society's thinking that it is normal. People who create children's books are adults who are part of this society that revolves around stereotypes. One can then easily assume that their cemented ideas about the world are in one way or another, transferred into the books they write

for children. Kilbourne further shows how society's attitude can affect children. She reasoned that children's developing concepts of themselves as individuals are bound up in their need to understand and fulfill the expectations of the society in which they are a part of. With the narrative heavily anchored from a male-centred perspective, the authors of *Eze Goes to School* from the onset advance the primordial sexual prejudice which tends to limit women's intellectual acumen. On his first day at school, Eze learns a few new things which he eagerly relates to his father as soon as he gets home. Among them includes the instructions giving to them by their teacher regarding the dos and don'ts of the school. Okonkwo is happy to realize that his desire for his son to gain western education is beginning to unfold. From Eze's story about his first day at school, Okonkwo picks out one thing which he is particular about; that there is a girl in his class called Chinwe Ndu. He therefore, instructs him never to allow anybody in class beat him academically much less the girl called Chinwe. For him it would be stupid to let that happen and so he instructs Eze thus:

You must beat all the boys in any examination you take you must take first place always, and if you are stupid enough to let a boy beat you, never my son, let the girl, Chinwe, beat you (EGS p.19).

Okonkwo's advice is filled with snippets of male-assumed superiority against women as demonstrated in the statement "never my son let the girl Chinwe beat you". He desires his son to excel above all the pupils in his class so as to be the proud father of an excellent child. For a girl to do better than his son would amount to a taboo. Okonkwo's attitude shows that attaining western education and socialization is positive as the phrase "you must take first place always" illustrates, however, his caution about the girl in class beating him is negative which is exemplified in the phrase "and if you are stupid". This is a further illustration of the patriarchal assumptions that seek to portray women as intellectually inferior and with limited mental capabilities compared to men. This corroborates Monica Ekpong's (1994:22) assertion

that 'male domination obtains as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of human culture'.

Furthermore, the position of widowhood in an African community is portrayed in the book. A widow in a patriarchal society such as Ohia in *Eze Goes to School* is almost an object of ridicule. She is humiliated and dejected by the late husband's family. She loses her respect and is treated with utmost disdain. As soon as Eze's father dies, his mother faces the wrath of a patriarchal community with beliefs and values detrimental to the progress of women. Agu, in a fit of anger and male bravado tells Eze's mother:

If you realize that they are our children too, why not shut up, you stupid woman? But if you mean to exert your influence, you should do so in your father's house and not here in a village to which you do not belong (EGS p.25).

The above outburst from Agu in the words "why not shut up you stupid woman?" and "you should do so in your father's house" supports the cultural belief nay societal norm that a woman has neither voice nor right in her husband's house. The words "shut up, you stupid woman" ridicules the widow and equates her with a nonentity. It also suggests that cultural institutions like marriage have been designed to favour the man unlike the woman. Debbie Taylor (1985:1) writing about women's patriarchal position of subservience argues that:

Discrimination against women is such a profound and subtle sickness that it has lodged deep in the sub consciousness of both men and women as well as in the structure of our societies. This makes it one of the hardest sources of inequality to fight because it grips women both from within and without.

On another occasion, when Eze's mother is helpless and goes to lay a complain to teacher Okafor about Eze's school fees, Agu again pounces on her for doing so, threatening to deal with her "...I'll teach that woman a lesson if she thinks she can slander us and get away with it" (EGS p.35). The above statement by Agu shows that Ohia community is a male

dominated one which has no place for women, more especially a widow. By taking the initiative to visit the teacher and plead on behalf of her son, she has broken societal etiquette, that reserves the initiative to men and which does not grant women the power to take decisions, and so the use of the word “slander”. Agu’s character and attitude towards Eze’s mother is a manifestation of a patriarchal structure which restricts the woman as she is made vulnerable to male marginalization, domination, exploitation and, oppression which are the motifs in female presentation.

As part of the gender stereotypes portrayed in the book, a male child in Ohia community is taught through the process of socialization at an early age to appreciate the demarcation between the male and female gender. He is to feel superior over the female. In addition, he is to abide strictly by the prescribed cultural standards. This is captured by Kurfi Hassan (2006:152) who states that:

It is in the process of socialization that the female creation is thought as inferior who is practically translated in cultural praxis. Young boys and girls are brought up gradually to understand and imbibe the meaning of “masculinity” and “femininity” and to appreciate that, the concept of sexuality actually connotes more than merely the physical or biological differences the two sexes bear to each other. No one who grows up in a typical patriarchal society in Africa, for instance, will fail to remember some of the heavily-loaded value assumptions his culture has fed him with, as menu of his cultural growth, these value-assumptions are represented in a rigidly Manichean division in which men and women are differently ascribed qualities, allegedly “natural” to their sexes.

Again, the prejudice of female inferiority and male supremacy is perpetuated and sustained in Ohia Hamlet where boys are nurtured by their fathers to feel and see themselves as superior to their female counterparts. As such they are not to display emotions in public. The omniscient narrator tells us that conscious of this, Eze journeys with his mother to the market from the

village and as the weight of his load begins to tell on him, he does not make a fuss because he remembers that his father:

Taught him that, he must learn to bear his burdens without complain and that he must never let any woman know when he was suffering. So Eze apart from fearing that the women and more especially the girls would laugh at him if he complained was trying to be as grown up as a young boy... (EGS P.89)

The above remark and the phrase “learn to bear his burden without complain” and “never let any woman know when he was suffering” shows that the male nature has been used to connote strength, courage and resilience while the female nature in opposite to the male’s has been used to symbolize weakness, inferiority and docility. Thus, based on the culture of the people, boys and girls are psychologically prepared through stereotype to internalize gender attributes which is to later define their social status in the larger society. Eze imbibes the teaching of his father and so for fear of being embarrassed by the women and especially the girls, he tries hard to bear his burden so that he does not belittle himself before the females. This is further displayed when Eze was beaten into second place by Chinwe in the promotion examination:

...He cried all the way home and refused to eat anything that evening. It was not that he was in second place that upset him most. It was that a girl was the one who had beaten him (EGS p.32).

