DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN SWAHILI AND ARABIC PROVERBS: THE IMPLICATIONS OF PROVERBIAL WISDOM IN INSCRIBING FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY

MUMALI HENRY KARAKACHA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN KISWAHILI STUDIES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF KISWAHILI, FACULTY OF ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

AUGUST 2021

DECLARATION

This PhD thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other university.

..... DATE...16/08/2021

MUMALI HENRY KARAKACHA

C80/99089/2015

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University Supervisors.

..... DATE...16-08-2021

DR. OMBOGA ZAJA

..... DATE...16th AUG 2021

PROF. RAYYA TIMAMMY

..... DATE...17th August 2021

PROF. KINEENE WA MUTISO

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my dear parents Wilson Karakacha and Sorofina Nekesa who have always taught me life lessons through proverbs; to my loving wife Sophia Mbembe who has been there for me through thick and thin by offering me the much needed moral support; to my three lovely children Salma Nechesa, Omar Mumali and Firdaus Nambala whose presence is the sole reason for my tireless efforts in whatever that I engage in; and to all those who stand up against the weak and voiceless in society.

May Allah reward you abundantly for the support you have offered me in this world and the hereafter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Allah the Most Gracious the Most Merciful for having granted me the ability to pursue academics to this level. Indeed, this thesis would never have been possible without the expertise and assistance given to me by a number of individuals. The journey has been long and winding; the challenges have been of enormous magnitude; however, through the advice and counsel offered to me by my supervisors; Dr. Zaja, Prof. Rayya and Prof. Kineene Wamutiso, the effort has been fruitful. I would like to thank my supervisors who tirelessly instructed me through the entire PhD program. I would like to convey special thanks to Prof. Kineene Wamutiso, Prof. Rayya and Dr. Zaja for having assisted me with the research materials and also for having been willing to listen and give me a helping hand whenever I called on them.

I credit my success to my family members and friends. I would like to thank my father and mother for their application of proverbs in teaching me life lessons, not forgetting Prof. Ayman of Al'azhar University, Dr. Muhammad Akidah of University of Nairobi and Dr. Muhammad Sheikh Othman of Raf University for all the assistance which they advanced to me towards the understanding of the macro meanings of Arabic proverbs. I acknowledge my relatives and friends who took pride in my endeavour and always gave me the assurance of success.

Last but not least I profoundly acknowledge my wife's efforts for constantly motivating me and being understanding especially on the payment of university fees and the purchase of other research materials. To all those who assisted in the writing of this thesis either directly or indirectly, I would like to offer you my sincere thanks for your timely contribution.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION ..... **ii**
DEDICATION ..... **ii**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **iv**
TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... **v**
ABSTRACT ..... **x**
DEFINITION OF TERMS ..... **xi**

CHAPTER ONE **1**
1.1 INTRODUCTION **1**
1.2 Statement of the Problem 8
1.3 Research Questions 9
1.4 Research Objectives 9
1.5 Rationale of the Study 10
1.6 Scope and Limitations 12
1.7 Literature Review 14
1.7.1 Studies on the Images of Women in Swahili and Arabic Literature 14
1.7.2 The Language Use in Depicting Women in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 19
1.7.3 Studies on Swahili Proverbs 21
1.7.4 Studies on Arabic Proverbs 23
1.7.5 Studies on Masculinity and Femininity 25
1.8 Theoretical Framework 28
1.8.1 Feminist Literary Theory 30
1.9 Research Methodology 34
1.9.1 Data Collection 34
1.9.2 Data Presentation 35
1.9.3 Data Analysis 36

CHAPTER TWO: MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY AS MUTED SCHEMAS IN PROVERB DEFINITIONS **40**
2.1 Introduction 40
2.2 Overt and Covert Functions in Proverb Definitions 41
2.3 Discerning Masculinity and Femininity in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs' Definitions 44

2.3.1 The Inscription of Masculinity and Femininity within the Linguistic and Structural Features of Swahili and Arabic proverbs 52
2.4 Communicative and Behavioural Functions of Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 57
2.4.1 Uncovering Masculinity and Femininity within the Functional Classification of Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 61
2.4.2 Masculinity and Femininity within the Thematic Classifications of Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 63
2.4.3 Stylistic-Structural Classification of Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 65
2.5 The Evocation of Masculine and Feminine Imagery in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 68
2.5.1 Imagery as Foundational Structures of Cultural Inscription 69
2.5.2 Functions of imagery 70
2.6 Conclusions 71

CHAPTER THREE: THE INSCRIPTION OF SILENCE, SUBSERVIENCE AND MARGINALITY IN THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN SWAHILI AND ARABIC PROVERBS 73
3.1 Introduction 73
3.2 The Varied Depictions of Women in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 75
3.2.1 The Inscription of Silence in the Depiction of Women in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 76
3.2.1.1 The Portrayal of Ignorance as a Feminine Trait 77
3.2.1.2 The Depiction of Women as Pleasure Objects 81
3.2.1.3 Passivity as Feminine Trait 88
3.2.2 The Inscription of Subservience in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 94
3.2.2.1 The Conceptualization of Patriarchy and the Inscription of Subordination 95
3.2.2.2 Women's Subordination and the Perceptions of Subservience 97
3.2.2.3 Objectification as Subservience 99
3.2.2.4 Physical Weakness and the Inscription of Subservience 100
3.2.2.5 Women as Home Makers and House Keepers 101
3.2.3 Proverb Usage and the Inscription of Marginality 103
3.2.3.1 Norms and Structures of Interaction as Strategies of Inscribing Marginality 104
3.2.3.2 Care Giving and Mentorship in the Depiction of Women 107
3.2.3.3 Repugnant and Socially Unacceptable Behaviours in the Depiction of Women 110

3.3 Conclusions 112

CHAPTER FOUR: THE INSCRIPTION OF PERCEPTIONS OF FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY IN SWAHILI AND ARABIC PROVERBS 115

4.1 Introduction 115

4.2 The Inscription of the Perceptions of Femininity in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 116

4.2.1 Women, Parenthood and Femininity 117

4.2.1.1 Marriage, Male Agency and Femininity 119

4.2.1.2 Conception, Delivery of Children and the Inscription of Femininity 124

4.2.1.3 The Nurturing and Socialization of Children and the Ethos of Feminine Inscriptions 141

4.2.1.4 Children's Education and Knowledge Schemas as Criteria for Inscription of Femininity 132

4.2.1.5 Role Modelling Children and the Inscription of Femininity 134

4.2.2 Women, Home-Keeping and Femininity 136

4.2.3 Femininity in Terms of Objectifying Women as Commodities or Vessels 138

4.2.4 Femininity as Denigrating Women in Terms of Physical or Moral Weakness 140

4.2.5 Women, Education and Femininity 146

4.2.6 Women, Labour and Femininity 148

4.2.7 Women, Leadership and Femininity 151

4.3 The Inscription of the Perceptions of Masculinity in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs 156

4.3.1 Men as Leaders and Family Heads in Inscribing Masculinity 156

4.3.2 Men's Physical and Moral Strength as Basis for Inscribing Masculinity 158

4.3.3 Men, Authority, Command and Masculinity 163

4.3.4 Men's Use of Violence in Asserting their Power 166

4.3.5 Men, Freedom of Choice and Masculinity 167

4.3.6 Men, Knowledge, Wisdom and Masculinity 169

4.3.7 Men, Resource Controllers, Means of Production and Masculinity 170

4.4 Conclusions 170

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CIRCULATION OF CULTURAL VALUES IN THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN SWAHILI AND ARABIC PROVERBS 173

5.1 Introduction 173

5.2 The Cultural Values Circulated in the Depiction of Women in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs....173
5.2.1 The Circulation of Sociologically Informed Cultural Values....174
5.2.1.1 Marriage as the Basis for the Circulation of Cultural Values....175
5.2.1.2 Motherhood and the Circulation of Cultural Values....180
5.2.1.3 Polygamy and the Circulation of Cultural Values....182
5.2.1.4 Family Relations and the Circulation of Cultural Values....183
5.2.2 The Circulation of the Biologically Informed Cultural Values....184
5.2.2.1 Reproduction and the Circulation of Cultural Values....185
5.2.2.2 Nurturing and the Circulation of Cultural Values....186
5.2.2.3 Growth and Development and the Circulation of Cultural Values....187
5.2.3 The Circulation of the Morality Informed Cultural Values....188
5.2.3.1 Chastity in the Circulation of Cultural Values....188
5.2.3.2 Women, Honour, Respect and the Circulation of Cultural Values....190
5.2.3.3 Women, Integrity and the Circulation of Cultural Values....191
5.2.4 The Circulation of Cultural Values on the Status of Women....192
5.2.4.1 Women, the Food Imagery and the Circulation of Cultural Values....192
5.2.4.2 Women, the Property Imagery and the Circulation of Cultural Values....193
5.2.4.3 Women the Donkey, Chicken, Ant, House Fly Metaphors and the Circulation of Cultural Values....194
5.2.5 Ornamentation and the Circulation of Cultural Values....195
5.2.5.1 Women, Objects of Adoration and the Circulation of Cultural Values....196
5.2.5.2 Women, Clothing, Beauty and the Circulation of Cultural Values....196
5.2.6 Societal Norms and the Circulation of Cultural Values....197
5.2.6.1 Women, Inequality and the Circulation of Cultural Values....198
5.2.6.2 Women, Companionship and the Circulation of Cultural Values....199
5.2.7 Women, Mentorship and the Circulation of Cultural Values....200
5.3 Conclusions....201

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS....203
6.1 Introduction....203
6.2 Summary of Study's Findings....203
6.3 Conclusions....206

6.4. Recommendations 214

BIBLIOGRAPHY 215

APPENDICES 231

APPENDIX I: One hundred Swahili proverbs which talk about women 231

APPENDIX II: One hundred Arabic proverbs which talk about women 237

ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs that seeks to understand how and in what ways proverbs as realities of folklore specifically and orature generally, are implicated in the framing of feminine and masculine identities, inscribing positive and negative attributes on the basis of gender framing and ultimately demonstrate how proverbs generally enable the circulation of cultural values. The study is premised on selected tenets of the feminist literary theory so as to enable, on the one hand the achievement of the study objectives and on the other hand facilitate the exploration of the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs; the investigation of the ways in which the Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity as well as the determination of the cultural values that the depictions of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs enable to circulate in the respective societies. This study is thus based on three tenets of the feminist literary theory namely: the postulation that foregrounds identification with female characters, the re-evaluation and counter-reading of the hushed functions of proverbs in the world in which they are utilized as well as mainstreaming the centrality of gender binary in gender discourses. These tenets are applied in the uncovering and analysis of the feminine attributes and nuances embedded in Swahili and Arabic proverbs thus enabling questioning whether Swahili and Arab societies have unquestioningly privileged one gender over the other. In order to fruitfully explore these study objectives, a detailed attempt was made to define paremiology and proverbs by providing varied definitions of these terminologies in terms of what they mean as well as what they entail structurally, thematically and functionally. The analyses of the selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs were undertaken variously so as to unravel the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality of women in the Swahili and Arab societies. An examination that entailed the de-codification of the metaphors, imageries, similes and the parallels that have been used in the formulation of the selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs that was geared towards the determination of the inscriptions of perceptions of femininity and masculinity as discerned both in the formulation and the use of those proverbs was undertaken. The analyses were further undertaken so as to determine the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in these societies. Overall, this study concludes that the Swahili and Arabic proverbs subtly inscribe silence, subservience and marginality as feminine attributes; they circulate negative perceptions of femininity; they have a very strong patriarchal framing thus circulating positive perceptions and attributes of masculinity, consequently the cultural values circulated through proverb formulation and usage in Swahili and Arab societies are unequal and discriminatory.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Arabic Language: this is a central semitic language spoken in the Middle East and North Africa.It has various dialects found in different regions of the world. In this study the Arabic language used is of Egyptian dialect.

Arabic proverbs: these are proverbs present in Arabic language. They were used interchangeably with the Arabic proverbs as used in Egypt.

Culture: this refers to social behaviour patterns, beliefs, arts, institutions and ways of doing things which are characteristics of a particular group of people.

Depict: to describe or portray someone using words or pictures leading to the overall representation of what is seen or perceived.

Depiction: the way that something is represented or portrayed. In our case the ways in which women are portrayed in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

Femininity: a set of attributes, behaviours and roles generally associated with girls and women. It is partially socially constructed, being made up of both socially-defined and biologically-created factors.

Feminism: this refers to social movements that seek to change the traditional role and image of women to end sexism and attain for women equal rights with men.

Feminist: this is a person who identifies with principles and aims of the broad feminist movement which works for women to have equal rights with men.

Gender: this refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men which include norms, roles and relationships between groups of women and men. These characteristics are flexible and vary from society to society. In other words, gender is about femininity and masculinity in this study.

Gender oppression: it is the systematic manner in which certain groups are privileged or disadvantaged because of their gender. In our case it refers to the undervaluing of what is seen as feminine.

Gender subordination: this is a social system in which people are socialized to accepting sets of beliefs which hold that women are inferior to men. The power relations attached to these ideas give men more power than women in society.

Image: a picture in the mind or an idea of how someone or something is. The way that something or someone is thought of by other people.

Masculinity: possession of qualities traditionally associated with boys and men. It is also known as manliness.

Oppression: a historical and structurally institutionalized system of rights where one group benefits at the expense of another.

Patriarchy: this is a social system which is based on beliefs of men's superiority and which gives men a major decision making power.

Paremiology: this is the study of proverbs from a wide range of fields such as culture, folklore, history, literature, sociology, anthropology, art, communication, philology, psychology and religion. In our case it is about the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

Proverb: a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, that is distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it.

Sage: the characteristic of being wise, discerning, judicious and knowledgeable especially as the result of a lot of accumulated experience.

Socialization: this means that people are taught to accept and perform the roles and functions that the society gives to them. Men and women are socialized into accepting different gender roles from birth.

Stereotypes: stereotyping refers to prejudices and fears about certain social groupings usually seen as inferior to the dominant group. Individuals are judged according to their group identity.

Swahili Language: this is Bantu Language spoken mainly in East Coast of Africa. The Swahili language used in this study is the Standard Kiswahili.

Swahili People: these are a Bantu Ethnic group inhabiting East Africa. In this study, Swahili people refers to Swahili speaking people residing at the East Africa coast specifically Kenya and Tanzania.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A proverb is defined as a brief statement full of hidden meaning, accepted and used by a community as an expression of truth or wisdom (Miruka, 1994). Finnegan (1994), defines a proverb as a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt and is distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it. The Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe has said that proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten (Achebe, 2006). An interrogation of the various definitions by the authors cited above and others would seem to suggest that a proverb is defined in terms of its structure, form and function. This is actually what underpins Kerschen's (2012), assertions when he notes that proverbs are the best indicators of attitudes and beliefs if one wants to explore the historical image of women in oral traditions. The functional dimensions of defining a proverb as suggested by Kerschen are in a sense open ended and would therefore seem to include the fact that proverbs of all societies are deployed in subtle ways to provide not just images and meanings but also underpin commentary on the images presented including images of women (and men, children, ethnic groups, animals and so on). They also canvass social relations such as the relationship between and among women as a social category on the one hand, and between women and men on the other hand. Besides social relations, there are myriad proverbs in virtually all societies that show other subtle relations between society and its environment, its historical experiences and even its future aspirations. It is safe to argue that proverbs are logically a people's repository of wisdom and philosophy of life, just as Oluwole (1997), asserts. It can be argued further that within the varied definitions of proverbs, there are many muted functions that are performed by proverbs but are only discernible through critical interrogations of proverbs such as; proverbs functioning as organizing principles of cultural gender roles and as strategies of cultural enculturation. This muted function of cultural enculturation is what this study seeks to explore so as to understand how proverbs in Swahili and Arabic societies are deployed to depict women in certain dimensions and thereby inscribe preferred patriarchal trajectories.

In view of the assertions above, it is worth noting that since proverbs are closely linked with cultures, then it is quite in order to bring into perspective the definition of proverbs to accord with the cultural contexts of their utilization. It is the contention of Hirsch et al (2002), that proverbs

reflect the accumulated wisdom, prejudices and superstitions of the human race. This means that as far as the definitions of a proverb are concerned, they are often based on wisdom which originates from human experience, interactions with social phenomenon, enactment of folklore and the observation of general truth. Since proverbs are a reflection of the wisdom of the wise people in the society, it therefore follows that, they mirror the cultural norms, beliefs and values of life of the culture or society they come from. Proverbs are a true reflection of cultural and social beliefs of a society in all aspects including beliefs that may be related to gender or that are gender influenced; consequently, any examination of proverbs in a particular language or in a particular culture can facilitate an informed understanding of the gender perceptions in that culture. It is expected that this study on the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs will help initiate an informed and critically nuanced better understanding of the ways women are depicted through the accumulated wisdom of Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

The study of proverbs, also known as paremiology, is a multi-dimensional epistemological approach that interrogates proverbs from diverse points of view drawing on such fields as culture, folklore, history, literature, sociology, anthropology, art, communication, philology, psychology and religion (Mieder, 2004). The consequences of these diverse approaches to proverb study are the presentation of a realization that proverbs constitute part of the genres of oral literature just like riddles, oral poetry and narratives. Schipper (1991:1), has described proverbs as '…short pithy sayings, ingenuously embodying an admitted truth or common belief". She further adds that proverbs have three characteristics: concise artistic fixed form, evaluative and conservative function in society and authoritative validity. Two of these characteristics are of importance in this study. The first is that they have an evaluative and conservative function. Their conservative nature qualifies them as good resources that can be used to explore the depiction of gender, interrogate strategies of gender construction and evaluate gender inscriptions of femininity and masculinity. The other important feature is that proverbs are authoritative in nature. This makes them pass as unquestionable ideology, community world view and wisdom. Since they are usually construed to have been constructed by sage experts in societal issues such as the wise men and women of old, their representation of society makes their truth value incontestable.

Ordinarily, proverbs present an invasive yet uncritical treasure trough of wisdom in many African literary cultures that project an "acceptable" view, that men view culture and society as a whole as

male, and therefore subtly persuade those it discriminates against to acquiesce to this view. This is understandable, particularly in sage wisdom given that there are sayings and proverbs that support this view, for instance, there are unquestioned sayings in Kiswahili like "***kufa kiume***, ***simama kiume***, ***jikaze kiume***" (die like a man, stand like a man, endure like a man) which subtly inscribe man as a norm, as the standard, a projection that ingeniously presents a philosophical outlook of an "accepted" worldview, consequently presenting a view that there is no discernible difference or conflict between what a man is about and how the world is supposed to understand the same.