Eze’s reaction in the above, “cried all the way home” and “refused to eat anything that evening” is a demonstration of the idea that, Eze has imbibed the teachings of his society. Because of this, Eze and the other boys in Ohia grow up to see themselves as better and superior to the girls. This is a way of building and maintaining the patriarchal social

order which indoctrinates women into believing and accepting their complacent subjugated position.

Furthermore, to give insight into gender relations as well as expose the stereotyped perception which the males have of the women, it is observed that in Ohia community, it is considered denigrating for boys to talk to girls. This shows that the cultural practice teaches the boys right from early age to segregate themselves from girls and to regard associating with them as a taboo. Here is how the narrator captures Eze's acquiescence to this cultural practice.

Eze apart from being naturally a quiet boy would never talk to strangers. He closed his lips even tighter when first he noticed there were no other boys in their group. He would never talk to girls. In Ohia hamlet boys regarded themselves as superior to girls, so Eze kept his distance from them (EGS P.8).

To expose the gravity of the scenario are the words "he closed his lips even tighter" "he would never talk to girls" and "Eze kept his distance from them". In apparent reaction to the above, Cahill (1986:59) contends that "children learn from their community to categorize themselves by gender very early in life. A part of this is learning how to display and perform gendered identities as masculine and feminine". Santrock (1994:5) affirms this by observing that "children learn at a very early age what it means to be a boy or girl in our society. Through a myriad of activities, opportunities, encouragements, discouragements, over behaviour, covert suggestions and various forms of guidance, children experience the process of gender role socialization"

Apart from this superior feeling that boys are groomed to exhibit, patriarchal culture has also helped to create a huge imbalance in attitudes and traditional roles of both genders. There is a huge gender stereotype in occupations. Boys spontaneously sort attributes and behaviors into masculine category, especially in the performance of home chores. Therefore,

they regulate their behavior based on the definition of masculinity which their culture has provided. Domestic chores in Ohia are divided along gender lines. The boys regard certain chores as belonging to girls and so distant themselves from such. A boy participating in domestic work evokes loud jeering from girls, thus portraying the domesticated nature of femininity. Eze grudgingly partakes in sweeping the class thereby exposing this gender stereotype:

...one group sprinkled water on the floor of the schoolhouse and the other swept it. Eze did not like this. Sweeping the inside of a house was a girl's job (EGS p.12).

From the analysis above, it is evident that gender stereotype is culturally conditioned. Eze has demonstrated awareness of his own positioning within the gendered social context of Ohia hamlet which he chose to conform to, the statement "Eze did not like this" and the words "sweeping the inside of a house was a girl's job" exemplifies this. It is in reaction to such that Bravo Baumann (2000:2) states:

In a society which is rife with gender stereotypes and biases, children regularly learn to adopt gender roles which are not always fair to both sexes. As children move through childhood and into adolescence they are exposed to many factors which influence their attitudes and behaviours regarding gender roles. These attitudes and behaviours are generally learned first in the home and reinforced by the child's peers, school experience and books. However, the strongest influence on gender role development seems to occur within the family setting with parents passing both overtly and covertly to their children their own beliefs about gender. (The Free Encyclopedia, 2000).

This shows that writers, including those of children's literature, reflect their society's culture which embraces values, behavioral standards and patterns in their works. This, as cognitive theorists of culture holds, implies that individual social categories can be premised on gender.

3.2 *Without a Silver Spoon*–Plot Narration

Eddie Iroh's *Without a Silver Spoon* (1981) similar to *Eze Goes to School* is set in the Eastern part of Nigeria even though written about twenty years after. The text is set in the early twentieth Century in the southeastern part of Nigeria. The story is about a brilliant and thoughtful boy, Ure, from an impoverished family. Ure becomes almost destabilized when in his sixth and last year in primary school his poor parents can not afford to pay his school fees. Not wanting to go the way of his elder brother Baba, who drops out of school to learn trading, Ure devises a means of completing his primary education by working as a servant for his class teacher, Steven, who will in turn pay his three term fees. His parents though not disposed to the idea have no choice and reluctantly release him.

Ure moves to his teacher's house and works diligently as a servant, enduring the constant mockery from his spoilt silver spoon best friend-Erugo, who secretly envies the good moral conduct and character of the boy. Teacher Steve returns from a journey to discover that part of his money is missing. He accuses Ure of the theft and sends him back to his parents, again one of his classmates' school fees is stolen, and Ure being the poorest boy in class is falsely accused by his estranged friend of being the culprit. After much disgrace and humiliation meted on him by all his classmates, Ure becomes depressed and confused as the only thing he claims possession of– his integrity is torn to shreds. To Ure's amazement, his teacher defends him before the authority and takes it up to himself to investigate the matter. He later apologizes to the boy as he finds his missing money, and after a thorough investigation, the most likely person, Erugo, is found to be the culprit with newly discovered evidences pointing towards him. Ure is absolved of the allegation earning back his respect and apologies from his classmates.

Eddie Iroh patterns his story after the tradition of a typical Nigerian children's book. Iroh employs oral tradition to embellish his story. For example, there is the use of folktale which is narrated by Ugadia in a bid to illustrate a point she makes, "kindness and good manners can save a life". It is about the animal kingdom and is titled, 'Why the Lizard nods its head today' (p.19). He also makes use of proverbs, e.g. "the thought that leads a person to take an important step does not come to his mind in a single day". And as a part of the people's traditional values, Ure's father teaches him about the gods of their ancestors e.g. 'Durugo' and to also know that women do not take the place of men. The traditional way of blessing is demonstrated also as Ure's father spits into his mouth while speaking words of blessings to him (P.27). The author uses the theme of honesty to depict the moral development of the character of Ure. The style of narration in the story is captivating; from the first person point of view Ure tells his story which through his simple language, gives the reader a vivid picture of every detail of the plot, in addition to constructing a picture of the narrator's character, class, attitude, and strengths.

According to Bravo Baumann (2000:3), "gender relations are the ways in which a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and the identities of men and women in relation to one another". Pauline Living good (2011:1) has identified areas of cultural influences on gender relations manifesting in the areas of self awareness, i.e. how men and women think about themselves within their gender roles, social behaviour shows how women are traditionally considered to be more gentle, passive, emotional, dependent and patient. These cultural expectations are capable of influencing people's behaviour towards each other, and how they view themselves. Lastly, is the influence of family relation which shows how women are traditionally the caregivers of children and homemakers. They traditionally do more housework including washing dishes, and cooking. These activities are reinforced through the media and books.

Typical of patriarchal societies, Iroh's main female character, Ugadia, in *Without a Silver Spoon*, is passive, docile and without a voice. Chukuwma Helen (1990:131) bemoans this in these words:

Docility and complete subsumption of will is demanded and enacted from the female. This traditional image of women as indeterminate human beings, dependent, gullible and voiceless, stuck especially, in the background of patrilineage which marked most African societies.

Writing about character portrayal in children's books Rudman M. (1995:4) argues that "females in children's books are the nurturers and often depicted as mothers, nurses and kitchen helpers". Thus, both in African and Western cultures, the female gender are often cast in stereotypes. In the picture illustration on page 12 of the text, Ure's mother, Ugadia is shown in the kitchen, and on page 38, she is shown nurturing Ure's little sister (Nnenna). When her voice is heard at all, she is either telling little Nnenna a fable: "Once upon a time, Mbe the Tortoise gave a feast for all the animals..." (WSS p.16) or talking in relation to food:

Nnam! Mama called from the kitchen. That meant that supper was ready to be served...come quickly your father must be starving by now (WSS p.15).

The implication is that child rearing, moulding, nurturing and domestic chores have been structured and solidified by patriarchy to marginalize women; which is occasioned by gender relations. Lending credence to this assertion, Aliyu Abba (1997:149) submits that:

Women's art of oral story telling is as ancient as the people themselves in Hausa-speaking areas of Northern Nigeria. Narrators can be located in the states of Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Kebbi, Sokoto, Bauchi, Niger, Borno, Adamawa, Taraba, Plateau, and the Federal Capital, Abuja.

The presentation of the female is stereotypically done based on culture, she is ascribed the roles of kitchen helper and story teller; the two of which patriarchy has carved out as the

exclusive reserve for the female. In the text, Iroh demonstrates that culturally, women hardly partake in 'serious' matters in the home. The cultural influence here comes along with a social behaviour that energizes the man into being active and restricts the woman from being anything but passive. We see this when Chokwe exercises his powers as vested on him by culture and tradition. Advising his son before he leaves home to live with his teacher, Steven, he said:

Let wisdom and obedience always be with you. Let every word that comes out of your mouth be a word of truth. Let no lies come out of your mouth. Let your change of abode not mean a change in your mode of life. Let truth always be with you, let bad company avoid your way. Always remember where you come from, let the spirit of my ancestors be with you (WSS p.45).

Ironically, all through the exercise, Ugadia is silent and says nothing to him. This shows that in patriarchal societies which perpetuate gender stereotype, the laws that govern and pattern human behaviour which includes well-defined gender roles and pervasive inhibiting customs and traditions, render women silent passive followers as it is brought to the fore by the words "let my ancestors be with you", the word 'my' is a way of edging the woman out of such an exercise which the tradition of the people only recognizes the male to be a partaker of. This validates Nawal El Saadawi's (1980:77) contention that "...masculinity is not real, not an essential truth, but only an external shell built up and imposed on women by societies based on class and sexual discrimination".

In addition, Iroh casts women as being conditioned by a patriarchal society, whose values they must internalize. They do not speak on issues when the male are present. This cultural influence brings about a certain self-awareness that forces the woman into thinking about herself within a given gender role; this is revealed through Ugadia's statement:

I have nothing to say, Dim. You are here. I cannot speak on matters while you are here. Whatever you decide is all right (WSS p.41).

Here, Iroh seeks to validate the cultural stereotype that women are subhuman compared with men as seen in the words “I have nothing to say....I can not speak on matters while you are here”. Silence in the midst of men is a socially ascribed feminine role; the male has the final say on all matters. Similarly, Chokwe’s statement: ‘woman! leave me alone, you women do not know when not to talk about food’ (p.81), is derogatory as it suggests that Ugadia is unintelligent. This is a stereotype informed by the culture of the people.

Because “cultural establishment always has conceived of children’s literature as a buttress for the dominant society’s hierarchies of gender rather than as a site for challenging them” (Murray 1998:49), the Nigerian children’s literature of the present generation as observed from the analysis above has continued to resemble what the nineteenth Century children’s literature was:

The message of the nineteenth-century children’s literature that girls and women inhabit a separate and quite unequal realm from boys and men was massively reinforced by the books of that century (Taxel 1981:3).

Also:

The ideal woman of nineteenth-century American school books has no interest or ambitions of her own. Her every desire, her every action, is bent to serve her husband and her children. She is a model of self-abnegation; her only role in life, her only fulfillment comes in helping the male fulfill his ambition. She has no choice in determining policy, state or familial, nor does she want any. She is modest, meek, and silent (Elson 1964:303) (The Free Encyclopedia, 2012).