Where women use these pieces of sage wisdom couched in sayings, aphorisms and proverbs, they unwittingly also view the world from masculine eyes, which is a sad but unfortunate fact. The enablement of the usage of these sayings and proverbs generally lies in their subtlety of inscription, that in virtually all instances, proverbs do not appear overtly sexist. Within this covert rather than overt construction, it is easy enough to point out the incongruity of women using women-debasing proverbs, yet it is a definitely more onerous task to try and explain why a woman would use a saying or proverb that may be a reflection of gender inequality. One aspect of language and power as proposed by Van Dijk (1993), is that it is possible for power to have joint-production where a dominated group is persuaded to believe that dominance is natural and legitimate. The genre of proverbs can facilitate this joint-production as people accept the truth value communicated in the proverbs. Since proverbs are words of wisdom which are carried from generation to generation; hence they transmit and reflect the accumulated wisdom, which is generally agreed and adhered to without question because its origin can be traced back to the wise old people of the society. Furthermore, in the context of gender and language relationships, proverbs acquire great significance because they are in tandem with the traditional power relationships between genders.

Fasiku (2006:51), suggests that proverbs serve as "a powerful rhetorical device for the shaping of moral consciousness, opinions, and beliefs." In the light of Fasiku's assertion, proverbs can also be said to construct gender besides being tools of gender maintenance. For instance, in the usage of Ekegusii proverbs, as asserted by Bosire-Ogechi (2006:123), an expression such as '***buna abakoro batebete***' meaning 'as the elders said/as the wise old people said', something equivalent to Kiswahili "***kama wasemavyo wahenga***" is used to credit them with authority. Such an expression also allows the proverbs to be viewed as society's sage wisdom rather than a single

person's statement. This construction and view of proverbs allows people to have a sense of ownership of the proverbs regardless of the representations that they portray. If a particular gender is represented negatively or in subjugation, they are likely to accept that depiction due to the authoritative nature of the proverbs.

In order to uncover the underlying truths embedded in sage wisdom, critical questions must be asked; in what ways and by what strategies does sage wisdom inscribe male as the norm and therefore enable humanity to be viewed as masculine? On the one hand, what male and female (masculinity and femininity) have come to mean in contemporary African and Arab societies in spite of changing times and circumstances, lies partly in sage subtle inscriptions of proverbs. The changing roles and impressions of women in African and Arab societies are quite visible in what is read in literary productions and in what is being written in non-literary discourses. Proverbs, as we have argued earlier constitute a literary genre; therefore, literature both reflects and helps to create societal or community reality. It is through their circulation and by extension their preservation in works of art that we come to know what types of images, types of stereotypes and archetypes they enable to circulate and; in turn, know the images that influence our view of reality and even our behaviour.

Many societies of the world (the Swahili and Arab societies included) use proverbs in order to correct, socialise or educate their members. This view is in tandem with Dundes' (1980), assertion in his work *Interpreting Folklore*, where he discusses the importance of folklore in the internal construction of a society as they "reflect or refract" the culture of a people. He adds that any form of oral literature especially proverbs (my own addition); as a non-material component of folklore becomes an embodiment and manifestation of the beliefs, desires, wishes, world view and fears of the people in which it occurs. Inherent in all these teachings are both overt and covert inscriptions of norms, philosophies and worldviews critical for organizing and functioning of society.

Proverbs are considered to be a type of wisdom that relates to everyday life, which also plays a decisive role in solving problems encountered by different members of the societies of the world. This is because people are able to take rational advice contained in those proverbs. This may explain why many researchers have undertaken studies that sought to compare proverbs of different cultures/languages to gauge societal or cultural attitudes towards women. For instance, Hussein (2009), compared the representation of women in sample proverbs from Ethiopia, Sudan

and Kenya, and found a synchronic prevalence of the sexist proverbs which show that there are intercultural similarities in the way women are treated, and that there are simultaneity and connectivity in the patriarchal world view in the countries in question which serve as ideological weapons used to persuade the public of the assumed weaknesses, fragility, and powerlessness of women.

Perhaps the most prominent and extensive research on the representation of women in proverbs is that of Schipper's (2004), *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet; Women in Proverbs from around the world.* Schipper argues that proverbial messages are an excellent yard stick for finding out the extent to which people continue to accept particular ideas about women. Like Hussein (2009), Schipper also discovered more similarities than differences in thousands of proverbs about women from across the world. Many authors explicitly or implicitly argue that most of the proverbs with derogatory messages have originated from men to express their jealousy and fear of women, and to maintain that women have seldom originated proverbs since men have historically dominated literature and society (for example Thorburn, 1978; Schipper, 1991, 2004; Granborn-Herranen, 2010 and Kerschen, 2012 as cited in Sanauddin, 2015). Whether the origin of proverbs is the preserve of men is still an open ended debate, however, what is clear is the fact that, the proverbs are a true reflection of cultural and social beliefs of a society in all aspects including gender. Put in another way this brings to mind the issues of masculinity and femininity which are at the core of this study, which interrogates how the Swahili and Arabs use proverbs to inscribe and reinforce the perceptions of masculinity and femininity and their attendant values and attributes.

Women image studies have preoccupied many scholars from all fields of social inquiry such as, images of women in traditional songs, riddles, poetry, prose, drama, music, cinema, advertisements, dance, pornography, the list is endless. Such studies have interrogated image ownership in terms of whose images are canvassed in specific studies—images as presented by women themselves or images of women as presented by men? In short, the diversity of images studies in the social sciences presents a plethora of points of convergence and divergence. It is plausible, therefore, to argue that from these studies, several factors have been singled out as having played a leading role in assigning women the images they have in many societies in the world. Factors such as patriarchy (Engels, 1844), cultural attitudes (Mugo, 1975) and education

(Riria, 1984), have been highlighted as having contributed to the formulation of negative images of women that many societies have.

In many societies, it has been observed that, women occupy lower status as compared to their male counterparts (Millet 1969; Emecheta 1977; and Figes 1986). This, it is argued, has been perpetuated through oral art forms; and in this instance, proverbs of particular groups of people have specifically been pointed out. There are varied studies that have been conducted on the images of women using proverbs, for instance, Webster (1982), in a study of Moroccan proverbs, has shown that not only are women held to be inferior to men, but they become progressively more so with the passage of time. Han (2001), lists a number of Korean proverbs which limit women's activities to the household, besides associating women with misfortune and bad luck. Hussein (2005), in a series of research studies on representation of women in proverbs of Eastern Africa notes that, African oral traditions depict women in general as foolish, weak, jealous, evil, unfaithful, dependent, frivolous and seductive. A number of studies from different countries also found that proverbs consistently depict the boy child in privileged positions while girls, on the other hand, are looked down upon and are sometimes considered a burden to society (Kiyimba, 2006; Fakoya 2007; Balogum 2010 and Ncube & Moyo 2011). It is evident from these studies that the way women are viewed is at variance in comparison to that of their male counterparts which brings to the fore the issue of femininity and masculinity.

Each society brings up its people to think, act and behave as male or female in order to maintain social and sexual identity for the prudent organization of the society. This, according to Nibafasha (2013), is actualized through the process of socialization whereby the society endeavours to build unchangeable and predictable attitudes and behaviours in order to create cohesion between men and women. In order to achieve this objective, society constructs various attributes imbued with nuances of masculinity and femininity and then respectively attributes them to men and women through subtle cultural circulation which is transmitted from generation to generation. It is prudent, therefore, to argue that an interrogation of proverbs both as an art form and as a cultural reality does actually bring to focus both converging and divergent issues of masculinity and femininity. Okot (1994), contends that masculinity refers to the quality, state and degree of being masculine; whereas femininity refers to the qualities designated by society as feminine. Each culture has its own fundamentals of what constitutes an ideal man and an ideal woman. To further cement that

notion of an ideal man and an ideal woman, each society sets up accepted behaviours to which men and women are expected to conform to. However, it is worth noting that there are perceptions of what constitutes maleness and femaleness that are viewed as dominant, privileged and natural that form what is taken as the norm as far as masculinity and femininity are concerned. Therefore, it is not uncommon for boys and girls to be socialized in ways that meet the set standard definitions of masculinity and femininity as prescribed by a society.

In a nut shell, being masculine or feminine means to essentialy conform to socially set up forms of maleness or femaleness. It is safe, therefore, to argue that masculinity and femininity are not only culturally and socially constructed but are reflected in pieces of art and folklore of a people, especially the proverbs. In view of these theoretical considerations, it is plausible to assert that the study of the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs has in several senses helped initiate an enhanced and logically canvassed understanding of how such depictions inscribe and reinforce the perceptions of masculinity and femininity and their attendant values and attributes. This is because every society whether consciously or otherwise, conforms and responds to organizational attributes and thus functions or fails to function according to those attributes. Consequently, the Swahili and Arabs use proverbs in their day to day lives to point out facts where there is an anomaly so as to restructure things and to prompt the deviant back to normality. In addition, Swahili and Arabic proverbs are used to warn, caution, advise, lampoon, console and encourage the different members in the Swahili and Arab societies. Furthermore, the Swahili and Arab societies have relied on the differences of masculinity and femininity to organize the members of their societies as it is evident through the analysis of the selected proverbs of this study.

In view of the works cited so far, on the gender issues and the position of women against their male counter parts in different societies of the world; it is evident that women have been depicted negatively with adjectives such as foolish, weak, jealous, evil, unfaithful, dependent, frivolous, and seductive, amongst others being attributed to them. Other studies carried out on the images of women have dwelt on the images of women as depicted in oral literature, use of a sexist language and proverbs. Ndungo (1998), for instance, studied the images of women from three perspectives namely; as an economic dependent, a wife and a mother. Schipper (2004), argues that proverbial messages are an excellent yardstick for finding out the extent to which people continue to accept

particular ideas about women. Ahmad (2005), on the other hand studied the educational and social values expressed by proverbs in Sudan and England. It is the contention of this study that, the depiction of women in proverbs in the studies available hitherto has presented women in grossly negative depictions, which strip women of any economic, social or human positive values. Equally, these depictions tend to frame women in images that reinforce negative depictions. It is in view of this, that this study undertook a re-examination of the whole idea about women imagery in literature and folklore generally, specifically focusing on proverbs.

This study is, therefore, geared towards examining the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, so as to explore in what ways such depictions inscribe and reinforce the concepts of masculinity and femininity and their attendant values and attributes. The study is aimed at explicating ways in which women are depicted in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. The study further investigates the role proverbs play in constructing perceptions, meanings and social nuances of femininity and masculinity and ultimately what role they play generally in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. It is arguable that by examining the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, it is possible to demonstrate the implication of proverbs in inscribing femininity and masculinity and thus underpin the consciousness or otherwise of the enculturation of marginality, silence and subservience subtly embedded in proverbs. The study sets out to demonstrate that there are Swahili and Arabic proverbs that appear to elevate a man, which ingeniously means that the reverse of elevation of male attributes essentially means the debasement of women attributes, where it marginalizes a woman it mainstreams a man and where it silences a woman it gives a voice to the man; as well as the evaluation of the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in the respective societies. The study analyses selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs with the view of highlighting the way women are depicted in those proverbs.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study is an examination of the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs that seeks to explore how and in what ways such depictions inscribe concepts of masculinity and femininity. It further investigates what role the depictions play in the formation of perceptions of the societal positioning of women and men generally and in particular the inscription of the concepts of femininity and masculinity. The overarching research aim is to interrogate what various proverbs

inscribe in terms of positive or negative attributes as ascribed to either pro-male or pro-female proverbs. This study avers from the onset that when proverbs foreground traits and certain characteristics assigned either to men or women, they must help us to understand what cultural values they inscribe in their given societies. The foregrounding of positive or aggressive elements of "manhood" on one hand, or the ascription of elements of passivity and negative attributes of "womanhood" in proverbs on the other hand cannot be seen as being insulated from advancing certain schemas of male or female persuasion, hence the implication of proverbs in inscribing femininity and masculinity. In order to achieve this broad research aim, this study is mainly based on three tenets of the feminist literary theory that is; the identification with female characters, the re-evaluation of proverbs in the world in which they are utilized as well as gender binary. These tenets are applied in the analysis of the female attributes and nuances in Swahili and Arabic proverbs that seeks to question whether Swahili and Arab societies have unquestioningly privileged one gender over the other. In a sense this study is a counter reading of traditional assumptions of the "maleness" and "femaleness" of proverbs in these societies. Thus, a feminist literary theory enables an examination of how proverbs inscribe patriarchal and matriarchal attitudes or undercut them in the circulation of cultural values. In essence, there is need to examine proverbs so as to find possible ways in which overt patriarchal privileging can be resisted and muted matriarchal interests mainstreamed in literary discourses.

1.3 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How are the attributes of silence, subservience and marginality inscribed in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs?
2. In what ways do the Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity?
3. What cultural values do the depictions of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs enable to circulate in the respective societies?

1.4 Research Objectives

In view of the research problem stated, this study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Demonstrate the existence of covert inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs,
2. Investigate the ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the respective societies,
3. Determine the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in the respective societies.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

The pervasive view that is prevalent in many studies of Swahili and Arabic proverbs hitherto, gravitates towards generalized conclusions that, proverbs summarize everyday experiences and common observations in a crisp and symbolic way. A number of studies have focused on the origins of proverbs and conclude that they have been produced and used for millennia and passed as expressions of wisdom and truth from generation to generation. Scholars who have been interested in this language phenomenon have examined proverbs from various points of view. There are those who have been devoted to collecting and classifying the proverbs, while others have focused on questions concerning the definitions, forms, structures, styles, content, functions, meaning and value of proverbs (see Mieder, 2004: xii). Yet, in spite of these widespread interests in proverb studies, there is a major concern that arises every now and then, namely; in what ways do proverbs inscribe significant cultural values, norms and worldviews? Given that proverbs are still instrumental in multifarious communicative functions, they are centrally implicated in inscribing societal perceptions of their worlds, their organizations as well as their perceptions of maleness and/or femaleness, consequently enabling the circulation of concepts of masculinity and femininity. This research is thus rationalized on the understanding that there is need for a critical discussion and a comprehensive interrogation of the ways and strategies through which proverbs inscribe and ascribe values, notably masculinity and femininity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. Indeed, there are many studies of proverbs that have dealt with various critical notions such as defining proverbs, main features of proverbs, origins of proverbs; however, there is no evidence that the phenomenon of cultural inscription, notably the inscription of masculinity and femininity through proverbs has been carried out in Swahili and Arabic languages.

The role of proverbs as a vehicle of cultural transmission, which has also occupied a central position in proverb studies has been tilted towards a familiar orientation, namely that women have been accorded negative images (Lakoff 1973, Mugo 1975, Chesaina 1994, Kabira 1994, Ndungo 1998, Sanauddin 2015). These studies' findings portend familiar conclusions where women are depicted as idlers, gossipers, cowards, fools; that they are sources of bad luck and weaklings, without venturing into questioning what cultural perceptions these attributes inscribe in the given societies. This study is, therefore, necessary so as to enable a re-evaluation of the depiction of women in proverbs that not only goes beyond the images highlighted in these studies hitherto, but also tries and demonstrates how proverbs are subtly involved in the inscriptions of masculinity and femininity. It is further geared towards investigating whether the perceptions of femininity and masculinity are overtly or covertly expressed in these languages namely Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

Theoretically, this study is predicated on a feminist literary theory because of the fact that, this theory has several tenets that are amenable to a re-evaluation of gender nuances embedded in proverb studies. This study is thus based on three tenets of the feminist literary theory namely; the postulation that foregrounds identification with female characters, the re-evaluation and counter-reading of the hushed functions of proverbs in the world in which they are utilized as well as mainstreaming the centrality of gender binary in gender discourses. This approach is fundamentally different from many paremiological procedures adopted previously. Furthermore, this study is persuaded that a feminist literary theory is both appropriate and useful in determining the role of proverbs in the construction of precepts of femininity and masculinity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. The choice of Swahili and Arabic proverbs which talk about women for the study, is informed by the fact that the two languages offer a wider scope of proverbs in which women and/or women attributes are depicted. This study's choice of the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs offers an opportunity to compare the depictions of women in the proverbs of two languages of two societies on the African continent. Such a comparison is crucial in analysing both the convergence and divergence of the depictions of women in the two languages and societies under study. This comparison is acquiescent to the argument advanced by Christian (1987), in the assertion that even though the experiences of Black women in the US or Britain may have much in common with the experiences of women in Africa, the middle East or Asia, however, an element of shared experience is not the same thing as saying that all women are treated or

perceived in a similar way in all those places. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Swahili language has had a lot of contact with Arabic language leading to more discernible convergent aspects of culture and cultural processes than divergent cultural and language aspects. Since proverbs are words of wisdom carried from one generation to the next, there is valid and justifiable need to study the depiction of women in the proverbs of the two languages given that initial observations of proverbs lined up for this study have tended to suggest that there are countless areas of discernible convergence than divergence between these two languages and their cultures.

Overall, it is important to note that though the geographical locus of the two languages is vast, there is an uncanny similarity that the oral traditions of proverbs of both languages and cultures provide intriguing insights which portend a commonality of shared sisterhood/womanhood in which women tend to endure similar peripheralization. It is prudent, therefore, to affirm from the onset that this study offers an opportunity for a critical examination of the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, so as to explore the ways in which such depictions inscribe and reinforce the concepts of masculinity and femininity and their attendant values and attributes.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study was majorly concerned with the examination of the depictions of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. The study investigated the ways in which proverbs inscribe significant cultural values, norms and world views. This investigation was informed by the fact that proverbs form an integral component of language whose role in inscribing societal perceptions of their worlds and organizations cannot be relegated to the periphery; especially their perceptions of maleness and/or femaleness, which enable the circulation of concepts of masculinity and femininity. It is worth noting that this study's scope of the depiction of women was limited to the way women are depicted in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. Furthermore, this study did not engage in the interrogation of the notions of the nature of proverbs; especially-their definition, main features, origins, functions as well as their application by different societies globally. This is due to the fact that these issues have not only been tackled by a number of researchers in earlier studies but also because they didn't form part of the study's objectives.

The Swahili proverbs were collected from sources authored by East African researchers specifically based in Kenya and Tanzania; where Swahili language is used as a national and official

language respectively. The choice of the works by these researchers was informed by the fact that not only are they some of the most recent publications in the field of paremiography but also because they have a large number of proverbs which offer a treasure trough of data necessary for the study of the depiction of women in Swahili proverbs. This study also made use of Arabic proverbs as used in Egypt. The reason why the study made use of Arabic proverbs as used in Egypt is three fold; at the heart of this choice was the fact that the Arab society is quite diverse and Arabic proverbs which are in use in one Arab country are not necessarily similar to those being used in the other Arab countries. Secondly, the Arab world is considered as the birth place of the most important civilizations like the Egyptian Pharaohs which was established in 3100 B.C (Abu Sarhan, 2011). This offers a rich culture which is reflected in their proverbs. Last but not least, Egypt as stated in Akidah (2012), is not only a majority Arabic speaking country in the world but is also considered as a pioneer in championing women's rights in the Arab world that acted as a springboard for other countries in the region to follow suite; hence the need to study the proverbs which talk about women so as to explore the ways in which such depictions inscribe and reinforce the concepts of masculinity and femininity and their attendant values and attributes.