From the analysis above, it is apparent that culture as found in the various texts perpetuates gender stereotype. In content, language as well as image illustrations, it is evident

that the authors are products of their societies and they have been influenced by their cultural beliefs. Comparatively, one notices that character portrayal in *Without a Silver Spoon* and *Eze Goes to School* are typical of what obtains in the cultural milieu of the communities in which the stories are set. Seen from this perspective therefore, it is possible to submit that culture embodies all the activities that give a people their identity. Thus, gender is in fact, entirely or mostly a creation of cultural attitudes. These cultural attitudes are responsible for the different kinds of stereotypes that are found in children's books and which promote gender imbalance in the society. This is what Gordon Kelly (1973:89-90) means when he holds that:

More than any class of literature; children's books reflect the minds of the generation that produced them. Hence no better guide to the history and development of any country can be found than in its juvenile literature. If children literature reflect the minds of the generation that produce them, then it is only logical that, cultural attitudes are bound to have serious implications on the books.

Finally, our notions of what it means to be female or male are socially constructed. Children's books which take part in such stereotypes automatically transfer our society's stereotypes onto them without giving them a choice to interpret the world as they grow. Although common sense tells us that there are obvious differences between males and females, culture and cultural myths shape gender relations. We must learn to take caution in passing onto our children, the difference between one's biological identity and the conventional pattern of behavior we learn to associate with each sex, *thereby, expanding gender inequality in the society*. (Kilbourn *ibid* p.3-4)(Emphasis mine).

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CHAPTER FOUR:

Gender Stereotypes in *The Missing Clock* and

Chike and the River

Children's books may seem to be the last place where gender stereotypes are present. However, studies have shown that stereotypical messages are evident in these books and as a result, children may be limited and restricted to mold into these stereotypes; *The Missing Clock* and *Chike and the River* are no exception to this assertion. According to the *Gender Dictionary* (1996:3), "Gender stereotypes refer to the constant portrayal of women and men occupying social roles according to traditional division of labour in a particular society. Such gender stereotypes work to support and reinforce the traditional gender division of labour by stereotyping it as "normal" and "natural." John Wiley (2002:1) defines gender stereotype as:

The simplistic generalization about the gender attributes differences and roles of individuals and/or groups. Stereotypes can be positive or negative, but they rarely communicate accurate information about others. When people automatically apply gender assumptions to others, regardless of evidence to the contrary, they are perpetuating gender. Traditionally the female stereotypic role is to marry and have children. She is also to put her family's welfare before her own; be loving, compassionate, caring, nurturing and sympathetic. The male stereotypical role is to be the financial provider, he is to be assertive, competitive, independent, courageous, and career-focused, hold his emotions in check. These sorts of stereotypes can prove harmful; they can stifle individual expression and creativity as well as hinder personal and professional growth.

He states further that "the weight of scientific evidence demonstrates that children learn gender stereotypes from adults. As with gender roles, socializing agents- parents, teachers, peers,

religious leaders, books and the media pass along gender stereotypes from one generation to the next.” The selected texts for analyses in this chapter by their content affirm Wiley’s assertion by demonstrating how children learn stereotypes from adults. Commenting on studies on gender stereotypes, Louie (2001:30) states:

Studies on gender stereotypes in children’s literature appeared in America as a consequence of the women’s movement in the early 1970s. At that juncture, a number of books were still replete with traditional and passive female roles. These children books investigated from feminist perspective fall into two categories. The first category is sexist books in which female characters are largely categorized and accepted through their domestic accomplishments, their timidity of soul, and their gentle appearance and manners. The second category is comprised of “cop-out” books (books that show children withdrawing from activities because of lack of nerve or inclination) which implicitly express gender biases by a crucial line, a paragraph or the last chapter.

In other parts of the world such as Japan, China, India, Romania, Syria, and the United States of America etc, findings on gender stereotypes and children’s literature reveal that almost all content analyses were telling essentially the same story, those of underrepresentation of females in words or illustration, gender stereotypes about traditional and domestic roles and gender stereotypes of individuals attributes and actions; with only minor variations regardless of country/region (UNESCO 2005:6). Drawing examples from the selected texts, discussion in this section looks at the gender messages, while comparing the manner of portrayal of the male and female gender.

4.1 *The Missing Clock*- Plot Narration

The Missing Clock (2010) by Mai Nasarais a story that uses the character of Banji to demonstrate the idea of dignity of labour and the need for self-reliance in young children. Set in present day Lagos-Nigeria, the story centers on Banji who at the age of four, decides to put an intelligent idea he has into use, hoping for it to blossom. A story of how his simple act

inspires his family to fortune; it celebrates ingenuity, hard work, and brilliance. Banji overhears adults' discussion about how to multiply things and because he wants many more of something he really likes to share; he decides to plant the family's table clock so that it will multiply for each room in the house to have a clock, for him to have enough to share with his friends. Unknown to Banji and the family, he buried their only hope for the rainy day. However, Banji's ignorance later gives birth to a business venture which transforms his parents from job seekers to millionaires.

Mai Nasara employs the story of *The Missing Clock* as an exploration of the consciousness, emotions and actions of the character of Banji in a fascinating narrative, distinguished by the simplicity of its themes, ideas, language and style. The author also endorses family cohesion and responsible parenting that would guide children to become imaginative, well motivated, and balanced individuals. The theme of hard work, self-reliance and ingenuity as well as a simple style, unfolds a story that celebrates faith and creativity. The theme of self-reliance which is major in the story is quite timely in the sense that the book is written at the time when the government of Nigeria is putting emphasis on the idea of self employment and Mai Nasara uses the story to stimulate children into thinking in this direction. All these, the author portrays using a well raised characterization in addition to a well developed plot.

Mai Nasara uses characters in the text to achieve the different themes that unfold step by step throughout the text. For example the character of Rashida is used to expound the theme of forgiveness; Rashida is offended by Mrs. Tobe who accuses her falsely of stealing the Bunny clock but still finds it in her heart to forgive her. The theme of hard work is also painted through her character as she plants and pays attention to the *ugu* plant which she eventually draws the interest of the Tobes to as they eventually became farmers of *ugu* after the loss of Mr. Tobe's job. Using the omniscient technique of narration, the text meets the basic

requirements of children's literature: simple and accurate language as well as useful lessons to be learnt by the reader, such as environmental health, the importance of growing food and returning to the earth, the sustainer of human life.