This study in its current form, therefore, explores, categorizes, describes and explicates the types of depictions of women present in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. The depictions are further examined with a view of exploring how such depictions inscribe the attributes of silence, subservience and marginality; as well as their positive or negative portrayals. The study, as presented, is geared towards the investigation of the role which proverbs play in inscribing perceptions of femininity and masculinity in Swahili and Arab cultures. Furthermore, this study evaluated the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in the respective societies. This study is based on an examination of one hundred Swahili proverbs as well as one hundred Arabic proverbs from secondary sources. The Swahili proverbs were collected from five main sources: Ndungo (1998), Wamutiso (2005), Mkota's (2009) *Kamusi ya Methali za Kiswahili Maana na Matumizi*, Wamitila's (2015) *Kamusi ya Methali za Kiswahili* and Ndalu and King'ei's (2016) *Kamusi ya Methali.* The Arabic proverbs as used in Egypt, on the other hand, were selected from six main books; Hanki (1897), Green (1909), Singer (1913), Elder (1927), Burckhardt's (1972) *Arabic proverbs* and Bayumi's (2004) *A Dictionary of Arabic proverbs*. Due to differences between the source languages and the target language (English), the material is

presented in both the source and the target languages with a free translation being provided to give the meaning intended in the original text. The Arabic proverbs are accompanied by a transliteration to help non-Arabic speakers to read the selected proverbs. Theoretically, this study is predicated on a feminist literary theory because of the fact that, this theory has several tenets that are amenable to a re-evaluation of gender nuances embedded in proverb studies.

1.7 Literature Review

The literature review undertaken in this section adopted a thematic approach focusing on five broad areas, namely; scholarly works that have engaged in debates about images of women in literature generally and in Kiswahili and Arabic literature in particular, with special attention paid to the images of women in proverbs, scholarly works in language use and the depiction of women, studies in Swahili and Arabic proverbs particularly those that have a bias towards feminist scholarship, studies in Swahili and Arabic proverbs notably the place of proverbs in acculturation and the studies on masculinity and femininity with special reference to Swahili and Arab societies.

1.7.1 Studies on the Images of Women in Swahili and Arabic Literature

One of the most pervasive perspectives in the image studies of women in literature and the arts, has been predicated on biological/sexual analogy as the determinant of social gender relations. Proponents of this perspective assert that men and women's roles and positions in society are predetermined by their biological categorizations. This biological/sexual analogy refers primarily to the idea that males' "superior" physical strength and the prolonged nurturing role of women in the bearing of children, are metaphors for every human action. Yet as Ellmann (1968), affirms, these facts have no apparent bearing in the determination and ascription of male and female positions and roles relative to their biological/sexual categorization. Ellmann argues that it is simplistic to ascribe superior roles and positions to men on the basis of their physical strength while ascribing inferior roles for women on the basis of their biological functions, namely childbearing and the subsequent child nurturing responsibilities. The import of Ellmann's assertions is that such views derived from this analogy are simple affirmations of naive and un-interrogated stereotypes and images which reproduce and are themselves reproduced by a false sexual/biological analogy. Ellmann's arguments on the way men and women should be looked at, touch on issues of femininity and masculinity which are at the core of this study, given that one of

the aims of the study is to investigate the role played by Swahili and Arabic proverbs in the inscription of the perceptions of femininity and masculinity and the depiction of women in these proverbs generally.

The importance of understanding the social and cultural contexts in the study of literature, is amplified by Millet (1977), in the assertion that literature is "mimesis", a relatively transparent reflection of life as it is lived. This assumption is used here as a justification of the argument that, gender is a culturally acquired sexual identity and not a natural given phenomenon, as women have been deluded into thinking. It is apparent, from Millet's arguments, that literature (both oral and written) conveys the views and aspirations of a people whose subject matter includes gender and sexual identity among other aspects. Simply put, Millet's research brings out the role played by culture in ascribing femininity and masculinity which, as is argued in this study, inscribes perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the respective societies; as well as the determination of the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in society. Millet's study on sociological factors ascribing female images in society underpins the sociological interface between proverbs as an art form and proverbs as forms of social interaction. The idea of interaction is critical in this study because it is through interaction that perceptions, images and concepts of marginality, silence and subservience become manifest.

Several reasons have been advanced as to why women have been depicted negatively in works of art specifically proverbs. Thorburn (1978), contends that this negative depiction is as a result of men's jealousy and fear of women. He argues that this is contributed by the fact that women seldom come up with proverbs since men have historically dominated literature and society. Thorburn's study, while focusing on foregrounding arguments about the issues of the mainstreaming of men and the marginalization of women in literature, resonates well with one of the aims of this study that seeks to investigate the ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity. It is worth pointing out that so far, the fact that a particular gender is the one responsible for the origin of proverbs is still elusive, but what is clear is that Thorburn's research addresses the patriarchal nature of man in literature, which is crucial to this study. Indeed, the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs covertly buttresses the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality.

While comparing the depiction of a girl child to boys in literary works, Alan Dundes (1980), asserts that women are reduced to home-makers where they have to be given instructions while men are outgoing and independent. Dunde's research that is predicated on the ways in which both the boy and girl child are assigned different roles by society, indeed emphasizes the investigation of the complicit involvement of proverbs in the circulation of cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable circulate in the respective societies. It would appear, on the basis of the above, that cultural circulation of values is not merely a Swahili Arab experience, but it has cognates in virtually all world cultures.

Matteru (1982), in a study that surveyed the image of women in Tanzanian oral literature, points out that women are depicted as mothers, men's pleasure objects or as men's owned property. The research's sources of data were collected mostly from traditional folksongs and oral tales; though other oral genres have also been alluded to. Matteru's work connects well with this study given that its survey of the images of women from the male's perspective has material cognates critical to the objectives of the study, notably the engagement of this study with issues revolving around the ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity. This study, benefits from Matteru's research in the sense that it highlights the different manifestations of male dominance in its analyses of the images of women in which there are subtle inscriptions of silence, subservience and marginality. There is no doubt that Swahili and Arabic proverbs are critically entangled not merely with image depictions but also with cultural inscriptions.

The depictions of women in folklore, as argued by Webster (1986), usually present sharp perceptual contrasts that oscillate between women as virgins to women as whores, women as saints to women as sinners, as well as between women as healers and women as witches. This study, therefore, benefits quite a lot from such insightful contrasting images of women which are clearly patriarchal in nature. Webster's folklore studies did indeed touch on issues of image depictions and their attendant role or functional perceptions, there is valid justification to argue that Webster's finding do indeed bolster an investigation of Swahili and Arabic proverbs which inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity.

Other studies focused on surveying the image of women in contemporary Swahili songs have been done by Mekacha (1993), in which a familiar finding was echoed, arguing that a woman is depicted as having insatiable desires, is jealous, weak and is the source of all evils in society. The women, according to Mekacha's research, are depicted as evil, immoral and demonic. Mekacha's engagement with images which appear to debase women plays a pivotal role in this study, it sets out some of the images that are critical in investigating the ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity. A proverb in Kiswahili such as "***Mwanamke haambiwi siri***"—***a woman is never told a secret"***, does in several senses echo the degradation of women that Mekacha found in popular Swahili songs, in this sense a foundation has been laid, upon which the inscriptions of masculinity and femininity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs can be canvassed.

Chesaina (1994), in her study on the images of women in African oral literature, argues that the Kalenjins regard women as children who need to be protected and guided. She observes that both Kalenjin men and women hold this view and that any woman who does not live up to that expectation is regarded as having become westernized and therefore rebellious. This same view is held by Maasai men and women as well. The Maasai argue that: "Infancy of women was natural law since jobs done by women were not demanding as those of men" (Chesaina ibid: 86). This view has however been sharply argued against by Kipury (1993:8), who observes that:

> "In Maasai society women do most of the work in the home. The numerous chores for which they are responsible including building houses, fetching water and firewood, milking and distributing food, cleaning milk utensils, sweeping the cattle, calf, sheep and goat enclosures as well as bearing and caring for children. Although the duty of grazing and watering stock is normally a man's job, it is not infrequent for women to be called upon to give assistance when the need arises".

From the study, Chesaina (1994), concludes that the depiction of women in Kalenjin and Maasai oral literature is very negative. The negativity found in Chesaina's study has cognates in Swahili and Arabic proverbs in a number of manifestations; the negative perceptions which African men have against women is a common and constant trait in most African art forms, thus the degradation encountered in Chesaina's study rings true to the patriarchal nature of African societies and their social organizations. Patriarchy, it must be argued, is a framing aspect of societal organization which is crucial in the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of

women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. The negative depiction of women in literature has also been alluded to by Kabira (1994), in her research exploring the images of women in Kikuyu oral narratives which identifies several images of women such as being: unreliable, disobedient, irresponsible, disloyal, adulterous, cunning, senseless, easily cheated, forgetful, evil, tricksters and lazy, among others. Kabira's work is a treasure trough in terms of women's image studies; this study draws extensively from the images of women which are culturally couched as neutral yet in that appearance of neutrality, there are subtle dynamics inscribing cultural values through Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women, thus enabling the circulating of patriarchal perceptions of women in the respective societies.

Studies of the images of women in relation to their male counterparts have been undertaken severally and in different domains drawing their data from a number of fields. De Beauvoir (1949), for instance, in the book *Second Sex* has a captivating discussion of the place of women in society and culture. The discussion revolves around biology, psychoanalysis, history, literature, politics, myth of "woman's life today", of the various roles of women from childhood to marriage to maternity and old age, and it ends by positing a future for the "independent woman". The fact that in almost every known society, women are seen as lesser beings, is a function not of nature but of a mode of thought in which man is taken as the norm and ideal, and woman is his defining "other", the being who validates his importance because of her differences from man. De Beauvoir's findings are foundationally important in canvassing the role played by the culture of a society towards the social positioning of women where the man is taken as the focal point which is ideal hence is used as a yardstick by which women are measured. De Beauvoir's research is vital to this study especially in understanding the determination of the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in the respective societies. Lastly, Ndungo (1998), in the research on the images of women in African oral literature has discussed extensively on the different images of women as depicted in the Gikuyu and Swahili proverbs. The research offered a lot of useful clues to this study especially on the images of women in Swahili proverbs which are culturally driven. This was crucial in the determination of the cultural values that Swahili proverbs on women enable to circulate in the Swahili society.

1.7.2 The Language Use in Depicting Women in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

A number of the studies carried out on the images of women have concentrated on language and how it is used to perpetuate circumscribed images of women. Among these studies is Lakoff (1973), who uses linguistic evidence like colour, words and tag questions to show that the marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the way women are expected to speak and the way in which they are spoken to. What is said about women, both in the choice and nuances of words, shows them as objects whose social roles are derivative and dependent on their relation to men. For this reason, language works against the treatment of women as serious people with individual views. It is apparent, therefore, that much of the earlier work on the studies of the images of women in literature emphasized dominance. Lakoff's (1975) pioneering work suggested that women's speech typically displayed a range of features, such as tag questions, which marked it as inferior and weak. Thus, she argued that the type of subordinate speech learned by a young girl "will later be an excuse others use to keep her in a demeaning position, to refuse to treat her seriously as a human being" (1975, p.5). While there are clearly some problems with Lakoff's work, her analysis was not based on empirical research, for example, and the automatic equation of subordinate with `weak' is problematic - the emphasis on dominance has understandably remained at the core of much of this work. Research has shown how men nominated topics more, interrupted more often, held the floor for longer, and so on (see, for example, Zimmerman and West, 1975). The primary focus of this approach, then, has been to show how patterns of interaction between men and women reflect the dominant position of men in society. This study has benefited from Lakoff's arguments especially the ones touching on the patriarchal nature of men in society generally and in literature specifically. Furthermore, Lakoff's research demonstrates how language is used to marginalize women; which resonates well with one of this study's objectives that explores the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs in terms of marginality, silence and subservience.

Some studies, however, have taken a different approach by looking not so much at power in mixed-sex interactions as at how same-sex groups produce certain types of interaction. In a typical study of this type, Maltz and Borker (1982), developed lists of what they described as men's and women's features of language. They argued that these norms of interaction were acquired in same-sex groups rather than mixed-sex groups and that the issue is therefore one of (sub-) cultural

miscommunication rather than social inequality. Much of this research has focused on comparisons between, for example, the competitive conversational style of men and the cooperative conversational style of women. It is apparent that with the general growth of feminist work in many academic fields, it is hardly surprising that the relationship between language and gender has attracted considerable attention in recent years. In an attempt to go beyond "folklinguistic" assumptions about how men and women use language (the assumption that women are "talkative", for example, demonstrates the prejudice which women are exposed to in many societies in almost all spheres of life). The issue of societal bias against women resonates well with this study's objectives especially the one touching on the investigation of the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

While some research has focused only on the description of differences, other works have sought to show how linguistic differences, both reflect and reproduce social differences. Accordingly, Coates (1988) suggests that research on language and gender can be divided into studies that focus on dominance and those that focus on difference. Although Coates' (ibid) distinction is clearly a useful one, it also seems evident that these two approaches are by no means mutually exclusive. While it is important on the one hand, therefore, not to operate with a simplistic version of power and to consider language and gender only in mixed-group dynamics, it is also important not to treat women's linguistic behaviour as if it existed outside social relations of power. The arguments advanced by Maltz and Borker (1982), together with Coates (1988), on the influence which culture has on the conversational style of both men and women blends in well with this study; which seeks to determine the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs enable to circulate in the respective societies.

Oduol's (1990), study gives some linguistic evidence of the sexist ideology infused in ordinary daily usage of Dholuo, a language spoken mainly around Lake Victoria. Oduol's work is an attempt to provide a case study of the relationship between language and gender in Dholuo by providing linguistic evidence of sexism reflected in the vocabulary expressions associated with women which have biased gender concepts. The extent to which patterns and cultural values of inequality and oppression in Luo linguistic practices are critical in sustaining the existing gender arrangements. Oduol's research offers a lot of material on the use of sexist language in the negative depiction of women which is also well reflected in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

In addition, Wamutiso (2005) has argued that in most societies, men have achieved their sexual dominance by limiting the range of women activities to the domestic spheres of housekeeping and child rearing. Wamutiso asserts that by so doing they have limited the range of women's linguistic activity to home. This research, as such delves much into the patriarchal nature of men in the Swahili society; and gives examples as to how Swahili men use their language to depict women as being weaklings while men are depicted as strong and honourable. Wamutiso's work is critical to this study considering that it has identified and interrogated the way Swahili men use language to depict men in terms of agency and activity, while depicting women in terms of passivity and inactivity or merely as recipients of men's largesse. In Wamutiso's findings one can ascertain subtle dynamics at work showing prejudice against women, which is helpful in the achievement of one of the objectives of this study that investigates the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

Sanauddin's (2015) research, explores the sexist language used in Pashtun proverbs through which various patriarchal depictions and inscriptions become manifest. Thus the research is able to show many patriarchal dimensions which offer a lot of images of women as depicted in Pashtun proverbs which resonate quite well with some of the images of women present in the selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs. The research offers a lot of insights on the way language is used to marginalize women as brought out through the use of Pashtun proverbs. These insights are vital in the investigation of the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

1.7.3 Studies on Swahili Proverbs

Available studies on Swahili proverbs hitherto, emanate from a variety of perspectives and are interested in pursuing myriad interests ranging from mere collections and cataloguing proverbs, describing functions, structures and contexts of usage, meanings and interpretations of proverbs, to comparisons between indigenous versus borrowed proverbs, and so on. Such studies have been done by Farsi (1958), Hollingsworth and Alawi (1968), Abudu (1974), Knappert (1975), Abudu and Baruwa (1981a, 1981b), Ngole and Honero (1982), Karama and Said (1983), Mkota (2009), Wamitila (2015) and Ndalu and King'ei (2016). These scholars have provided invaluable data to this study, for they have not only collected and compiled proverbs of the Swahili but have also explained their meanings and usage. The collections of proverbs undertaken by these scholars avail

a treasure trough of information not only on oral traditions of the Swahili but also on their manners, customs, beliefs and folklore (Knappert, 1975). The knowledge on Swahili manners, culture and beliefs availed by these studies is both foundational and fundamental in informing the determination of the cultural values that the depictions of women in Swahili proverbs enable to circulate in the Swahili society. These scholars' collections of Swahili proverbs, though not predicated on academic treatises, are nevertheless logically categorized alphabetically and thematically, their meanings contextually explicated, they are as such critical in the exploration of the depiction of women in Swahili proverbs with regards to the attributes of marginality, silence and subservience.

A Swahili proverb (***methali***) has a message/meaning which can be interpreted at both a literal and coded level. Parker's (1974) research, proposes a sound methodology for investigating the Swahili proverb meaning and also advances a theory for interpreting their messages at both literal and coded levels. The images of women discernible in Swahili proverbs are critical in exploring the human traits informing social relationships in the Swahili society. These images otherwise known as imageries in proverbs have the potential to subtly conceal a message but at the same time actualize its functionality on the target domain. The hidden message may not be discernible to the untargeted audience because through the subtlety of inscription such imagery may be presented in an innocuous manner yet its functionality on the targeted audience is unmistakable. This line of argument is advanced by Mumali (2012), in his discussions on the thematic imperatives of Swahili proverbs and contextualized meaning focusing mainly on the manifestation of character, health, work, religious and psychological issues. These themes form part of the cultural issues addressed in both the Swahili and Arabic proverbs; thus enabling an informed exploration and determination of the cultural values that the Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in the respective societies.

Similar projections have been advanced by Kobia (2016), whose study focusing on a number of Swahili proverbs where the metaphor of chicken has been used to represent a woman, has demonstrated the marginal circumscription of women in the innocent usage of chicken. This explication of the Swahili proverbs by Kobia that specifically highlights the nature of hidden messages found in Swahili proverbs is made possible through the use of imagery in the proverbs.

Kobia interrogates the metaphor of chicken to demonstrate a demeaning depiction of women not only as mothers and wives, in a marginal positive way, but also as people who are passive and helpless, in the typical peripheralization way. Kobia's analyses are both informative and useful in this study given that her preoccupations with metaphor has direct correlations with the wider and more insidious depictions of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs which ingeniously make possible the circulation of the attributes of marginality, silence and subservience in both Swahili and Arab societies.

1.7.4 Studies on Arabic Proverbs

Scholarly works on Arabic proverbs have canvassed many and varied issues in Arabic societies. Such studies include Hanki (1897), Green (1907), Singer (1913), Elder (1927), Burckhardt (1972) and Bayumi (2004). These scholars have availed a large repertoire of Arabic proverbs and have investigated myriad issues that have direct parallels with the present study. This repertoire was critical in informing the current sample of the data for this study on the depiction of women in Arabic proverbs as used in Egypt. The discussions and explanations deriving from these scholars' studies on the Arabic proverbs' meanings and uses are well grounded in the analyses of the images of women present in the selected Arabic proverbs. Al Askari (2005), has written quite extensively about the meanings and uses of Arabic proverbs. He argues that the Arab culture plays a leading role in ascribing to the proverbs the kind of messages that are inherent and intrinsic in all proverbs generally. The ensuing argumentation is that one needs to be well versed with the Arab cultural practices in order to understand the deeper meanings of Arabic proverbs. Al-Askari's study avails for this study useful insights especially those focusing on critical cultural features necessary for ascertaining and analyzing hidden meanings in Arabic proverbs. Such features are also critical in the identification of the images of women present in those proverbs.