There is a huge imbalance that is observed in the portrayal of male and female characters in the books selected for this study. Male characters tend to be better represented when compared to the females. For example there is disparity in number, titles of books, frequency in appearance, and in the manner of presentation. Moreover, this imbalance can be observed in the areas of content, language and illustrations. Jett-Simpson and Masland, (1993:2) confirm:

Gender bias exists in the content, language and illustrations of a large number of children's books. This bias may be seen in the extent to which a gender is represented as the main character in children's books and how that gender is depicted.

This is exemplified in Mai Nasara's *The Missing Clock*. Despite the number of female characters in the work which is viewed as proportionate to the male, the female is under-represented. Typical of the tradition in a patriarchal society the females have been stereotyped as kitchen helpers, in addition to presenting them in an un-admirable manner. Mrs. Tobe's first appearance on page 13 shows her wearing an apron and standing in front of the cooker in the kitchen. Her next appearance is on page 19 where she is again seen in an apron tidying up the house. This manner of presentation is also a way of defining her role as a cook. Mrs. Tobe is one of the major characters in the book; however, apart from presenting her in this manner she is all through the text not associated with any serious activity. Similarly, Mrs. Ekwensi whose first appearance on page 37 also in the kitchen wearing an apron, is without any serious activity attached to her character. The first appearance of a character gives one an onset impression about her/him, the author's manner of presentation using image illustrations of

Mrs. Tobe and Ekwensi therefore, send stereotypical messages while giving an impression that women's role only revolve around kitchen activities and so occupy a less important role in the society than men. This is perpetuated by the uneven stereotype image created by men as seen in books. To this end Kate Millet (1969:31) demonstrate that "an inequitable social structuring like patriarchy must generate thought patterns and processes that must negate the "inferior" partner of patriarchal organization-woman".

Again the inaccurate stereotype that leads to the denigration of the woman is expanded in *The Missing Clock*. Mai Nasara associates house-helpers with bad habits and mistrust. This illustration is brought to the fore with the accusation Mrs. Tobe places on Rashida over the disappearance of the bunny clock. Mrs. Tobe could not be convinced that Rashida had not stolen the Clock because of her already established mindset about house-girls which pushes her to conclude:

All those house-helpers! You give them an inch and they take a mile! Give them a hand and they grab at your elbow-to pull you down (TMC p25). No thief would think to steal the clock, unless the thief is a house-girl (TMC p.26).

The above derogatory phrase, "All those house-helpers", and the word "thief" used in the description of Rashida especially in the statement 'no thief would think to steal the clock, unless the thief is a house-girl', and the imagery on page 26 'the light-fingered wretch of a girl', bring the reader to consciousness, forcefully and insightfully about the manner in which the female character is presented. Lamenting this social order Alrabaa (1985:10) submits that:

Derogation of the female is the undertone in the many description of her; often females are portrayed as manipulative, fussy do-nothing, as weak, irrational and despicable.

The above is suggestive of writers' persistent attitude of portraying the female in a negative light.

It is for the same reason that Anna Fine(2012:2) opines:

But it is not only an absence of female central characters which is a problem in children's books; it's how the women are represented when they do appear.

Fine's position on the representation of the female in books corresponds with the illustrations found in Mai Nasara's *The Missing Clock* where the female is under-represented in all spheres of endeavour. To demonstrate the uneven set up which the pervasive patterns of a male dominated culture have erected is the presentation of the male in an admirable manner. For example, Banji made his parents millionaires, his ingenuity of planting a thing so that he can have it multiply brought about the idea of cultivating *ugu* plant, after his father was laid off from work (P.22). Banji is considered as bright and boisterous, one who is capable of original thinking and ideas. He is regarded at the end as a hero who saved his family from hunger. Alphonso, the houseboy to Mrs. Ekwensi is portrayed as capable and innovative. He is able to fix gadgets that other people consider to be out of use:

It must be an old broken clock nobody wants anymore he said to himself. Maybe I can fix it and put it to use or even sell it. He was quite good at repairing things. The radio in his room was a piece of refuse someone had thrown away. He had found it and fixed it (TMC p.23).

The clock was the same one Banji buried with the hope of having it multiply so that he could have one in every room and give out some to his friends. But Alphonso who thought that the clock had been thrown away decided to dig it out and fix it for his own use. The author employs the words of Alphonso above thus, "maybe I can fix it and put it to use", and of the narrator "the radio in his room was a piece of refuse someone had thrown away, he found it and fixed it" to construct the character of a boy with ingenuity. Rume is also portrayed as impressive and intelligent. He sold to Mr. Tobe the idea of exporting his vegetables to Europe, America and Canada as illustrated in the following lines:

Apart from local sales of course I don't see why you cannot export timely vegetables from West Africa at a profit to Europe and even beyond to America and Canada (TMC p.78).

Rume further suggests building and maintaining an e-commerce website for him:

Sir, I can build and maintain a fully functional e-commerce website for you, to take orders from wherever on God's good earth, for purchase of *ugu* and other vegetables I know you will be diversifying into (TMC p.78).

With the above suggestions by Rume, Mai Nasara's presentation is an indication of a boy that is intelligent and versatile; his ability to build and maintain a website and the knowledge of exporting produce to places like Europe, America and Canada immediately invokes in the reader the image of an individual who is smart and vast in the area of information technology.

In retrospect, it is clear that almost all the impressive, noble, and exciting things are done by men and boys. While the males are elevated as the characters that matter, the females are reduced to being tokens of male status, an indication of the stereotypical messages that children's books send about the male in relation to the female. This conditions the minds of children in the way they perceive and read the world, thus reinforcing gender images. This reinforcement, Fox (1993:34) opines "...predisposes children not to question social relations". The uses of select adjectives in books are used to describe male and female characters. These adjectives tend to also demonstrate the manner in which the characters are portrayed. Temple (1993), observes that "males tend to be described as fighters, adventurers, and rescuers, while girls tend to be caretakers, mothers, princesses, cooks, and nurturers".

Mai Nasara's portrayal of female and male characters in *The Missing Clock* sends out messages of the kinds of adjectives he ascribes to them either directly or by implication. The female characters are cooks, caretakers, housekeepers, nurturers, passive and dependent. In

some cases, derogatory adjectives are used as in the case of Rashida: “the light fingered wretch of a girl” (TMC p.26). The males are heroes, intelligent, innovative, genius, inquisitive, bright, determined and adventurous. Besides, certain statements in the narrative also describe the males in a more positive manner: “isn’t my Rume also wise and clever!” (p.80), and referring to Banji “clever little boy” (p.18), “you should win a prize for original thinking” (p.46), “my mighty active little boy” (p.21). These kinds of representations send stereotypical messages to boys and girls thereby promoting gender inequality.

In all, Mai Nasara’s *The Missing Clock* gives a realistic portrayal of female reality in a male dominated society. It succeeds in doing this by showing the bias that exists in content, image illustration as well as in language of the book.

The choices children make and what they become in life can be influenced by the stereotypical messages they encounter in the process of socialization. This is so because such messages are found everywhere and because children are quick to absorb all kinds of messages offered to them. This implicitly gives children messages of what their gender roles are, and gives limitations to what they are capable of. Affirming this assertion, Cherland Teya (2007:1) states:

Children are constantly developing and absorbing messages that society throws at them to better understand the world in which they are a part of. They constantly interpret the social messages they receive and try to mold themselves to fit into that norm.

Devor’s (2002:3) assertion illustrates the point further:

Children learn and develop their values and beliefs of their culture through stories and books. When they are

repeatedly given stereotypical messages, their choices of what they want to become or accomplish is limited by these gender stereotypes. The biased views about themselves and those around them prevent children from doing activities that best suits their personalities and capabilities.

Teya and Devor share the view that society and the culture that nurtures children ply a vital role in the kinds of messages that children receive, and are therefore, responsible for the stereotypical messages that children imbibe.

Most Nigerian children literatures have made the females invisible, under- represented them in titles, pictures, and also as central characters. In some of these books, children are exposed to gender socializing messages such as families, peers, and schools which can be communicated overtly and explicitly. They can also be communicated subtly, inadvertently, and unobtrusively through culture-exposure to an interpretation of cultural beliefs about gender. When transmitted through indirect and often subtle “gender messages”, this may affect the way children view one another. Kuo Junmin (2005:2-3) confirms the status quo:

The manner in which genders are represented in children’s literature impacts children’s attitudes and perceptions of gender appropriate behaviour in society. Sexism in literature can be so insidious that it quietly conditions boys and girls to accept the way they ‘see and read the world’, thus reinforcing gender messages.

In further affirmation, Fox M. (1993:3) states:

These stereotypes limit boys’ and girls’ freedom to express themselves and pressure them to behave in ways that are ‘gender appropriate’ rather than ways best suited to their personality.

The above postulations are true of Nigerian children’s literature and shall be examined using Chinua Achebe’s *Chike and the River*.

4.2 *Chike and the River* –Plot Narration

Set in the village of Umuofia in Eastern Nigeria and published in the year 1966, the book tells the story of Chike who is from a poor home. Having lost his father at an early age; he moves to Onitsha to stay with his uncle. Though Chike is happy to be free from waking up early and going to the stream to get water, he becomes emotional and starts to cry as it is time to depart because, he is going to miss his mother and sister. *Chike and the River* is an adventurous story with the plot revolving around Chike's ambition to cross the River Niger in a boat. It is this desire that nearly makes him deviate from the righteous path, for he tries to get money through a magician known as professor Chandus who swindles him thereby, depriving the boy of his three pence. Chike is so desperate to cross the river that he begs his uncle for some money but the man looked so stern that he had to run away. Nevertheless, his wish is fulfilled when he goes to the riverside to wash cars for people and he is rewarded with a shilling. The adventure takes a different turn when Chike fulfills his ambition and he is so enamored by Asaba that he forgets to return to the riverside to catch the last boat to Onitsha at the other side of the river. The author contrives the story interestingly to include a patriotic act by Chike who was sleeping in a lorry that was used for robbery. Chike helps the police in tracking down the three thieves thereby exposing a miserly trader known as Peter Nwana as a thief.

Divided into eighteen chapters and employing the third person narrative, the narrator reliably uses simple language to help the reader construct a picture of every situation and character. In some instances, there is the use of Pidgin English by some characters to help construct situations as real as possible. In addition, there is the use of simple language with the infusion of colloquial words typical of schools in the village setting. Some of the dialogue, passages and descriptions point toward the theme of adventure, determination and curiosity.

Chike is a symbol of bravery, a risk taker, an explorer, ambitious and a fearless boy who turns out a hero. All of his experiences at Onitsha are a mixture of sweet and bitter pills.