Ahmad's (2005), study has preoccupied itself extensively with the educational and social values expressed by proverbs in Sudan and England. Ahmad's work on the depiction of women in Arabic proverbs offers a lot of insights which are critical in the exploration of the images of women in the selected Arabic proverbs. As already indicated above, proverb meaning has been a constant preoccupation with many scholars (Hanki, 1897, Green, 1907, Singer 1913, Elder 1927, Burckhardt, 1972, Bayumi, 2004, Al-Askari, 2005). These scholars' explanations of the Arabic

proverbs' meaning are centrally implicated in the exploration of the depiction of women in Arabic proverbs. Ahmad's (2005), on the other hand which studied women issues in proverbs as portrayed in different social aspects like education, God, religion, family, friendship amongst other issues; these aspects resonate well with the objective that seeks to determine the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in society.

Saidi's (2010), study on gender and analysis of Arabic proverbs in Oman, has discussed the images of women as exemplified in those proverbs. The study categorized the proverbs talking about the images of women into either negative or positive proverbs by analyzing the type of messages depicted in the respective proverbs. This study has thus afforded the current study entry points notably those issues that underpin the ways in which women are routinely depicted in Arabic proverbs. It is equally useful in intimating how such depictions affect the assignment of social as well as gender roles. Furthermore, Saidi's categorization of the Arabic proverbs as used in Oman into either positive or negative according to the messages depicted in them offers important clues necessary in the investigation of the ways in which the Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity.

The relationship between proverbs and culture is always intricate and closely bound with that given culture, its traditions as well as it worldview; consequently, this is why proverbs reflect and bring out a particular culture in terms of their explication as well as their functions in the overall cultural life. It is, therefore, important for the person interpreting proverbs to take into consideration the cultural aspects of the society whose proverbs are being researched, analysed or interpreted, just like Othman (2013) asserts. Othman, in his study focuses on the role of micro and macro levels in the rendition of Standard Arabic proverbs into English language, where he rightfully argues that proverbs may not be understood if a translation focuses on the micro level (the surface features of the proverbs such as semantics, syntax and style), without taking into account the macro level (the socio–cultural context of the proverbs and the issues of pragmatics). Othman's study on the effects of aspects of macro level translation is in several ways crucial in determining the cultural values that the depictions of women in Arabic proverbs enable to circulate in the Arab society.

1.7.5 Studies on Masculinity and Femininity

Gender need not be reduced to an embodied trait or a social role; rather it should be understood as a socially constructed system of ideologies about masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity entail sets of practices, norms, beliefs and mandates that work to organize and regulate emotional expressions, patterns of social behaviours, social interaction and sexuality. Masculinity, for instance, is concerned with qualities that are associated with boys/men that include: being assertive and exerting power over others, protecting and defending members of the opposite sex and avoiding behaviours which are associated with the female gender. In contrast, femininity comprises of those qualities which are associated with girls/women that include: being responsive and caring, avoiding conflict and anger, preserving relationships as well as maintaining a certain level of beauty.

Girls are likened to young goddesses as brought out in Kezilahabi (1971) study, which signifies the harmless nature of girls that is elevated to almost holy status with the embodiment of tenderness and beauty. The implication of this is that girls are precious and have to be worshipped, loved and treated with utmost respect just like goddesses. Similarly, girls have been compared to angels, which in itself help in the reinforcement of the image of girls as being obedient and submissive. On the other hand, Mohamed (1977), asserts that women are devils who are capable of causing sudden destruction. This could imply that girls mutate from their angelic images to become demonic in adulthood and that they are prone to all manner of evil. These qualities of men and women are core issues in this study given that it is in such qualities and attributes of expression that perceptions of masculinity and femininity get embedded. It needs to be understood that in any given depiction of women, as in the Swahili and Arabic proverbs, that various perceptions and worldviews get inscribed, as is the case with perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the respective societies.

The concept of masculinity as defined by Chavetz (1978), means being athletic, breadwinner, objective, sexually aggressive, unemotional and domineering; while femininity is associated with traits such as being weak, domestic, sexually passive, emotional and dependent. This argument is supported by Hofstede (1980), in his assertion that masculinity and femininity refer to the dominant sex patterns in the vast majority of both traditional and modern societies; and it entails male assertiveness and female sense of nurture. He adds that cultures which are masculine are

cultures which expect men to be assertive, ambitious and competitive. By extension, men are not only required to strive for material success but also to respect whatever is big, strong and fast. On the flipside, women are expected to serve and care for the non-material quality of life, for the children and for the weak. It is evident that different societies construct and wield gender relations and practices in line with their cultural beliefs.

Every society has a set of systems to censure and control the normative concepts of masculinity and femininity. Put in another way, this implies that the entire essence of femininity and masculinity is rooted in the way the society expects girls/women to behave or act as opposed to the way boys/men should carry themselves around. This argument is also alluded to by Thomson and Pleck (1986), who associate masculinity with the issue of status and further emphasize that for men to achieve status and earn respect of others, then they should be mentally, emotionally and physically tough. In order to achieve this, they add that it requires men to not only be self-reliant but also exhibit anti-feminine characteristics; which reinforces the notion that men should avoid stereotypically feminine activities and occupations. There is a lot that this study draws from these studies, especially the role played by the society's cultural beliefs towards their understanding of femininity and masculinity. However, it is worth noting that the definition of femininity and masculinity being culturally driven varies from one culture to the other; this aspect forms part of this study's objective that investigates the ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe the perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the respective societies.

The common notion that females seem to be the weaker of the two sexes, has been argued against by Chinweizu (1990), who asserts that the womb, kitchen, cradle, man's immaturity and his inability to control his emotions, constitute what she refers to as the five pillars of female power that enable a woman to have dominance over the male. It is worth noting that this argument is paradoxical in the sense that women who are generally viewed as weak physically are able to manipulate and exploit men to their advantage without antagonizing their position as it were. It suffices to say that, this shrewdness and cunningness expressed by the female gender, seems to contradict the earlier depiction of women as angelic. It is clear that the understanding of femininity advanced by Chinweizu (ibid) is quite distinct from the commonly held notion which associates the female gender more often than not with weakness which renders them helpless. This brings to mind the diversity in understanding of gender and helps one to appreciate the fact that gender can

mean different things to different people as affirmed by Craig (1993), who asserts that gender definition requires reference to the changing conventions of culture and that we need a conceptualization of gender that recognizes multiple cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity as well as research that exceeds traditional analysis.

The debate of who is viewed as "strong" of the two sexes has also been alluded to by Greene and Kahn (1994), who argue that women have wielded more power than has been known before and that the restrictive aspects about women's lives could act as enabling factors which work to their advantage. However, the debate about who should be viewed as being dominant of the two sexes is better understood by considering the caution given by Connell (1995), in his assertion that masculinity is not a property of men, and urges us not to use the terms "men", "male" and masculinity interchangeably. It is, therefore, safe to describe masculinity as the totality of the innate characteristics in a person that enhance the survival abilities of a person which include boldness, fearlessness, determination, selflessness, wisdom, courage, understanding and so on. These traits, he argues, are not a preserve of men but could be present in both males and females even though the male gender may be dominant in their exhibition. The discussions surrounding the characteristics which are considered in definition of femininity and masculinity are critical to this study because they constitute the principal features that get manipulated and embedded with values, views, attributes and trajectories which inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

The concept of femininity in Africa, just like it applies to other places in the world, depends on a number of variables that are not necessarily based on the body type. This fact has been alluded to by Oyewumi (2003), who opines that in feminist gender discourses, femininity does not just rest on the body type which is not male, but its definition is multi directional. By extension, it means that femininity ought to be represented in terms of the roles and achievements of women in the society as well as making a deliberate effort to study masculinity in order to understand how it affects femininity in general. This assertion is similar to Matsugu (2007), who defines femininity as being non-aggressive, non-assertive, modest, overtly polite, formal, humble, indirect, ambiguous, uncertain, hesitant, less canonical, hence meek, weak, powerless, soft spoken, submissive, gentle, elegant, graceful, refined, beautiful, empathetic, emotional, and socially immature. This study, on its part, describes masculinity as being aggressive, assertive, forceful,

rough, blunt, less modest, less polite, insistent, powerful, authoritative, less beautiful, and responsible. It is obvious that Matsugu's arguments with regards to femininity and masculinity bring to the fore contrasting traits of both female and male respectively. This contrast has also been addressed by Dulz (2016), who alludes that masculinity has traits which can be positive or negative. The Dulz study argues that the positive masculine traits are thought to be active, independent, decisive, aggressive, tough, hardworking and hierarchal; while its negative traits are listed as greed, hostility and being self-centred. At the same time femininity has its positive traits as being compassionate, devoted to others, emotional, gentle, submissive and egalitarian. Femininity is negatively associated with traits like being gullible and weak.

In summary, the aforementioned discussions on what masculinity and femininity entail are important and foundational in understanding the critical issues at the core of this study namely; masculinity and femininity on the one hand, subtle inscriptions of values and attributes and the enablement of the circulation of prejudices, views and biases against women on the other hand. An investigation of the ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the respective societies cannot be undertaken without first understanding what these concepts entail and how they are actualized in individual proverbs or in proverbs collectively. It is on the basis of such understanding that the determination of the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in society can be predicated.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework selected for this study, is the feminist literary theory. The term feminism was coined by the French socialist, Charles Fourier in the early 19th century (Ndungo, 1998). At that time, it was used to refer to the new woman who was agitating to transform the women folk and the society in which she lived. The term "feminism" has evolved over time and is generally used to refer to a variety of theoretical conceptions explicating the varied social and material relations between men and women in society, the origins of such relations and how they might be changed for the better (Mitchel and Oakley, 1986). Feminism, as such reflects a global view that mainstreams feminine issues in varied studies and their varied expressions, it thus attempts not only to make women's struggles for equal rights with men feasible but also confronts systematic injustices and hindrances placed on the feminine gender. In other words, feminism in all its facades, essentially means deploying a feminist lens to enable us to see individuals, groups,

families, and organizations in their social, political, economic, ethnic as well as cultural contexts in terms of appreciating their social and material relationships and the respective rights thereof.

The feminist literary theory, therefore, offers a perspective for understanding human social and material behaviour within the constraints of their social environments. It is a perceptive perspective that enables a critical focus on women in terms of highlighting the day to day struggles that women face in diverse endeavours in different societies in specific historical epochs. The feminist literary theory, both in terms of its theoretical conceptualizations and its application, seeks in various ways to transform the structures of traditional male power which predominate and determine social and material relationships and the ways they are ordered. In the hands of a feminist literary critic, the theory demands a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which prejudicial societal structures get formulated, find their way into artistic compositions and find sustenance and continual reinforcement in literature and literary criticism. This study, therefore, makes use of the feminist literary theory, mainly because the theory has tenets that are critical in the identification of gender as well as the recognition of women's positions internationally as one of second class citizens, which the theory seeks to remedy. As Frank (1984) observes, feminist literary theory is a theory whose interest is oriented to women issues in literature, both oral and written. Besides the assertions presented above, the feminist literary theory is a valuable tool that enables critics to examine sexist images of women, the effects of such images as perpetuated by literary artists and by extension, the societies in which they write.

The choice of the feminist literary theory for this study was in accord with this study's objectives namely; to enable the understanding of the inscription of masculinity and femininity in proverb formulation and circulation, to underpin the exploration of the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, to make possible the investigation of the ways in which the Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity; as well as the determination of the cultural values that the depictions of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs enable to circulate in the respective societies. The feminist literary theory as employed in this study, is critical in the examination of the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs so as to enable the exploration of how and in what ways such depictions inscribe concepts of privileged masculinity and debased femininity. It further investigates what role these depictions play in the formation of perceptions of the societal

positioning of women and men generally and in particular the inscription of the types of relationships upon which the concepts of femininity and masculinity are predicated. Furthermore, this theory as applied to the examination of how the attributes of silence, subservience and marginality are inscribed in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, is foundationally important in disclosing the extent of such attributions; as well as in the determination of the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in the respective societies. In short this theory is necessary for the investigation, analysis and presentation of the depiction of women in proverbs generally and in Swahili and Arabic proverbs in particular. The theory's applicable tenets in this study are elaborated in subsequent subsections of this section.

1.8.1 Feminist Literary Theory

In order to canvass the core concerns of this study as intimated in the foregoing sections, this study adopted a feminist literary theory also known as feminist literary criticism as expounded by Napikoski (2017). The feminist literary criticism theory is broadly concerned with the need to understand, explore and defend the rights of women, however widely defined. This theory, therefore, obliges a critic or literary analyst to decisively scrutinize feminine-masculine relations in his/her given social and material world from multiple contexts and provide strategies which will help remedy the conditions that negatively affect a majority of women in that given world. The feminist literary criticism, therefore, attempts to explain the social and material differences between men and women, in particular focusing on canonizing gender; emphasizing how prejudiced gender differences affect human behaviour in historical, political, social and cultural contexts as well as exposing how oppressions that are gender based are perpetuated and naturalized. This is critically important in this study given that proverbs, the focus of this study, are not only an art form; they also constitute critical aspects of the social and cultural milieu of any society.

Regardless of its diverse definitions and understandings, the focal and functional use of a feminist literary theory in this study is to underpin commitment to initiate changing oppressive structures as well as connecting abstract ideas to concrete problems for political action geared towards the valuing of women and their experiences by identifying conditions that oppress them (Flax, 1990). It is also functionally important in informing a view of positively changing society by

acknowledging the factors that negatively impact women's views, ideas and actions. There is no doubt that proverbs are indeed implicated in subtle forms of oppressions, notably psychological oppression considering their subtlety of inscription, which ingeniously makes women acquiesce to patriarchal philosophical outlooks and formulations of societal organization and ordering. Furthermore, the feminist literary theory argues for the need to pay close attention to the ways in which certain power relations (usually those in which male wield various forms of influence over female) are represented in art forms such as proverb formulation and utilization. This study, therefore, contends that the power relations discernible in expressions of art forms reflect those same power relations in the culture of a given society, and proverbs are critically implicated in the actualization of such power relations. The deployment of a feminist literary theory in this study, enables the entrance of an old text by a researcher/critic from a new critical direction; or simply put, seeing an old text with fresh eyes (Ndung'o, 1998). Alternatively, the use of this theory in this study, is a strategy that enables a critical re-thinking of the analyses of proverbs with perceptive new outlooks that allow the uncovering of muted and covert schemas directed against women. This theory as applied in this study, encourages further re-thinking and re-evaluation that resists traditional assumptions often ascribed to proverbs, such as their authoritative and unquestioned veneration while at the same time retaining that which is positive and creative.

A reading of a proverb as an oral text, therefore, should in the application of this theory, entail challenging normative assumptions embedded in proverbs which were thought to be incontestable, hallowed and universally true. In simple terms, the feminist literary theory as applied in this study, consciously seeks to support the re-evaluation and inclusion of women's knowledge in proverb studies where it has been deliberately muted, thus erasing and shutting out positive values of women's experiences in proverb formulations and interpretations. Feminist literary criticism as applied here, assumes that proverbs both reflect and shape stereotypes and other cultural assumptions about women. Thus, the feminist literary theory adopted for this study, enabled the examination of how proverbs in Swahili and Arab societies embody patriarchal attitudes or undercut them, sometimes both happening within the same proverb domain; the examination of how relationships between men and women and those assuming male and female roles are depicted in the proverbs, including power relations inscribed in proverbs.

The feminist literary theory as applied in this study, entails the utilization of its flexibility to make use of several methods of inquiry and analysis including; deconstructing the ways in which women are described and depicted in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, especially those proverbs that overly or covertly privilege men as well as their attendant patriarchal attributes. It was also employed in the deconstruction of how one's own gender influences how one understands and interprets a proverb, and which gender and how the user of a given proverb identifies with the gender embedded in a given proverb. Furthermore, it was applied in the deconstruction of how women as subjects in the proverbs are ascribed with debasing attributes and how those attributes help inscribe perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Similarly, this theory was employed in describing relationships between a corpus of proverbs and the ideas they circulate about privilege, power, sexuality and gender. It was also employed to help critique the patriarchal or woman-marginalizing language overly discernible in proverbs, as well as "universalizing" the use of masculine language in proverbs. This theory was also used here to help make noticeable and unpack differences on how proverbs depict men and women: for instance, notice and understand why proverbs about women are confining and restrictive and those about men abound with freedom and flexibility.

It is important to add that this theory, was deployed here to help expand for inclusion, the features of proverbs worth investigating and criticizing so as to debunk the canonicity of the proverb corpus that privileges masculinity and debases femininity. It was thus deployed to help in a subtle way in the reclaiming of the 'female voice' in proverb studies, a voice that is routinely marginalized or ignored. It was further applied to help examine how relationships between men and women are structured and as such unpack how male and female roles are depicted in proverbs, including unpacking power relations embedded in proverbs so as to figure out ways in which patriarchy is resisted or could have been resisted. It is important to note that the feminist literary theory, as used here, has drawn a lot of its inspiration from the assertions advanced and expounded by Napikoski (2017), which foreground a feminist viewpoint, feminist theory of action and feminist place and space concerns. This is so because, this theoretical framework is attentive to issues of difference—which abound in proverbs, the questioning of social power—which is circulated by proverb usage, resisting oppression due to one’s gender—which is what this study seeks to advance, and finally hoping that social justice can be realized by exposing covert schemas in proverbs that enable their continuance. Besides its functional trajectory, the feminist literary theory as expounded by

Napikoski (ibid.), is predicated on critical tenets that focus on identifying with female characters in various forms of literary expression as well as tenets that centre on re-evaluating a proverb (as an art form) in the world which the proverb is utilized. Ideally, the identification with the female characters as a tenet, is meant to challenge the male-centred viewpoint of proverbs, which are viewed as presenting women in the proverbs as objects as seen from a male perspective. The tenets' concern on the questioning of society's predominantly valued male proverbs is critical in bringing to the fore the less valued contributions of women in a male dominated world.

These tenets are foundationally critical particularly in the identification of female depictions, attributes, perceptions and sexual nuances in proverbs and then subjecting them to a re-evaluation that seeks to question whether Swahili and Arab societies have unquestioningly privileged one gender over the other. In a sense, this study is a counter reading of traditional assumptions of the "maleness" and "femaleness" of proverbs in these societies. Thus, a feminist literary theory enables an examination of how proverbs inscribe patriarchal and matriarchal attitudes or undercut them in the circulation of cultural values. The applicable tenets have been borrowed from a variety of feminist critiques and procedures such as the tenets that foreground identification with female characters both in oral and written discourses, the re-evaluation and counter-reading of the hushed functions of proverbs in the world in which they are utilized as well as mainstreaming the centrality of gender binary in gender discourses. The critical concern in deploying these tenets was to enable an exploration of proverbs that goes beyond the more obvious male-centred outlooks and interpretations of oral literature, the arts and various forms of social interactions. This, in essence, meant that this study subjected Swahili and Arabic proverbs focusing on women to a critical interrogation so as to uncover the muted schemas that underpin the circulation of patriarchal cultural attributes.

Equally important was the consideration that, these tenets were deployed to interrogate the male literary canon of proverb formulation and its attendant circulation. These tenets were, as such deployed to raise questions about the apparent privileging of proverbs that are imbued with positive and elevating male attributes while peripheralizing proverbs imbued with demeaning attributes ascribed to women. The application of the feminist literary theory in the sense alluded to above, enabled this study to untangle the intertwined reality in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs get

utilized in postmodern contexts that are predominantly populated with complex questions of gender and societal roles. It is important to note that, the feminist literary theory has through its various phases of development amassed and benefited from tools of critical inquiry from other critical disciplines such as historical analysis, psychology, linguistics, sociological analysis, economic analysis, amongst others. This is a critical interface, given that the proverbs sampled for this study, permeate all these areas of human interaction. It was prudent, therefore, to demonstrate how the feminist literary theory acquiesces to such factors as sexuality, physical ability; psychological dispositions and social class are involved in proverb circulation.

1.9 Research Methodology

This study was basically premised on a purposive sampling trajectory which focused on examining archival materials, mainly consisting of published proverb books, Swahili and Arabic proverb dictionaries, selected journals as well as other research materials in libraries and online sources which were relevant to the study. Ideally, this selective and subjective sampling, was informed by the fact that, the researcher, being a speaker of both Swahili and Arabic language, had the luxury of prior knowledge about the existence of proverbs in published forms and was equally cognizant about the purpose of the study overall. On another level, this form of sampling was appropriate for this study given that it sought to access a specific subset of proverbs that fits a particular research trajectory, namely the identification of overly gendered Kiswahili and Arabic proverbs capable of establishing a viable research sample, which though not statistically representative, has the capacity for being qualitatively generalizable. Further, this methodology was selected because proverb studies in both Kiswahili and Arabic languages, is an information-rich phenomenon animating varied studies.

1.9.1 Data Collection

The data for this study which mainly focused on overly gendered Swahili and Arabic proverbs, was collected from published proverbs sources and books. There was no field work as the study largely depended on secondary data. The Swahili proverbs were collected from five main sources, namely; Ndungo (1998), Wamutiso (2005), Mkota's (2009) *Kamusi ya Methali za Kiswahili Maana na Matumizi,* Wamitila's (2015) *Kamusi ya Methali za Kiswahili* and Ndalu and Kingei's (2016) *Kamusi ya Methali*. These sources were purposively selected mainly because of the fact

that they offered a large range of proverbs for the study, which totaled well over three thousand proverbs (3000), of which two hundred (200) talk about women, this was a substantial data trough incorporating some of the latest publications in Swahili proverbs. The Arabic proverbs, on the other hand, were collected from six main books; Hanki (1897), Green (1909), Singer (1913), Elder (1927), Burckhardt's (1972), *Arabic proverbs* and Bayumi's (2004), *A Dictionary of Arabic proverbs*, which collectively resulted in over four thousand Arabic proverbs out which one hundred and fifty talk about women, which formed a treasure trough of data for this study. However, given this large number of proverbs, it was not possible to incorporate all the proverbs collected in this study given that in terms of our purposive sampling, the focus was on selecting overly gendered proverbs, with obvious gender themes or easily accessible sub-texts, presented potential applicability and relevance to the research objectives. Equally, the proverbs collected were intended to respond to the research questions as outlined in the foregoing sections, bearing in mind that such proverbs did not present the potential to go counter to the applicability of the tenets of the selected theory. Most of the proverbs left out of the sample did no present characteristics which made them overly gendered, andr some were left out because other proverbs with similar gendered themes and meanings were already sampled and therefore representative for varied analyses in the study. The use of the same number of proverbs in the two languages was equally purposive and was intended to get balanced and representative data for the analysis of the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. As already noted, the two hundred proverbs (one hundred Swahili and one hundred Arabic) selected from the sources indicated above, are statistically miniscule in terms of the total number of proverbs collected, however, they were sufficiently representative and they formed viable basis for sustainable generalizations.

1.9.2 Data Presentation

We were indeed persuaded that purposive sampling was most cost-effective and time-effective method applicable to this study. This sampling method was most appropriate and effective in exploring a wide range of proverbs as utilized in varied situations where the discovery of theme and meaning was ameanable to an intuitive approach and therefore easy to categorize into gendered and non-gendered Kiswahili and Arabic proverbs. Out of a total of 3000 Kiswahili proverbs, 200 proverbs were assessed as eligible for inclusion; and out of 4000 Arabic proverbs 150 were assessed as eligible for inclusion in the analysis. First, all the 200 Kiswahili proverbs and 150

Arabic proverbs sampled were analyzed to determine their overt gender marking. The process enabled the discarding of 100 and 50 Kiswahili and Arabic proverbs, respectively. This sampling approach was critical in ensuring that proverbs representing a wide thematic spread were included so as to enrich the data and guarantee a critical focus that closely responded to the study's main objectives. It also provided the study with methods to cross-check for under-representation of critical gender themes.

The main aim underpinning our purposive sampling was to guarantee the quality of proverb analysis by ensuring that the number of proverbs sampled was manageable and representative. There was also need to ensure that the proverbs sampled were the most suitable for answering the research questions and advancing the study objectives; and given that this was a gender oriented study, the proverbs sampled were purposively selected to cover a broad range of proverb settings and their contexts of usage. The idea was to have proverbs which reflected the core of the research objectives as close as possible and to ensure that the data was as rich as possible. Consequently, the first category of Swahili and Arabic proverbs selected were explicit in their reference to female gender, the second category consisted of proverbs whose reference to the female gender was implicit, and finally, the third category contained proverbs which were clearly non-gendered, which nonetheless presented potential for appropriation for advancing patriarchal agenda. Another critical consideration informing the selection of proverbs was their habitual usage and therefore their probable applicability to the objectives of the study in terms of canvassing female, women and finally gender in the two languages. The final consideration in the selection of proverbs was intuitive, focusing mainly on the thematic import of the proverbs, namely—proverbs which thematically and potentially inscribe silence, subservience and marginality, proverbs which potentially inscribe perceptions of femininity as well as those that inscribe the perceptions of masculinity, and finally, proverbs which thematically and potentially enable circulate cultural values that are sociologically, biologically and morally oriented, generally cultural values touching on the status of women, ornamentation, societal norms and mentorship.

1.9.3 Data Analysis

The first consideration in our data analysis addressed itself to a number of study characteristics, such as ascertaining that the maximum disparity of proverb usage situations had been factored into

the analysis. It was also critical to ensure that the proverbs sampled were adequate in the assessment of data richness and appropriateness to the research objectives, mainly ensuring that the proverbs selected were enough, that they were fact and information adequate in supporting the anticipated analyses. It was also necessary to ensure that the proverbs selected did not occasion data saturation, which is, using too many proverbs where a few would service. Our data analysis also took into consideration the methodological strengths and limitations of the sampled proverbs, this entailed assessing and ensuring that the proverbs included in the study analysis were feasible and critical in supporting the varied analyses in view of the study objectives.

The analysis started with the purposive selection of one hundred Swahili and one hundred Arabic proverbs which were overly gendered, making explicit mention or talking about women regardless of whether such mention or talk was positive or negative. The next step entailed literal translations of the Swahili and Arabic proverbs into English, the language of this thesis writing. The third step necessitated a transliteration of the Arabic proverbs from the Arabic script into the Latin script to enable non-Arabic readers to access the selected proverbs both in terms of readerability and discerning potential and overt meaning (the Arabic proverbs have been presented fully in the Arabic script in the appendix). The selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs were then subjected to a thematic analysis in terms of their overt and covert gender orientations. However, it should be noted that, given that core interests of the study, namely— the exploration of the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality, the inscription of perceptions of femininity and masculinity and the circulation of bigoted cultural values, quite a number of the sampled proverbs were bound to be replicated across sections and subsections of this thesis in the course of their analyses. This is because many of the proverbs sampled for this study are amenable to varied contexts of usage.

The thematic analyses constituted the bulk of the work overall, considering that this study, as premised on three tenets of the feminist literary theory namely: the postulation that foregrounds identification with female characters, the re-evaluation and counter-reading of the hushed functions of proverbs in the world in which they are utilized as well as mainstreaming the centrality of gender binary in gender discourses. These tenets were foundationally critical particularly in the identification of female depictions, attributes, perceptions and meaning nuances in the sampled proverbs. In terms of their measurable attributes, the analyses focused on overt themes, they were also subjected to a re-evaluation that sought to bring to the fore the hushed sub-text meanings, this

was because in so doing, the study was enabled to question whether Swahili and Arab societies have unquestioningly privileged one gender over the other. In a sense, this study's data analysis was a counter reading of traditional assumptions of the "maleness" and "femaleness" of proverbs in these societies. This was in tandem with the feminist literary theory guiding this study which enabled an examination of how proverbs inscribe patriarchal and matriarchal attitudes or undercut them in the circulation of cultural values.

The analyses relating to the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs were undertaken on three levels—which entailed the analyses of Swahili and Arabic proverbs in terms of their portrayal of the attributes of ignorance and passivity as feminine traits, as well as women as pleasure objects. In order to capture the essence of subservience in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, the conceptualization of patriarchy as a domineering principle was a critical consideration in determining subordination, objectification, physical weakness and women as home makers and housekeepers. The determination of the inscription of marginality in these proverbs entailed uncovering the presence of cultural norms, structures of interaction as strategies of inscribing marginality—in terms of care giving and mentorship, the attribution of repugnant and socially unacceptable behaviours in the depiction of women.

Another criteria which was used in these analyses of the sampled proverbs, involved a juxtaposition of Swahili and Arabic proverbs, namely; the inscription of the perceptions of femininity in Swahili on the one hand followed by a similar analysis of Arabic proverbs on the one hand. The analyses of these perceptions were spread over a range of thematic concerns—such as the demeaning of women within the trajectory of parenthood, which entailed re-evaluating marriage and male agency, biological-social responsibilities as trajecotories in framing marginality, whch entailed re-evaluating conception and delivery, the nurturing and socialization of children, educating and role modelling children, as constituting those trajectories. Other thematic concerns which informed the proverb analyses included—domestic chores through which the objectification of women is manifested as commodities or vessels, women in terms of physical or moral weakness, education, labour and leadership. The analyses of Arabic proverbs followed the same trajectory but also included; men's physical and moral strength, authority, command,

men's use of violence in asserting their power, freedom of choice, knowledge, wisdom and men as resource controllers, means of production and masculinity.

Finally, in order to determine the nature of the cultural values that the selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs enable to circulate in their respective societies, the analyses of the sampled proverbs considered a number of issues as enablers of the circulation of cultural values;

a) Sociological imperatives: marriage, motherhood, polygamy and family relations and the circulation of cultural values.
b) Socio-biological imperatives: reproduction, nurturing, growth and development.
c) Sociological imageries: the food imagery, the property imagery, donkey, chicken, ant, house fly metaphors.
d) The ethos of morality: chastity, honour, respect, integrity.
e) Beautification and ornamentation: women as objects of adoration, women as admirers of ornaments—clothing and ornaments of beauty.
f) Societal norms: inequality and companionship.
g) Women and mentorship.

CHAPTER TWO

MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY AS MUTED SCHEMAS IN PROVERB DEFINITIONS

2.1 Introduction

Paremiology as a study is interested in the myriad properties and features of proverbs such as the linguistic structure of proverbs and what they entail thematically and functionally; it also deals with proverb collection and classification, tracing the nature and origin of individual proverbs as well as investigating their socio-historical significance. Dundes (1978:3-4), argues that for the historians, the proverbs and other forms of folklore were treated as "immaterial relics", surviving remnants among the peasant "folk" of the "savage ideas and ways" from which civilization had evolved. Bartlotti (2000), affirms that the linguists of the nineteenth century considered proverbs as the source material for the comparative philological study of rural "archaic" dialects. In other words, paremiologists usually engage themselves in an indepth study of proverbs that is both multi-dimensional and epistemological in its approach; that interrogates proverbs from diverse points of view drawing on such fields as culture, folklore, history, literature, sociology, anthropology, art, communication, philology, psychology, religion, and sociology (Mieder, 2004). On the other hand, sociologists and anthropologists took interest in proverbs' studies in the hope of finding the reflection of national characters in these small pieces of public philosophies. Though sociologists and anthropologists seem to have found a point of convergence that proverbs are pieces of public philosophies, they do not seem to have recognized that proverbs also have overt and sometimes muted functions.

There is defendable evidence in critical interrogations of proverbs that there is a wide range of proverbs that perceptibly arise from prejudiced patriarchal trajectories, mainly informed by the patriarchal interests and at the same time advancing those muted patriarchal interests. This is evident in many Swahili and Arabic proverbs where there are strong masculine and feminine overtones inscribed in a variety of proverbs. This argument acquiesces to the idea that the main interests behind the study of proverbs for the sociologists and anthropologists is the idea that the proverbs of a people would provide valuable clues about their character and culture and open paths of communication that can enable a discovery of what is obvious and what is muted functionally;

which simply put seems to imply that proverbs most clearly and abundantly express the social thoughts of traditional societies.

2.2 Overt and Covert Functions in Proverb Definitions

The diverse interests intimated in many scholarly studies predicated on the interrogation of what proverbs are, what they do or how they function as well as what informs their genesis, implicitly suggest a multifaceted and multi-layered involvement of proverbs in the circulation of cultural values in many cultures. It is prudent, therefore, to argue that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women are overly and covertly involved in the enablement and circulation of cultural worldviews, philosophies and values in their respective societies. It would appear, on the basis of the above, that the circulation of cultural values is not merely a Swahili and Arab experience, but rather a global cultural experience that has cognates in virtually all world cultures. The circulation of cultural values through proverbs in everyday life is a reflection of the dynamics of folklore in enculturation, social organizations and social interactions as alluded to in many earlier seminal studies, thus proverb usage in varied social interactions is indeed a dynamic process. Therefore, the vivacity of proverbs in terms of their recurrent expressions in diverse interactional contexts captures the ways in which proverbs bring to the fore a convergence of the gravest societal concerns, society's most precious values, its wisest perspectives as well as its subtle and hushed commitments.

At other times proverbs even communicate society's coarsest humour and its basest beliefs such as quiet marginalizations of certain sections of its population, the inculcation of debasing attitudes and perspectives, thereby structuring its world milieu. Consequently, it can be argued with evidence, that there is an intricate scheme where proverbs in Swahili and Arab societies are deployed in the circulation of attributes of silence couched as honour, subservience presented as respect and marginality intended to be understood as rightful placement in society. However, a critical re-reading of these attributes reveals that these attributes are subtly structured in respect of one gender only, the female gender; they thus bring to the fore the paradoxical nature of proverbs in Swahili and Arab societies. For instance, whereas proverbs are generally understood to epitomize simplicity and common sense, such as ***"Nyumba ni mwanamke—a home is not complete without a woman"***, they turn out in insidious ways to be complex and subtle strategies

deployed to underpin societal organization either in preference of patriarchal interests or matriarchal interests. This is usually achieved through a subtle combination of their linguistic structures as linguistic items possessing concrete elements of verbal and logical structure and functional qualities in terms of possession of motives, strategies and avowed outcomes, for instance, as perceived in the Swahili proverb above that confines mothers and women generally to household chores. Even when predicated on the supposedly simplistic trajectory that proverbs are messages passed between and shared among people of common ancestry, they nevertheless function selectively, socially and behaviourally.

As much as it is true in other world cultures, proverbs in Swahili and Arab societies are part and parcel of a much larger whole, namely societal culture, its folklore, its folk knowledge, its internal cohesion and organization encompassing all areas of human life as well as aspects of their functioning at individual and societal levels. Indeed, even when proverbs are normally defined as treasure troughs of good reason, of authoritative wisdom, such definitions arise out of their functional dynamics, notably as in ethno-pedagogy, because proverbs are ubiquitously deployed in imparting "accepted" knowledge about nurture and upbringing, they are a system of educating and interpreting human behaviour and its habituation, into which may be injected both obvious and hushed patriarchal or matriarchal biases. Proverbs thus deployed, provide societal answers to the so-called base concerns, how to be a member of a social group or how to live in a given society, they ingeniously influence what a man or a woman should be like, how he or she should behave, think and act within specified societal contexts. The underlying thesis here is that, proverbs have innumerable functions encompassing a manifestation of a norm system, an interactional system, a cultural system and an ethical system among others, through which proverbs teach fidelity to the respected members of society, adherence to socially defined gender roles, reliability of action and deference to parents and adults.

They warn against the effects of unethical conduct—"***Mla kuku wa mwenziye miguu humwelekea—he who steals and eats another person's chicken, the chicken legs expose him"***; they favour perseverance— "***Mstahimilivu hula mbivu—he who is patient relishes the sweetness of a ripe fruit"***, they criticise hypocrisy—"***Mpanda upepo huvuna tufani—whoever sows the wind will harvest a storm"***. Thus, proverbs present a societal cosmology, a mosaic description of

the world of that society; they are life signposts given that they make it possible for society to tame its reality, no matter how logically disjointed that reality is. In other words, the isolation, marginalization or the privileging of certain sections of society that may be embedded in certain proverbs, is predicated on the moral principles of a given society's philosophy of life. The proverbs' other roles include reinforcing bonds among the members of a given community—"***Mla nawe hafi nawe ila mzaliwa nawe—the one who dines with you doesn't die with you, you die with your kinsman"***, thus, proverbs entail an integrative function in a given society, yet even when such a role is clearly discernible in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, a question will always arise whether the integrative function applies equally to all members of society. Proverbs act as social commentaries; thus providing means of risk reduction in social interactions— "***Mchungulia bahari si msafiri—he who scans the sea is not a traveller"*** or "***Mume ni kazi mke ni nguo—husband works and a wife dresses"***, but what is the validity of such commentary in present circumstances?

Whereas there is a general consensus that proverbs do actually have numerous functions, some of those functions are subtly muted and can only be discovered through a critical re-thinking of what is obvious. There is need, therefore, to re-think the interpretation of the functions of traditional proverbs in the contemporary world and of their usage in Swahili and Arab societies. Is there a way in which folk wisdom in proverbs is superseded by everyday human experiences in these societies? There is a truism that some proverbs such as those deployed in raising and nurturing children may be maintained through several millennia, yet there are others whose authority can be questioned. For instance, those proverbs that traditionally demeaned women, can they be maintained where the material status of women have so fundamentally changed? Given, then that proverbs can correctly be presumed to belong to wisdom literature, it is possible for them to be subjected to a hermeneutic perspective of studying them, first as a social experience in which are embedded attitudes and perspectives to the surrounding social world, thus reanalysing a proverb from a hermeneutic perspective may reveal something un-experienced before—"***Mke sawa na mtoto hatosheki na kupewa—a woman is just like a child, she is never satisfied with what she is given"***, can this still be relevant given women's changed circumstances? Secondly, even without contesting the validity of the truism that proverbs are by definition perceived as passing on the truth—which functionally consists of explaining or clarifying a given situation without obscuring

the picture of reality, for instance in the Swahili proverb—"***Mke kipofu huwa mwaminifu—a blind wife is a faithful wife"***, how possible is it to sustain its traditional interpretation given that women do not exist in a vacuum, they are acquiescent to common feelings, experiences and situations? Thirdly, given that only those proverbs which tend to describe universal experiences tend to survive over longer periods of time, how can it be explained that traditionally bound proverbs in Swahili and Arab societies are used to refer to the present realities that are hardly experienced?