The concept of emotion can be viewed as strong feelings for somebody or something. *The Advanced Learners Dictionary* (2002) defines emotion as “strong feeling such as love, fear, or anger, the part of a person’s character that consists of feelings”. Crying generally is also referred to as a way of letting out emotions. To this end, it should be understood that letting out emotions can be done by any individual irrespective of gender, age or race. However, traditional stereotypic roles constructed by society assign emotional displays such as crying to the female since it is a common belief that females are more emotional than males. Chike’s mother urges him not to cry when he became emotional at his moment of departure to join his uncle at Onitsha: “stop crying said his mother, remember you are now a big boy, and big boys don’t cry” (p.6). The statement ‘big boys don’t cry’, gives the reader the impression that, it is normal only for a certain group of persons like Chike’s sisters and mother to cry, giving that they were also in tears at the time of Chike’s departure. Furthermore, expressions in the narrative like ‘Small thing you begin de shake like woman’ (p.53) is also indicative of the belief that only females express fear in an uncomfortable situations. However, phrases such as ‘Chike stood there crying’ and ‘Chike became really afraid’ (p.50) are ironical and debunk the mind set that the males can keep their emotions in check and not express them in the public. Such statements and the impression they convey is premised on the kinds of gender role messages that people receive in the society as highlighted in Wiley John’s (2000:13) article on ‘Gender Stereotypes’: “Traditionally the male stereotypic role is to be assertive, competitive, independent, courageous, career focused and hold his emotions in check”. Eagly et al (2004:40) hold that what maintains this structure is based on the idea that:

Men and women as social beings strive to belong and seek for approval by complying and conforming to the social

and cultural norms within their society. The conformity to social norms not only shapes the pattern, but also maintains the very existence of sex-typed social behavior.

The desire to “belong” and “seek for approval” by way of conforming to social norms as stated above is what makes the male keep his emotions in check and not letting them betray him especially before the female. This is well exemplified by the stereotypical message passed on to *Eze in Eze Goes to School* by his father:

His father had taught him that he must learn to bear his burdens without complaint and that he must never let any woman know when he was suffering (EGS p.8).

Eze was trying to belong to the society he hails as well as seek approval from his father who thought him, by conforming to the norm of not letting his emotions out before the female, and so he bore his burden without complaining. In Emmy Idegwu’s *Ata Igala the Great* for instance, tradition does not permit the Ata to emotionally express himself in public as demonstrated in the following words:

...but for any group that amuses him, the attendants fanning him cover his face with their ‘*utofo*’, hiding his face from the crowd; for traditionally, Ata does not respond to humour or grief in the open (AITG p.9).

The same goes for the Ata who by virtue of being a traditional ruler is constrained from expressing himself publicly as his face is hidden from the crowd by his attendants while responding to humour or grief.

Stereotypes dictate how, by whom and when it is socially acceptable to display an emotion. Chike for instance was given the reason by his mother why he should not cry; in the words ‘big boys don’t cry’, and also because it is against the cultural norm of the people, Eze’s

father makes him understand that his emotions must be put under check, as revealed in the phrase ‘learn to bear his burden’ and not keeping strictly to it can be equated to a taboo with such statements as ‘never let any woman know when he was suffering’. This attitude and instructions inhibit Eze from expressing himself freely: “So Eze apart from fearing that the women and more especially the girls would laugh at him if he complained was trying to be as grown up as a young boy” (p.9). For the Ata of Igala, being a traditional head of the people, the same tradition forbids him to break the norm and so “not to respond to humour or grief in the open”, and to keep this in check “the attendants fanning him cover his face with their ‘*utofo*’”. Therefore, one comfortably agrees with the assertion by Rudman M. (1995:5) that: “These stereotypic messages limit individuals’ freedom to express themselves and pressure them to behave in ways that are ‘gender appropriate’ rather than ways best suited to their personality.”

Girls and boys can be influenced by their peers at school or at home as they socialize. This influence which arises from the gendered messages they also are fed with by parents and society is capable of creating a mindset in them to such an extent that, they are pushed toward engaging in activities that are unacceptable. Chike who was just eleven years of age could not have been financially independent. But the sorts of messages he received from his peers laid the foundation for his cravings to cross the River Niger at all cost: going against his mother’s warning not to go near the river, “do not go near the River Niger, many people get drowned there every year” (p.6), leaving home to the riverside without permission from his uncle, and seeking for money at all cost to fulfill his ambition. The dialogue between Chike and Samuel illustrates the point further:

‘But I have no sixpence, said Chike’

‘What? Said Samuel, a big boy like you has no sixpence. Don’t let people hear it, it is too shameful’ (p.9).

The above response from Samuel “a big boy like you has no six pence” made Chike feel ashamed leading him to lie; “Chike was really ashamed and so he told a lie to cover his shame”. He said: “it’s not that I don’t have money, I have plenty but my uncle keeps it for me” (p.9).

It is a general belief that society’s standard for measuring male ego is his financial standing. This is exemplified in Buchi Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* where Francis’ assumed dignity was humbled because Adah his wife comes back home with a larger pay package than his. This fact bothered and belittled him because society has established that the male should be better off than the female in all ways including financial status. This is the same notion that runs through the psyche of Chike’s peers, that maturity is measured by one’s financial status which obviously is an inheritance from the adults and in agreement with John Wiley (2000:20):

The weight of scientific evidence demonstrates that children learn gender stereotype from adults. As with gender roles, socializing agents- parents, teachers, peers, religious leaders and the media pass along gender stereotype from one generation to the next.

Chike stopped at nothing to see that he achieved his ambition of crossing the river. The sole reason for this is to see himself become at par with his peers by all standards and avoid hearing from his friend Samuel such phrases as “you talk like a small boy” and ‘small boy talk” (p.27) who the narrative describes as “Samuel knew how to act like a grown-up” (p.27). Once Chike began to handle the kind of money he never handled and was finally about to make it to and from the River Niger, he felt fulfilled. In the words of the narrator; “After today he would be able to say to his friends, ‘I too have been to Asaba’. There only remains Lagos” (p. 45) and “Chike felt like a grown man” (p.28). Chike’s experience was driven by an internal need to fit into a structure which he had found among his peers, a structure erected by

patriarchal society.