2.3 Discerning Masculinity and Femininity in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs' Definitions

A critical interrogation of how proverbs have been defined over millennia reveals that most definitions have been premised on neutral paradigms, that is, dimensions which do not integrate gendered views into those definitions. Thus we are confronted with studies where such definitions as linguistic, structural, thematic and functional definitions of proverbs are dominant. Into these are injected other interests like delimiting the difference between proverbs from other gnomic devices such as apothegms, maxims, aphorisms, quotations and so on. Not only did such great minds as Aristotle and Plato occupy themselves with the question of what constitutes a proverb, the early Greek paremiologists in particular wrestled with this seemingly insurmountable task as well. In his attempt to define a proverb, Norrick (1985), argues that proverbs are pithy pieces of folklore because by nature most proverbs are figurative hence, can express multiple meanings at the same time, enabling them to serve a variety of purposes in different situations, that assertion is still not contestable. On his part Taylor (1985), contends that the definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking; and that, however, one tries to combine it in a single definition, it is insurmountable task. Consequently, he concluded that an incommunicable quality tells us that this sentence is proverbial and that one is not. Taylor's definition, in view of this study, is rather unhelpful because it does not provide us with entry points or points of view which will enable the discovery of hushed schemes in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

Barlotti (2000), argues that the linguists of the nineteenth century took proverbs as the source material for the comparative philological study of rural "archaic" dialects; owing to the fact that proverbs were treated as "immaterial relics" or surviving ideas from which civilization had evolved. This position does not seem to telescope into contemporary understandings of proverb pedagogy that enables the discovery of hushed patriarchal schemes in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

Barlotti's idea of civilization is presented in a homogeneous and unvarying sense as to insinuate the non-existence of covert schemes enabled by proverbs generally. This medley of proverb definitions presented above even when complemented by Mieder's (2000), assertions, who opines that even the most sophisticated and best educated people are in need of the succinct wisdom contained in metaphorical proverbs, do not facilitate the detection of hushed functions. Thus, scholars around the world continue to find their own so-called "working definitions," of which some of the most recent attempts in the English language include the following works: Milner (1969)—who defines a proverb as a pithy, vivid, humorous and emphatic statement that can be stated literally or figuratively which is often linked to another saying that gives it life which is used to urge, teach, praise, convince, warn, blame or discourage. Abrahams (1972)—whose assertion is premised on the understanding that proverbs are self-contained units with a moral weight of their own and an argument that is virtually self-sufficient. Mieder (1985)—contended in his definition that a proverb is wisdom in a sentence, whereas Whiting (1994)—asserted that a proverb means a grammatical sentence expressing an idea complete in itself.

Miruka (1994)—while drawing from his African experience defines a proverb as a brief statement full of hidden meaning, accepted and used by a community as an expression of truth or wisdom. On her part, Finnegan (1994)—sees a proverb as a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt and is distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it. Ahmad (2005)—is of the view that proverbs are short pithy sayings which had gained credence through widespread or frequent use. Sanauddin's (2015), position is not very different given that she is contented with the assertion that a proverb is a short but complete statement carrying folk wisdom in a general and often figurative form to guide behaviour in a recurrent situation. These proverb definitions are, in several senses persuaded by a formulaic dictate; that is, stating what a proverb is without necessarily questioning whether what is stated is the only thing discernible in proverb functions. Equally, these definitions in their assumed neutrality do not provide entry points to the discovery of the inscriptions of masculinity and femininity that are evident in a variety of Swahili and Arabic proverbs. There is need, therefore, to re-think proverb definition in some radical ways that will enable such inscriptions to be discerned. Such definition will of necessity re-think the proverb in terms of its overt manifestations

as well as its muted sub-text. There is much to be discovered in the sub-text of any proverb especially considering that proverbs are amenable to multi-faceted applications.

The word proverb, as used in English, originated from Latin "Proverbium" which means a simple and concrete saying popularly known and repeated, which expresses a truth, based on common sense or the practical reality of humanity. Proverbs can also be defined as short wise sayings which are often based on observable facts and heavily linked with the culture of a people, consequently even overly gender biased proverbs like "***Mwanamke haambiwi siri— a woman cannot be told a secret"***, will pass as wise sayings and observable facts. Yet within this "short wise saying", there is so much that is subtly inscribed, such as the male attitudes towards women, the societal placement of women, the centrality of secrets in this society and who the secret keepers ought to be; in short, the sub-text of any proverb is imbued with a treasure trough of societal wisdom, philosophy, relations, and much more. Consequently, this study seeks to go beyond folklorist Mieder's (1970) definition that, a proverb is commonly thought of as a phrase, saying, sentence, statement of or an expression of the folk which contains above all wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation. It seeks to argue that there is always something more subtly inscribed within the mundane paradigms of "wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons and advice". In other words, it seeks to ask what is it that lies within the sub-text of a wisdom proverb, a truth proverb and others.

Though this definition may be closely linked to Mieder's (1985:119), later refinements that, a proverb is "a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation", this definition does not go far enough as to suggest or even propose that proverbs present much more than what appears obvious. In other words, even when it is safe to argue that proverbs express some basic truth or practical precept, it is prudent to ask what constitutes a "basic truth or practical precept" in given societies but more so in given contexts of proverbs usage. Mieder's definitions unsurprisingly have cognates in other scholars' definitions like Ahmed's (2005), who defines proverbs as short pithy sayings which have gained credence through widespread or frequent use. Consequently, a proverb such as "***Mwamumne ni mbono huatika kule—a man is a custard seed, it busts and scatters afar"*** which obviously inscribes patriarchal and patronizing ethos which have survived generation after generation without being

interrogated. When all these definition variants of proverbs are taken collectively, they fail to appreciate the existence of heterogeneous schemes and functions embedded as embedded in proverbs. For instance, most proverbs in Swahili and Arab societies depicting women consistently employ imageries that demean, marginalize, subdue and in several senses commodify and objectify women, thus enabling very subtle inscriptions of masculinity and femininity. It would follow, therefore, that Swahili and Arabic proverbs are expressions of wisdom subtly nuanced in social and cultural discourses in which people's roles, functions and worth are fore-grounded and validated. Such attributes may be in tandem with aspects of acculturation and may thus include but not necessarily limited to such issues as nurturing, admonishing and advising. The presentation of proverbs of advice, moral upbringing, admonition and acculturation in which society is centrally situated abound in the lived experiences of Swahili and Arabic speaking people. Simply put, this means that proverbs are as such, natural observations "about life".

By projecting, for instance, an advice trajectory, proverbs are centrally premised in socializing the society into a given world view, as in ***"Kazi ya mekoni kazi ya nisiwani—kitchen work is work for women"*** subtly inscribing masculine and feminine ethos, which then get seamlessly embedded naturally into that society's natural scheme of things. For instance, the Swahili proverb, "***Asiyefunzwa na mamaye, hufunzwa na ulimwengu—he who is not taught by the mother is taught by the world"***, offers advice to the young people to listen and heed to the teachings from their parents if they want to lead an upright and successful life, otherwise they will have it rough in life. In the sub-text of a proverb like this, one can discern several gender interests such as the prescribed role of mothers in the nurturing and bringing up of children, a responsibility from which men are insulated. This means that, whichever way a child turns out later in life, it is a mother's responsibility. However, in this particular proverb, it is the turning out bad that is strongly intimated, thus bad upbringing is not perceived a shared responsibility between father and mother but rather as a failure on the part of the mother; whereby the fathers are absolved from blame.

Similar advice is given in the Arabic proverb, "***Al-aaqilyatazawaji lilawladihi—he who is wise marries for his children"***. This proverb amplifies the pivotal role played by mothers in the process of raising children. Thus, proverbs are subtly deployed in celebrating mothering-fathering, motherhood-fatherhood, and therefore, the life advancing values connected with all aspects of motherhood-fatherhood such as nurturing, family-wholeness, moral flexibility, social

responsibility, morality, religion, culture and positive strength. As much as it may appear that these are shared views, the extent of their execution is not always equal but is rather dependent on the masculine or feminine interests advanced.

The hitherto available definitions of proverbs from different languages have tended to be confined to what is overly observable, for instance, there are numerous attempts to define what a proverb really means through the use of other proverbs. For instance, English proverbs which in themselves are folk definitions of a sort include: "A good maxim is never out of season"; "All the good sense of the world runs into a proverb"; "Proverbs are the children of experience"; "Proverbs are the wisdom of the streets"; "Nothing can beat a proverb"; "Proverbs cannot be contradicted", to mention but a few. These types of definitions in several senses obscure the realization of hushed functions of proverbs, notably in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. It is imperative, therefore, to mention here that proverbs mean different things to different people (Mumali, 2012). However, the examples advanced in projecting this position such as: "a proverb is the horse of conversation" (Yoruba), "proverbs are the daughters of experience" (Sierra Leone), "a wise man who knows proverbs reconciles difficulties" (Yoruba), "a proverb is the voice of God" (Spanish, Latin and Japanese), "a proverb is an ornament to language" (Persian), "a proverb is to speech what salt is to food" (Arabic), "the proverb is the leaf they use to eat the word" (Ibo) and "proverbs are affairs of the nation" (Congo); do not in any way delve into what may be contained or what constitutes the sub-texts of proverbs thematically and functionally. In terms of what these definitions bring to this study, one thing stands out; they do not demonstrate how ubiquitously proverbs are embedded in the inscription, enculturation and circulation of cultural values, ethos and worldviews.

Milner (1969a:199), argues that a proverb has six characteristics namely: it is pithy, concise and easily remembered by the use of rhyme, rhythm, repetition or alliteration; it is vivid, homely, sometimes coarse, deals with people's primary interests; it singles out something abstract and universal based on experience and observation which might be stated literally or figuratively; it sums up a situation by appealing to humour; it is often linked to another saying which appears to give it the life; last but not least its effect is to raise a statement from the ordinary to emphatic level in order to urge, teach, praise or convince or alternatively to warn, blame, restrain or discourage. It is important to note that these arguments concerning the characteristics of proverbs, though discernible and exemplified in Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women, they do not render

observable patriarchal biases or even muted masculine agendas. For instance, the Swahili proverbs; "***Aliyemwoa mama ndiye baba yako—he who has married your mother is your father***", *"**mke ni nguzo ya nyumba***—a ***wife is the pillar of the house***", *"**Mficha uchi hazai—he who hides his nakedness cannot sire a child***", ***"Titi la mama litamu jingine haliishi hamu—the mother's breast is the sweetest no other breast quenches the thirst",*** *"**Fuata nyuki ule asali—follow the bees and eat honey***", and "***Asiyefunzwa na mamaye, hufunzwa na ulimwengu—he who is not taught by the mother is taught by the world***"; may on the whole appear simply as celebratory proverbs celebrating womanhood and motherhood generally. However, a closer scrutiny of these proverbs' sub-texts reveals that there is so much inscribed in these proverbs, including among other things, ethos of masculinity and femininity.

For example, a critical interrogation of the sub-text of a proverb loosely translated as, "***Aliyemwoa mama ndiye baba yako—he who has married your mother is your father***", invokes a marital interaction in which the male is emphasized, thus elevating the role of a man in a marriage and at the same time demeaning and relegating the woman's role in the same relationship. On the other hand, much as the proverb, *"**Mke ni nguzo ya nyumba—a wife is the pillar of the house***", is a subtle celebration of the importance of a woman in a marriage but, it is a celebration that is confining as it is marginalizing to the women folk by limiting their activities to the homestead. Similarly, the proverb, *"**Mficha uchi hazai—he who hides his nakedness cannot sire a child***", may appear to refer to either gender, yet its bias towards women is evident given that the act of giving birth or lack of it thereof—barrenness, is not considered a male issue. The blame would, therefore, naturally fall on women, in which case, this is an ingenious infusion of biological delineation into social organization. Even though the overall message in the proverb, ***"Titi la mama litamu jingine haliishi hamu—the mother's breast is the sweetest no other breast quenches the thirst***", appears to be positively celebratory and in praise of the superiority of the mother's milk in comparison to any other, it is nonetheless, yet another subtle infusion of the biological delineation in assigning the role of nurturing of children to women while absolving their male counterparts from the same. The proverb, "***Follow the bees and eat honey***", though not obviously feminine, however, when used in the portrayal of female-male relationships, it tilts towards depicting men as aggressive and go-getters; while women are looked at as passive objects just like honey, which has no choice in deciding who, how and when it is consumed. Such proverbs, then, when critically interrogated withing a feminist theory paradigm, reveal that they are centrally

implicated in silencing and muting women's locution while giving voice to the men. Last but not least, the proverb, "***Asiyefunzwa na mamaye, hufunzwa na ulimwengu—he who is not taught by the mother is taught by the world***"; apportions the role of educating children to the mothers, which simply put, implies that mothers will be blamed if their children are not well behaved; while on the flipside if they are disciplined then their fathers take credit for it.

Similarly, these characteristics are exemplified in Arabic proverbs, for instance, the proverbs; "***Idhaa kaana zauji raadhi aishi fudhulu al-qaadhi—if my husband consents why should the Kadhi's interference be entertained***", "***Asa'a al-daaba al-sareea waakhud twaliq al-mara almutwiya kulaha tumtiya—keep a fast moving animal and marry an obedient woman as they are the enjoyment of your life***", ***"Al-zauj sutra—marriage is a shield***", ***Zaitunaa fii daqiiqinaa—our oil is mixed with our own flour***"***, "Ghairatu al-qahabatu zinaa wa ghairatu al-huratu bukaa—the jealousy of a harlot is by adultery while that of a virtuous woman is by weeping***" and ***"Mani tazawaja fi isuuqu al-twairi kaana twalaaqahu tamusuubil-khairi— he who marries in the bird market his divorce is as quick as one saying goodnight***". When these proverbs are critically examined within the feminist theory paradigm, they raise fundamental issues concerning male-female relationships, social organization, social interactions, consequently they ingeniously enable the inscriptions of masculinity and femininity; they also inscribe the ethos of gender locus in terms of core and margin as well as high and low. For instance, the proverb, "***If my husband consents, why should the Kadhi's interference be entertained***", inscribes the ethos of subservience in the sense that it does not only assign the role of a wife to women, but also makes them subservient in that role. Their locus in marriage is passive and their locution is muted. Thus, there is no chance of determining the dynamics of a given marriage, for instance moving out of a marriage which may be abusive or which may not be working for them is at the discretion of their husbands or the Kadhis who also happen to be men.

The proverb, "***Keep a fast moving animal and marry an obedient woman as they are the enjoyment of your life***", is predicated on the ethos of both silence and marginalization, in other words, women are objectified as objects of male enjoyment, and by that stretch of imagination, women are required to be obedient but most importantly they are there as pleasure objects for the men. On the other hand, whereas the proverb, "***Marriage is a shield***", doesn't seem to directly marginalize women, its sub-text is nonetheless strongly nuanced in terms of core and margin, given

that in the institution of marriage in this society, marriage strategically confines and limits women's activities, freedoms and movement, they get mostly restricted to household chores which end up marginalizing women in the long run. Similar ethos is echoed in the proverb, "***Our oil is mixed with our own flour***", which seems not to refer to any particular gender, yet a critical rethinking of the same proverb divulges a hushed idea, inscribing subservience, in practical terms it is used to make women passive and docile because just like flour depends on oil during kneading so are the women dependent on men. The proverb, "***The jealousy of a harlot is by adultery while that of a virtuous woman is by weeping***", clearly addresses itself to attributes that exalt women either in terms of purity "a virtuous woman" or disparage them in terms of impurity "jealousy of a harlot" and "adultery." Furthermore, one can see in the proverb the nuanced sense of seclusion and in terms of metaphors that invoke confinements and smallness. The hushed ethos that become discernible tilt towards issues of masculinity and femininity whereby the women are depicted as foolish for exhibiting attributes of adultery-harlotry and weakness expressed in terms of a weeping woman, who is in turn hailed as virtuous. Similar apportionment of attributes where men are depicted in terms of strength and weakness to women is depicted in the proverb, "***He who marries in the bird market his divorce is as quick as one saying goodnight***" where attributes of family stability and piety are invoked.

It is evident that, in order to discern hushed themes and functions of proverbs, as in the case of discerning the inscriptions of masculinity and femininity, there is need to go beyond the routine definitions of proverbs available hitherto. There is need to argue and demonstrate that a proverb does indeed have the overt surface text and some hushed sub-text as has been demonstrated in the foregoing debate. Discussions or definitions of proverbs touching on proverb structure as well as proverb function must in several ways allude to the existence of proverb sub-texts in which are embedded hushed schemes, strategies and cultural ethos. The concept of sub-text in proverb studies will constitute the core of the discussions in the subsequent subsections of this thesis in which the highlights of linguistic and structural features of proverbs will be juxtaposed in terms of their surface texts and sub-texts. Their communicative and behavioural functions will be interrogated in terms of their enablement and circulation of cultural values; as well as demonstrating the importance of these features in terms of enculturation.

2.3.1 The Inscription of Masculinity and Femininity within the Linguistic and Structural Features of Swahili and Arabic proverbs

A number of scholars have devoted a great deal of effort to identify the occurrences of certain "markers" which help in identifying a given statement as a proverb. One such scholar is Litorkina (1996), who contends that proverb markers are those internal features which make a certain statement a proverb, even if it is presented in isolation, out of its surrounding discourse and even if it is heard for the first time. These "markers" may be certain grammatical or syntactic features, for example, the omission of the article, certain patterns, quadripartite structures; semantic markers, for example, metaphor, parallelism, paradox, irony; lexical markers, archaic or old-fashioned words; such words as never, always, everyday; phonic markers for example, rhyme, alliteration, meter amongst other markers. For instance, the occurrence of metaphor—as in the Swahili proverb, "***Kuku havunji yaile—a hen does not break her own egg***" and in the Arabic proverb "***Al-mara sha'ar tabia raqaba—a woman is hair that follows the neck***"; the occurrence of irony—as in the Swahili proverb "***Kaburi la mke mwenza li kombo—the grave of the co-wife is crooked***" and in Arabic proverb, "***Thalatha maa tarfau minhum aswaa: al-mara wa al-naqaara wa al-himara—do not take your stick away from these three; a woman, a drum and a female donkey***"; are some of the markers of the proverbs among others. It must be pointed out that these are merely overt markers; they constitute the surface text of proverbs.

Many proverb scholars agree that proverbs are generally "short" and "pithy" or "pregnant with meaning". In the words of Lau et al. (2004:2), proverbs are "brief and pithy, wise and witty". Proverbs such as "money talks" and "haste makes waste" contain only two and three words respectively but convey a higher degree of lexical meaning per word. Another feature of a proverb is its "completeness", to which most proverb scholars including Whiting (1994, 95), say, "Proverb means a grammatical sentence expressing an idea complete in itself". Proverbs are self-contained units with a moral weight of their own and an argument that is virtually self sufficient"; they are nearly always a single sentence statement (Abrahams, 1972:123; Honeck et al. 1980). Whereas it is not plausible to contest the validity of these definitions, this definitional criterion is merely geared towards distinguishing proverbs from proverbial phrases, a situation that does not allow a proverb user to discern the existence of a dual text within a single proverb. In this sense, it may be possible to question, what does it mean to be "pregnant with meaning?" what does "proverb

completeness" mean? For example, when one interrogates an English proverb such as "easy come easy go" is it possible to discern a plurality of texts or rather a singularity of text? These markers or features for that matter must tell more than this.

The poetic features of proverbs have also been studied widely and hence are considered as part of the defining criterion of proverbs (Abrahams, 1968; Holbek, 1970; Norrick, 1985; and Milner, 1969a). Norrick (1985), distinguishes, "external" poetic features (such as rhyme, rhythm, parallelism, alliteration amongst others) and internal features (such as metaphor, pun, personification, hyperbole, to mention but a few). Whereas the range and distribution of these features in Swahili and Arabic proverbs vary, they nonetheless manifest themselves in the proverbs. It is not enough to point out the existence of a mere feature, let's say the existence of a simile as in the Swahili proverb "***Mwanamke ni kama maji ya dafu, hayapendezi ila dafuni mwake—a woman is like the water of a young coconut which is not pleasant except in its shell***", a critical engagement with this proverb must go ahead and question, what does the simile in question present? Ideally, whether one is talking about external or internal poetic features, it must be appreciated that those features do not exist for their own sake, they constitute an array of strategies which enable both overt and covert functions of proverbs.

Figuration is another area which has engaged proverb scholars in various ways, such as pointing out the distinction between literal and figurative meaning where it has been observed that meaning depends on the contexts in which a proverb has been used. As it has been rightfully argued by Hasan-Rokem (1982:15), "a proverb *y,* for instance, may be in a metaphorical relationship in context *a*, but may be in literal relationship in context *b".* It is, therefore, safe to conclude that, even if figuration is a common feature of proverbs, it does not amount to a criterion for the definition of a proverb, yet there is so much that can be observed when a proverb is used in either of the contexts. For instance, the usage of the Swahili proverb "***Ushaufu si heshima ya mwanamke—flirting is not respectable to a woman***"; may be a caution, admonition or ridicule. But there must be some hushed issues in all these. Even if one were to remain within the lexical features of this proverb, it is obvious that the choice of the lexical items is heavily tilted. If flirting is not honourable for women, how is flirting to be understood when men are involved? And in any case, is flirting possible without the involvement of the other gender? Consequently, lexical choices in this proverb are not neutral; they are deployed to advance certain patriarchal agendas.

There have been a number of scholars who have grappled with the idea of rigidity and fixedness as a feature of proverb definition. Scholars like Barley (1972), Green (1975), Taylor (1985) and Sanauddin (2015), contend that a proverb is "rigid" and "fixed" in structure and form on the assumption that the listener can instantaneously tell that a proverb is being used. Regardless of their theoretical orientations with regard to this assertion, it is prudent to query what underpins this sense of rigidity and fixedness in proverbs. Part of the explanation has to do with the aura of unquestionable authority with which proverbs are imbued, in which case if a proverb is found wanting in some way, that flaw is not questioned. This is one of the ways in which what is inscribed by proverbs is hardly questioned. This notion is not in any way fundamentally altered even with Norrick's (1985) assertion that; many proverbs have their variants even in the same linguistic community. Moreover, certain structural changes or lexical additions to a proverb do not change the recognisability of the proverbs. Variability is a characteristic trait of proverbs that makes it possible for proverbs to be inverted, transformed and abbreviated through addition or subtraction of items; without negating their involvement in the inscription and circulation of cultural values and worldviews (Akbarian, 2012). For example, the statement, "It is while the iron is hot that it should be struck", would still be recognized as a proverb even if its form has slightly been altered, yet its thematic and functional efficacy remains unchanged. The same can be said of Swahili and Arabic proverbs, for instance, in its usual format the Swahili proverb **"*Azaaye kinyago hukinyonyesha—the one who gives birth to a statute suckles it***" can be changed to "***Hukinyonyesha azaaye kinyago***" yet the hushed schemes do not change. This means that the engagement with the ideas of rigidity and fixedness as necessary criteria in proverb definition is superfluous when proverbs are analysed in terms of their thematic and functional imperatives.

Just like it is true of the requirements of rigidity and fixedness, paremiologists' engagements with the structural properties of proverbs, such as the syntactic structures of proverbs, have had minimal impact in assuaging the thematic and functional aspects of proverbs generally. Attempts like Milner's (1969a:199), definition of a proverb on the basis of the "symmetrical structure, form and content" have not in any way negated the thematic and functional imperatives of proverbs generally. Milner's theoretical assertions that a proverb has four parts or "quarters", where each quarter can be assigned a positive (+) or negative (-) value according to whether it is good or bad, safe or dangerous, friendly or hostile, useful or useless, is a rather lengthy exercise whose practical

value in terms of appreciating the thematic and functional aspects of proverbs is hard to ascertain. The attributes enumerated by Milner are by and large normative and subjective such that the assigning of the same to any proverb is subjective as well. For instance, a Swahili proverb such as "***Ukistahi mke ndugu huzai naye—if you shy away of your cousin's wife you will not sire with her***", within the paradigm of Milner's positive and negative value assignments, is basically subjective. Yet whether those positive and negative values are discernible or not, the thematic function of social role assignment is sustained. It is further affirmed in Milner's theoretical postulations that the four quarters of a proverb can be grouped into two "halves" where these halves count as negative (-) when the quarters are opposite (+ and -) and as positive (+) when they are both positive and both negative (+and +; or – and -). Consequently, when Milner's theory is applied to a proverb "New brooms sweep clean" this proverb is grouped as positive because both its parts or "halves" give a positive message, while the proverb "soon ripe soon rotten", would be grouped as negative, because its second half is negative as the word rotten connotes a negative value.

It does appear that Milner's theoretical supposition is appropriate in its application to the study of the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs because it provides clues necessary in the identification of whether the depiction in the selected proverbs of the two languages is either positive or negative. In other words, the disclosure of the inscription of masculinity and femininity within the linguistic and structural features of Swahili and Arabic proverbs, will inevitably be considered in terms of their positive or negative values. For instance, the Swahili proverbs; "***Kuku akiatamia hana matembezi—a hatching hen doesn't stroll around"***, and "***Kaburi la mke mwenza li kombo—the grave of the co-wife is crooked***", have a positive and negative message respectively, yet within those positive and negative messages are embedded hushed negative attributes and cultural values that underpin and ascribe silence, subservience and marginality to one gender. It should be noted, however, that being positive or negative is not a straight forward affair; it is something arising out of given interpretive perspectives. For instance, the first proverb's first part that "a hen with chicks" is positive in the sense that a mother who gives birth is celebrated in the Swahili society; while at the same time this same proverb can be used to marginalize women by limiting their movement especially when they have young children. Similarly, the second proverb's first part being "the grave of the co-wife" revolves around the not so cordial relationship between co-wives married to a Swahili husband. The reason behind the negative message in this proverb is twofold; in the first instance, women in this proverb are depicted in terms of one wishing

bad luck for her fellow women folk and secondly this proverb symbolises the subservience of women to men.

On the other hand, when Arabic proverbs are subjected to a similar theoretical postulation, it is evident that the type of message projected in the proverbs requires some critical analysis in order that the hushed thematic and functional qualities are brought out. For instance, the proverbs; "***Umm adhukur adhaniiha baardah—the mother of male children has peace of mind***" and "***La talid al-hayat ila hayat—a snake does not give birth except to a snake***"; have positive and negative messages respectively. A closer look at the first part of the first proverb that "the mother of male children" is positive in the sense that children especially boys are celebrated in the Arab society; but again this same part brings to the fore the preference of male children in comparison to the females, consequently they have hushed inscriptions of masculinity and femininity. This fact is emphasised in the second part of the same proverb that mothers who give birth to boys have peace of mind; this proverb inculcates subservience in women because they are depicted as being inferior to their male counterparts. The second proverb's message is negative owing to the fact that both of its parts are negative. Furthermore, by depicting women as snakes, this proverb seems to suggest that these are people who should either be shunned or approached with caution; therefore, its hushed thematic function is the marginalization of women in the Arab society.

Dundes (1975a), contends that structurally, all proverbs are composed of a topic and a comment. The topic is the apparent reference which forms the subject or item which is allegedly described; the "comment" is an assertion about the topic, usually concerning the form, function, characteristic, or action of the topic. The simplest form of the proverb would thus be "money talks" in which money is the topic and talks is the "comment". Dundes concluded that all proverbs are descriptive statements which are composed of at least one topic and one comment, and it is therefore theoretically impossible to have a one-word proverb. On the surface analysis of proverbs, this is true of Swahili and Arabic proverbs, they are short, may be, two word proverbs but hardly a one-word proverb. Dundes' suppositions are important in their application to this study, notably in terms of their enabling the identification of topic and comment within proverb structure. For instance, in the proverbs already used above; "***Kuku akiatamia hana matembezi—a hatching hen doesn't stroll around"*** and *"**La talid al-hayat ila hayat—a snake does not give birth except to a snake***"; have "a hatching hen" plus "a snake does not give birth" as the topics; while their

comments are “doesn’t stroll around” and “except to a snake” for the Swahili and Arabic proverbs respectively.

2.4 Communicative and Behavioural Functions of Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

While discussing the communicative and behavioural aspects of proverbs Mieder (1993), affirms that by employing proverbs in their speech, people wish to strengthen their arguments, express generalisations, influence or manipulate other people, rationalize their own short comings, and question certain behavioural patterns, satirize social ills, or poke fun at ridiculous situations. This argument is echoed by Sanauddin (2015), in the assertion that proverbs are not only linguistic structures but they also play an active social role in the lives of both speakers and listeners. By extension, this assertion insinuates that Swahili and Arabic proverbs are active and dynamic devices in everyday conversational interactions, where they affirm varied behavioural givens and communicate the same either overtly or in a muted sense. It should not be assumed that everything communicated by proverbs is obvious, overt and readily available to every listener. This is a truism that pervades virtually all Swahili and Arabic proverbs, whether the proverbs are focused on women or not. However, what is important in understanding this complex communication, as canvassed by Mieder and Sanauddin, is the need to uncover the communication of the muted interests embedded in proverbs. For instance, in what ways can Swahili and Arabic proverbs be said to be manipulating the feminine interests of their societies so as to advance patriarchal interests? How do these proverbs rationalize male privileging on the one hand and female marginalization on the other— “***Kuku hawiki penye jogoo—a hen does not crow where there is a cock***”? How do they satirize and ridicule either male or female roles in society?

For instance, it is possible to see how proverbs may be deployed in a manipulative way so as to advance interests of one gender while at the same time demeaning or muting those of the other gender, as is discernible in the following proverbs. The Swahili proverb “***Eda ni ada yenye faida—abstinence and self-seclusion is a beneficial culture***” and the Arabic proverb “***Habulatuni wa murudhiatuni wa qadaamihaa aruba’atuni—she is pregnant with a child and nurses a child and has four children before her***”. These are good examples that illustrate how Swahili and Arabic proverbs are deployed strategically and, therefore, are responsible for the manipulation of the feminine interests of the two societies. These proverbs are products of a long established cultural practice in which one gender is privileged while the other is insulated from certain chores or

responsibilities. For instance, in Swahili culture, the Swahili women who have lost their husbands either through divorce or death are supposed to wait for three months (in divorce cases) and four months and ten days (in the case of death for the widows) before remarrying; but men are not subjected to that *eda*—that period of seclusion and abstinence—because they are allowed to remarry at the time of their choosing. It is evident that in praising an expectant woman who is nursing a young child besides having four other children, the Arabic proverb mentioned above is employed in manipulating women and makes them not to fully appreciate the fact that raising of children is a full time job with no end in sight.

Swahili and Arabic proverbs are also deployed in subtle ways to buttress the rationalization of male privileging on the one hand and female marginalization on the other as evidenced in the Swahili proverb "***Jogoo hawezi kulea wana—a cock cannot raise chicks***", and in the Arabic proverb *"**Idhaa arada rabuka halak namlatun anbata laha ajinihatun—if God wants to destroy the ant he allows it to grow wings***". In the first proverb, the image of a cock with all it haughtiness and sense of self-importance is strongly invoked in symbolizing husband-man-male conceit on the one hand and on the other, it is manipulated to insulate men from the responsibilities of nurturing children, thus ingeniously burdening wives-women-female with that responsibility. This proverb not only assigns gender roles between the man and woman but also marginalizes women by limiting them to household chores where they are fully occupied with the raising of children. The Arabic proverb, on its part, echoes a similar message of women's marginalization where a woman is compared to a wingless ant. The hushed sub-text of this proverb subtly suggests that women in this society are deprived of any form of empowerment and supports that view of disempowerment by insinuating that if God wants to destroy the "ant" he allows it to grow wings. The subtlety of inscribing smallness is invoked by the image of an "ant" growing wings, in other words, women should not be saddled with responsibilities way above their abilities. In this sense, feminine marginality is quietly inscribed and allowed to circulate.

Furthermore, these Swahili and Arabic proverbs are also used to satirize and ridicule either male or female roles in their societies. For instance, the Swahili proverb "***Mume ni kazi mke ni nguo—the husband works the wife dresses***", and the Arabic proverb "***Al-mara sha'ar tabia raqaba—a woman is hair that follows the neck***". It is obvious that whereas these proverbs may look well-meaning, they are nonetheless used to both satirize and ridicule female roles. By stating that a man

works and a woman dresses, the Swahili seem to down play the role played by women in society since as claimed by the proverb they only fuss over clothes and dressing. Similarly, the Arabic proverb that a woman is hair that follows the neck implies that women's roles are not as important as those of their male counterparts; simply put this means that they cannot lead they can only follow.

The notion of women taking secondary positions in leadership or any other social responsibilities is discernible in the study by Seitel et al (1976:125), in which they have expressed the view that, proverbs are best understood as "the strategic social use of metaphor" to serve certain purposes. The study further asserts that these short and traditional statements are used "to further some social end" like evidenced in a number of Swahili and Arabic proverbs strategically constructed and deployed to confine women to restrictive homestead chores—"***Mke ni nguzo ya nyumba—a wife is the pillar of the house***"; a proverb whose overt manifestation appears celebratory yet covertly manipulative in the sense that its overall rhetorical strategy in a given communication event, is to confine women to homestead chores. A critical interrogation of the issues canvassed by scholars like Seitel shows that there is an awareness that there is a disconnect between the structural-linguistic and functional qualities of a proverb. It is prudent, therefore, to aver that in order to demonstrate the existence of hushed sub-texts in proverbs implicated in the inscription of patriarchal interests and their circulation, critical studies need to focus on the proverbs' myriad functions.

There have been attempts to draw general functional proverb categories, such as those advanced by Bascom (1965:290), in which he argues that proverbs promote social integration by validating culture, "justifying its rituals and institutions to those who perform and observe them" as in the Swahili proverb "***Mwacha mila ni mtumwa—he who discards culture is a slave***". Intuitively, this means there is always a proverbial strategy to defend those proverbs that may be plainly biased. For instance, when people express dissatisfaction with some accepted aspect of life, a "wise" proverb will work as an explanation. Additionally, Bascom argues that proverbs function as "pedagogic devices" or as "pedagogical discourse" (Granborm-Herranen, 2010:96), that is as a means of teaching morals and values to children (Yankah, 2001 and Akbarian, 2012). Both Granborm-Herranen (2010), and Akbarian (2012), concur that it is because of the pedagogical and moralist codes that proverbs are mostly associated with adults as in the Swahili proverb

"***Mwanamke ana jicho la nje—a woman has an "outside eye***" and the Arabic proverb "***Dumuu'u al-fawaajiru hawaadhiru—the tears of the adulteress are ever ready***".

Similarly, proverbs as alluded to by Bascom (1965:295), fulfil "the important but often overlooked function of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behaviour, a means of applying social pressure and exercising social control" as in the Swahili proverb "***Nyumba ni mwanamke—the house is a woman***" and the Arabic proverb "***Al-zawaj sutra—marriage is a shield***". This argument is shared by (Grzybek, 1987; Yankah, 2001 and Akbarian, 2012), that proverbs are understood as instruments that create and establish certain social norms and behaviours as in the Swahili proverb "***Eda ya mke hakuna eda ya mume—abstinence and self-seclusion is for the wife, there is no abstinence and self-seclusion for the husband***" or as in the Arabic proverb "***Al-mara maa bawada wuhaa—a consignment will not be given to a woman***". Proverbs are not only employed in the education of children and adults alike in different societies across the globe, but also proverbs are used as a means of applying pressure on members of society in order to make them submit to societal norms. In other words, there are various proverbs that are strategically deployed to restrain individuals who attempt to deviate from social conventions, norms and locations, including gender positions.

The other function of proverbs is that, proverbs reveal people's frustrations and attempts to escape into fantasy from repressions imposed on them by society (Bascom, 1965). In these kinds of situations, the use of pithy proverbs enables people to hide their own thoughts and say something they would not dare to say in a direct manner as may be said in a Swahili proverb "***Simba awapo mawindoni hafunui zake ndole—when a lion is hunting it does not display its claws***". This is one strategy through which hushed schemes and covert interests enabled by proverbs are maintained. According to Sanauddin (2015), when proverbs are used to communicate information which people find hard to say plainly, then it is a paradox, because while proverbs play a vital role in transmitting and maintaining the social norms and in forcing individuals to conform to them, at the same time it provides socially approved outlets for the repressions which these same institutions impose upon individuals. Hamilton (1987:74), asserts that proverbs are taken as the true feelings of the suppressed group; plainly put, "voices from below" as in the Swahili proverb "***Kesi ya mwanamke haipelekwi barazani kwa wazee—a woman's case is not taken in front of the elders***".

The last but not least proverb function is that proverbs are rhetorical devices the "ornament of speech" (Akbarian, 2012) and "weaponry in natural interaction" (Liber 1994; Arewa & Dundes 1964 and Yankah, 2001). Proverbs are used for some practical or pragmatic purposes in various circumstances of everyday communication, for instance, in the communication of social and gender roles. As Krikmann (1985:58), asserts that, "with the aid of a proverb, one can aim to provide an endorsement to his statements, express doubts, accuse someone of something, justify or excuse somebody, mock somebody and so forth". These rhetorical and didactic functions of proverbs are central and critical in understanding inscriptions of masculinity and femininity as is being canvassed in this study. This kind of understanding is in many ways insinuated in discussions that have been made by many scholars, such as (Norrick, 1995; Seitel, 1976; Abrahams 1972; Krikmann, 1985 and Yankah, 2001), who have argued that the most important functions of proverbs are embedded in their didactic properties. In other words, when a proverb is introduced in a conversational interaction, there is a direct or indirect hint given to the listener asking him/her for some behavioural changes according to the situational context. Consequently, in trying to discern the inscriptions of masculinity and femininity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, the functional categories are critical in underlining how attributes of silence, subservience and marginality are ascribed to the female gender.