Furthermore, gender roles are cultural and personal. They determine how males and females should think, speak, dress and interact within the context of society. Learning plays a role in the process of shaping gender roles. These gender schemes are deeply embedded cognitive frameworks regarding what defines masculine and feminine. While various socializing agents teach and reinforce gender roles throughout the life span, parents probably exert the greatest influence, especially on their young offspring and so influence their line of decision making. In *Chike and the River* for example, Ezekiel's decisions and attitude both at home and in school is largely a product of the gendered message which he received from his mother: "his mother said that house-work was only for servants and for girls" which is demonstrated in the narrative "Ezekiel's sisters were asked to wash plates or draw water from the public tap (p.15). This is a great discriminatory practice which society, through parents perpetuate between the sexes thereby, placing the female at a disadvantage. It is believed they do this in response to having been recipients of gender expectations as young children. This makes Ezekiel to develop into a lawless little imp. The idea he got from his mother's stereotyped mindset created a bias mind in Ezekiel, leading him to taking decisions that became detrimental to his personality. In relation to this point, Cherland Teya (2007:1) states that "these messages can stunt the growth of young people's dreams and manipulate their minds to believe that they must act within their 'given place' in the society". It is believed that a child's sense of self concept is a result of the multitude of ideas, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs that she or he is exposed to. The information that surrounds the child and which she or he internalizes comes to the child within the family arena through parent-child interactions, for desired behaviours and parental approval or disapproval.

As children move into the world of school and friends, many of the ideas and beliefs are reinforced by those around them, which was the case with Ezekiel. Because Ezekiel's

mother allowed him to do whatever he liked, “she allowed Ezekiel to do whatever he liked” (p.15) his notion of a twelve year old primary school child that he was changed, to the extent that as a result of the way he behaved, he was hailed by his friends “he was called ‘Tough Boy’ and his friend thought the world of him” (p. 16). From stealing meat from the soup pot, he grew into stealing money from his mother, “when Ezekiel grew up he began to steal sums of money from his mother” (p.15). At school he wrote letters to children in the UK asking for money, camera etc and promising to send Leopard skin in return which he never did (p.16). He lured other boys into this dubious act also and they all fell into trouble “Samuel was given six strokes, and the others nine strokes each” (p.18). Ezekiel’s ordeal affirms Santrock’s (1994:8) assertion that:

Parents attitude towards their children have a strong impact on the child’s developing sense of self esteem. Often parents give messages regarding gender and what is acceptable for each gender. These are so strong that even when they are exposed to different attitudes and experiences they revert to stereotype choices.

Santrock’s assertion corresponds with the objective of this study which states that there is a correspondence between gender stereotype and children’s choices, and what they later become in life.

This chapter examines the correspondence between stereotypical messages and the choices children make as well as the promotion of gender inequality through children’s literature. Using Chinua Achebe’s *Chike and the River* and Mai Nasara’s *The Missing, Clock*, the chapter demonstrates that women are under-represented in content, language and in image illustration in a number of children books as compared to the male. It is also obvious that the stereotypical messages children are fed with by socializing agents affect the choices they make and what they later become in life.

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CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

This research examines the works of four writers whose literary careers have made significant contribution to the growth of children's literature. The study critically foregrounds and interrogates gender stereotypes in children's literature with particular interest on Nigeria. This study demonstrates that gender stereotypes are a part of any given culture which is found every where and aiding gender inequality. It sheds light on the areas in which gender stereotypes exist in Nigerian children's literature while demonstrating the overwhelming influence of culture on the authors of children books, while sending stereotypical messages about gender to boys and girls. These messages are of social and behavioural norms that are considered to be socially "appropriate" for individuals of a specific sex; such messages are in the areas of traditional gender roles and division of labour.

This research demonstrates that there is a correspondence between stereotypical messages and the perceptions as well as the judgments of children. In other words, how genders are portrayed in literature books thus contribute to the image children develop of their own role and that of their gender in society. The concept of gender is viewed as a social construct giving that, differences in the behavior and role of its members are learned. To further explain this stance, this study employs the feminist literary theory which challenges the gender social order, destabilizing what society sees as normal, natural and moral; hence the reason for the feminist deconstruction of gender in the 1980s which questions the dualities of gender and undermining the legitimacy of favouring one group over its opposite. Although this research highlights the imbalance of gender in children's literature books in Nigeria, it also reveals that indeed, there are existing studies on children's literature in other parts of the world which have interrogated the bias that exists in such books. From the selected study texts, the study uncovered the huge bias that are embedded in children's books, which is believed are

consequent upon the culture of the given societies in which they are set. For this reason, the study believes that people do not merely internalize gender role as they grow up but they respond to changing norms in the society. This work adopts a library approach whereby secondary materials from a wide range of sources are used in the study. Such materials include books, journal articles, magazines and unpublished dissertations and the internet, while primary materials include Nzekwu and Crowder's *Eze goes to School* (1963), Eddie Iroh's *Without a Silver Spoon* (1981), Chinua Achebe's *Chike and the River*, and Mai Nasara's *The Missing Clock* (2010)

The research reveals that as a concept gender goes beyond anatomical differences between a male and female; it goes beyond biological features and stretches to the way an individual acts, reasons, feels and reacts in given situations. The analysis of selected texts reveals the imbalances that exist in Nigerian children's books from the 1960s to 2010. The study also reveals the manner in which gender stereotypes exist in language, content and pictures of Nigerian children's literature, showing a gross discrimination in the manner of presentation of males and females. The females are under-represented while the males are presented in admirable light. In addition, the research shows the correspondence between stereotypical messages and the choices children make and what they later become in life.

Studies have shown that guidelines have been made in an effort to eliminate sexist roles in children's books; this is in a bid to encourage a healthier development for boys and girls however, not surprisingly, even after these guidelines were established, gender stereotypes and biases continue to appear in children's books. This evidently shows how deeply rooted stereotypes lie within human culture. Individuals' ideas of femininity and masculinity have undoubtedly seeped so deep into their culture that it seems almost incurable.

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