2.4.1 Uncovering Masculinity and Femininity within the Functional Classification of Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

One issue that has preoccupied proverb scholars for long has been the issue of classification of proverbs. Just like mentioned previously on the matter of structural-linguistic properties of proverbs, other scholars have focused on functions enabled by proverbs. Simply put, the functional classification is premised on the overt functions performed by proverbs or functions discernible in the use of proverbs. Scholars such as Kipury (1983), and Chesaina (1991), have undertaken studies in which their collection of African proverbs from selected African communities are grouped on the basis of this criterion. However, it must be noted that they are not vocal in their assertions on classification that indeed proverbs have both surface and sub-texts, in which case, the overt functions upon which their classifications were done are not the only functions discernible. Miruka's (1994), assertion that functional classification operates from a theoretical framework which is sociological in nature and that proverbs play a major role towards the advancement of

education to the proverb users, does not in any way allude to the apparent duality of proverb function.

Although aspects of utilitarian imperatives have been integrated into this taxonomy, it is imprudent to appreciate proverb function only in terms of its surface manifestation. Whereas there is some utility in this classification approach which treats all oral literature as utilitarian art, it must be pointed out that this approach has its limitations. This is so because it has been demonstrated in many studies that proverbs are by nature diverse in their functions. Such functions range from warning, advising, castigating negative social behaviour, consoling victims involved in misfortunes, to encouraging good behaviour among other functions. However, what these scholars have not done is to point out the nature and perspective of warning, advising and castigating negative social behaviour. Are the warnings and castigations applied equally and without bias across the gender divide? Is there a possibility that some proverbs may be obviously patriarchal while others may advance patriarchal agendas but in a hushed manner? For example, the Swahili proverb, "***Fadhila mpe mama na Mola atakubariki—give respect to your mother and God will bless you***"; may overtly appear to encourage people to treat their mothers with utmost respect and kindness so as to be blessed by the creator. Similar advice is also echoed in the Arabic proverb, "***Initaabati al-qahabatu uriswati—if a harlot repents, she becomes a procuress (marriage material)***". The surface text of this proverb teaches that when people reform and behave well, they will end up being treated in a respectful manner. At this point a question must be asked, are these the only texts that can be read of these proverbs?

Whereas there is no doubt that there is good moral advice embedded in these two proverbs, good counsel that seems to suggest that respect is earned through a person's words and deeds, there is something about the second proverb's imagery that suggests bias and bigotry. In the Arabic proverb, the woman is first denigrated into a harlot, and then her salvation is advocated through marriage, obviously marriage to a man. There is no doubt in this proverb that masculinity and femininity are inscribed. Harlotry is disparaged but only in one direction, the feminine direction as if harlotry is possible without male involvement. This is the kind of text that gets side lined in generalized proverb functional classification. Though it is important to remember that in order to understand the function of a proverb, knowledge of the situation in which it is utilized is essential, however, that situational understanding must be deep rooted and critical. This has been duly argued

by Finnegan (1970:416), who affirms that, "one proverb can be used in several contexts to suggest a variety of different truths or different facts of the same truth or even their opposite truths". Finnegan further argues that, to confine a proverb (my own addition) to a single role is to mess proverb flexibility and blur situational applicability that may be outrightly discernible in proverbs. This is in view of the fact that the same proverb can be used in a whole range of situations with different applications and meanings, in other words, the utilization of proverbs' surface and sub-texts in varied ways. It should be noted, however, that this approach's flaw is its failure to allude to multiplicity of application in the sense that a proverb is acquiescent to changes in its functions depending on when it is used, in which context and by whom (Ndungo, 1998).

The functional classification approach as discussed by the aforementioned scholars, though it offers clues which are useful to this study, it is nevertheless limiting the appreciation of proverbs' multiple texts and as such multiple functions. If proverbs are interrogated within arguments advanced by Ndungo (ibid), which assert that proverbs are products of culture; hence they reflect a peoples' philosophy, beliefs, attitudes, and values, then it is plausible to argue that within a culture's mosaic, there are inscriptions that are coarse, prejudiced and discriminatory. On the basis of these arguments, this study avers inter alia that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women have their share of coarse, prejudiced and discriminatory inscriptions.

2.4.2 Masculinity and Femininity within the Thematic Classifications of Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

Just like some proverb scholars have been preoccupied with functional classification of proverbs, other scholars have been focusing their attention on what proverbs talk about, that is, focusing on the thematic concerns of proverbs and, therefore, necessitating a thematic classification. Proverbs that engage in religious matters, for instance, are grouped together; while those that centre on politics are also put together. Similarly, those that deal with social matters such as marriage and divorce are also categorized into yet another group. The major drawback to this classification method is that it is too focused on the surface manifestations of what may be perceived as thematic, indeed the proponents of the method are keenly aware of its other flaw, obvious thematic overlaps; given that some proverbs apply across many subject areas. This is demonstrated as in the Swahili proverb; "***Asiyefunzwa na mamaye hufunzwa na ulimwengu—he/she who is not taught by***

his/her mother, is taught by the world". This proverb may be used by educationists to show the importance of the mother's education to her children and also show that such education is necessary in the betterment of a person. The proverb may also be used by law enforcers to warn those errant members of the society, that they risk being punished, imprisoned or even sentenced to death, in so far as being taught by the world is concerned. In addition, this same proverb may be used by the proponents of gender equality to advance the view that mothers, and by extension women are as good as men because without playing the important role of education then the entire society will go to waste. It is important to note that if this proverb can be extended to canvass gender debates, then it means there are obvious indicators of inscriptions of masculinity and femininity in this proverb. It also means that the proverb is capable of subtle deployment in the advancement of biased gender roles, where though women are assigned the task of educating children, education is thus considered a homely chore best left to women. It is in this sentiment of "homely" that attributes of simplicity, plainness, and ordinariness are nuanced and then ascribed to women. The consequences of these hushed attributes are that they end up marginalizing and peripheralizing women by limiting their activities to the confines of homes where they are required to take care of the children's affairs.

Similar ethos is echoed in the Arabic proverb; "***Al-mara al-biquuloo mara minn al-ataba waliwaraa—the woman that they call a real woman is behind her door step***" can be applied across a number of topics. This proverb can be seen as being applicable in encouraging girls to get married, settle down and raise their own families together with their husbands. Given what girls are expected to do in this proverb inevitably echoes the "homely" chores encountered early in the Swahili proverb. It has been argued in other contexts that this proverb may be used by male chauvinists to marginalize women in preventing them from working by arguing that the women ought to strictly stay at home and take care of their children. Again, it is evident that the enjoinment of this proverb in gender activism is a recognition that it contains or it acquiesces to masculine and feminine inscriptions. Just like in the functional classification of proverbs, the thematic categorization also suffers a familiar downside; it does not allude to the existence of multiple texts embedded in proverbs. As has been demonstrated in the two proverbs in this section, there is evidence that Swahili and Arabic proverbs do in subtle ways inscribe masculinity and femininity and ascribe attributes of silence, subservience and marginality to the female gender. There is need, therefore, to deconstruct the routine thematic classification of proverbs so as to demonstrate its

involvement in the covert inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

2.4.3 Stylistic-Structural Classification of Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

In a number of studies, proverbs have also been classified according to their stylistic or structural features. With regard to their form, proverbs are generally short and appear in more or less fixed forms whose patterns are acceptable to society. Finnegan (1970:399), contends that, proverbs are mainly expressed by literal statements, similes, metaphors, hyperbole and paradox. Based on the manifestation of these stylistic elements in given proverbs, proverbs have been classified as rendered or either as directives, epigrams, or as allusions. This kind of classification is referred to as literary classification, an approach which classifies proverbs entirely on account of their stylistic features. When proverbs come out as directives they comment on situations or sum up some designed message to the targeted audiences (Miruka 1994). Proverbs in this category manifest themselves as terse authoritative statements, whose truth is explicitly unalterable as in the Swahili proverb; "***Mtoto wa nyoka ni nyoka—the child of a snake is a snake***". This teaches that behavioural and character traits manifested by children are largely inherited and copied from their mothers, owing to the fact that mothers spend a lot of time with their children from their infancy and generally throughout their lives, thus their ever-encompassing influence on children. The use of the image of snakes in depicting women connotes negative ascriptions on the part of women, and subtly marginalises women from mainstream activities because just like snakes, people are cautioned to treat and deal with women with utmost caution or be avoided completely. This is an obvious case of double standards given that the same society expects women not only to educate but also nurture children to become responsible individuals in future. However, it is within this sense of double standards that biased inscriptions of masculinity and femininity become discernible; women are depicted in negative terms that are always realized as negative imageries or negative connotations.

Ndungo (1998), has argued in her study that proverbs are characteristically marked by some kind of poetic quality in style and of sense. For example, that poetic quality is discernible in Swahili proverbs such as; "***Eda ni ada yenye faida—abstinence and self-seclusion is a beneficial culture***", and "***Mwana mtukana nina kuzimu enda kiona—a child who abuses his/her mother brings destruction to himself/herself***". Similar poetic qualities are discernible in Arabic proverbs

such as; "***Idhaa kana zauji raadhi aishi fudhulu al-qaadhi—if my husband has consented why should the Kadhi's interference be entertained***" and "***Habulatuni wa murudhiatuni wa qadaamihaa aruba'atuni—she is pregnant with a child, nursing another besides four other children***". The four proverbs presented here for illustration are not only poetic but they also have a social orientation given that they touch on the marriage institution in both Swahili and Arab societies. The first proverb which asserts that abstinence and self-seclusion (*eda* the waiting that is expected after divorce or death before remarrying) is a beneficial culture is obviously a patriarchal strategy employed in the silencing and marginalization of women; given that the abstinence and self-seclusion as well as the waiting in question solely applies to the women folk while the men are free to remarry any time they feel like. It should be noted that according to the Swahili the issue of culture is revered (because it is heavily borrowed from the Islamic religion which is followed by a majority of the Swahili people); and nobody wants to be seen going against whatever that can be classified as culture. Perhaps that could be the wisdom behind the proverb "***Mwacha mila ni mtumwa—whoever discards culture is a slave***". Much as the position of the mother is hailed in the proverb on the fate of a child who abuses his/her mother but still the proverb has elements of marginalization owing to the fact that mothers are supposed to spend most of their times in the homestead taking care of the children.

The Arabic proverb that questions the interference by the Kadhi where there exists mutual consent between the wife and husband, brings to the fore strongly nuanced attributes of silence and subservience on the one hand, and a clearly marked gender divide in terms of what is strictly masculine and, therefore, elevated and what is feminine and therefore demeaned on the other. The attribute of silence as ascribed to women, is extensively demonstrated in the Arab culture where only men have the final say on marriage and women are "naturally" expected to fit into predetermined patriarchal arrangements and not the other way round. Fathers and by extension the male relatives of the woman are responsible for determining the choice of whoever eventually marries which woman in that society. The woman, once in a marriage becomes subservient to the man/husband, an arrangement that invokes a perfect example of a gentle woman absolutely and utterly dependent upon the two men in her life: first her father and then her husband. From them come her economic and social status; they are the centre of her thoughts and the objects of any ambition she might have. The Arab woman in this arrangement as evoked in the proverb does not

live for herself; she hardly has a self, because her entire existence is vicarious, it almost has no existence at all.

In this society a woman as a daughter is absolutely under the power of her father and upon her marriage, she is legally wrapped up by her husband. Any money she has becomes technically his (since his consent is needed for a woman to engage in income generating activities), as do all her property, including her clothes and even those possessions that are given as personal gifts before her marriage. Any earnings she might make by working belong to her husband. In cases of a husband's cruelty, she has almost no legal protection from him because divorce in practical terms, can only be obtained by men. Men hold the key to a divorce; except in rare cases which will still have to be decided by the Kadhi who also happens to be a man. Though the importance of children is robustly nuanced in the proverb about a pregnant woman who is nursing another child besides having four other children, in a subtle way objectifies that same woman burdened with giving birth. Though this proverb celebrates women in their parenting roles, it marginalizes them nevertheless because parenting is lampooned as "homely" chore.

When proverbs are rendered as epigrams they tend to be structurally longer, are amusing and express some clever thought. The major feature of an epigram is that it draws analogies between phenomena. An epigram comprises of two parts both of which may be stated or one of which may only be implied. For instance, this is discernible in the Swahili proverbs; "***Maji yakijaa hupwa—when the tide is high it ebbs***" and "***Mpanda ngazi hushuka—he who climbs the ladder comes down***". It does not real matter what length a proverb may be, but what matters is how the epigram features are interrogated in terms of wanting to uncover their hushed agendas. Similarly, even when presented as allusions, the same interrogative trajectory applies. An allusion is an indirect reference to some familiar person, event, object or place. The familiarity of the concept makes the meaning of the proverb clear and actually places it in a context. Proverbs being products of a peoples' history abound with allusions, some historical as well as social, thus linking specific cultures and cultural communities to specific historical moments and events of the society in question.

They could also refer to stories and institutional beliefs which are well known to the society as shown in the Arabic proverb; "***Aswaifu dhwaya'ati laban—the summer caused the milk to get lost***". This proverb is said to have originated in reference to an actual incident in which a young

beautiful woman got married to an elderly Arab man; and later left him when she found a handsome young man who was well off financially than the previous husband. The woman lived happily together with the new husband for many years till there was a severe drought in the land which led to famine, and when the youthful husband could no longer cater for her needs, she left him, annulling a marriage once more. The lady got wind that the former husband was doing well because he had a lot of camel milk, so she decided to pay him a visit in order to get some milk. The elderly man denied the lady entry and also refused to give her any milk; and instead told her this proverb that the summer caused the milk to get lost. This proverb is used to warn people not to leave what they have for what is not theirs, even if it appears superior. The broader application of this proverb touches on other contexts in which women are depicted as being helpless and can only survive through the assistance of their male counterparts. In terms of the ethos of cultural inscription, masculinity is elevated while femininity is rendered subservient. This proverb has cognate meaning in the Swahili proverb; "***Usiwache mbachao kwa mswala upitao—do not leave your prayer mat for a passing prayer mat which is not yours***". It is possible to insinuate that in this proverb, the imagery of a mat is symbolic both in a marital and sexual sense, woman as under like is routine with mat, thus the proverb invokes nuances of low, small and minute, attributes mostly associated with silence and subservience. Furthermore, the proverb depicts a woman as a person deprived of any choice just like a mat that never chooses whoever sleeps on it.

2.5 The Evocation of Masculine and Feminine Imagery in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

Proverbs constitute part of oral and traditional literature; which is a legacy from the past, handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The issue of imagery in proverbs plays a significant role in the analysis of the proverb's meaning just as it has been alluded to by Dierks (1972), who argues that the wording of many given proverbs is generally figurative, hence if one wants to understand the meaning of a given proverb in which a certain imagery is used, one must first explore what is implied in the specific image. While concurring with this argument Motebele (1997), avers that proverbs usually have a figurative meaning. This study is acquiescent to this view and as such argues that most proverbs use imagery for the purpose of concealing the meaning of the proverb to a certain extent and the wording of such a proverb is thus figurative.

Finnegan (1990), affirms that proverbs are a rich source of imagery and succinct expressions on which more elaborate forms of understanding can be drawn. This study argues further that, the expression of abstract ideas, compressed and allusive phraseology as well as the use of imagery; come out particularly clearly in proverbs of many African societies. This is in tandem with Motebele's (1997) argument that, proverbs employ figurative language to evoke rich imagery. This is true for Swahili and Arabic proverbs, for example, this sense of figurative language and imagery is well captured in the Swahili proverb; "***Kufuga punda madhila hukujambia mashuzi—to rear a donkey is annoying as it only farts***". Similar figurative language and imagery is manifested in the Arabic proverb "***Khalitaha al-mara qirbat dam shiltaha kharat wa inn waa'at—a woman is a leather bag full of blood if you carry it, it pours out and if you leave it, it becomes pus***". The important thing that needs to be understood in terms of understanding the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is what the images used to depict them evoke. Do they conjure up positive or negative images? For instance, by using the imagery of a donkey to refer to a woman the Swahili seem to suggest that just like a donkey depends on its master so does the woman. A similar message is echoed in the Arabic proverb that states that a woman is a leather bag full of blood which has to be carried around which depicts the dependency of a woman to the man. It is in the imagery and the construction of the figurative language that one is enabled to discern the hushed inscriptions of masculinity and femininity.

2.5.1 Imagery as Foundational Structures of Cultural Inscription

Cohen (1973-187), defines imagery as "a direct sense of appeal, a figure of speech or both which lead a reader by a process of association to combine at least two elements inherent in the figure". A constituent pattern of imagery sometimes constitutes symbolism. Similarly, Shaw (1973:195, as cited in Motebele, 1997), defines imagery as "the forming of mental images, figures or likeness of things, the use of language to represent actions, persons, objects and ideas descriptively". This means that imagery can be both figurative and literal and in interpretive terms, they can conjure up positive or negative values. An author or speaker can use figurative language such as metaphor and simile to create images which are as vivid as the objects or ideas being presented. The meaning of imagery according to Cuddon (1977:316), is "a general term that covers the use of language or represents objects, actions, feelings, ideas, states of mind and sensory and extra-sensory

experience". This study seeks to affirm that in proverb studies, the concept of an image can be extended beyond mental pictures so as to encompass perceptual images as well.

Imagery even when variously defined may be literal or figurative; given that it involves both mental and physical images that are produced by metaphorical language. Imagery makes use of human senses, and is produced by figures of speech. Furthermore, imagery involves describing an object or concept in terms of another by drawing similarities between the two. For instance, the Swahili proverb "***Kuku havunji yaile—a hen does not break her own egg***", has a deeper meaning which can only be appreciated by understanding that a hen is used as a metaphor which refers to a caring mother in African communities, which primarily takes care of her children hence cannot harm them but instead instils education and discipline in them (Kobia, 2016). The proverb assigns the role of educating children to the women which limits their operations to the homestead and eventually ends up marginalizing them. In terms of critical interrogation of the proverb, it may be necessary to exclusively focus on the hen as an image where certain behavioural and characteristics of a hen may be drawn—a weak creature, easily scared, low intelligence, always cowed by cocks, an edible delicacy, a domestic animal of low economic value, among others. The inevitable question thereof is, is this a positive or derogatory image of a woman?

Similarly, Arabic proverbs have employed figurative language and imageries in a number of proverbs, for instance, the proverb "***Idha arada rabuna halaka namlatun, anbata laha ajinihatun—if God wants to destroy an ant, he allows it to grow wings***". This proverb uses the imagery of an ant acquiring wings as an imagery to mean that if a woman is empowered, then she is bound to become unmanageable a state which eventually leads to her selfdestruction; just like an ant whose wings lead to its death by being eaten by birds while in flight. Again simply put, the focus may be placed on the ant and its wings, what behavioural patterns and characters do they evoke, positive or negative? Put in another way, this proverb is used to marginalize women because it justifies the denial of resources and opportunities from women by some men.

2.5.2 Functions of imagery

Van Staden (1980 as cited in Motebele, 1997), has enumerated four functions of imagery as used in literary discourses both written and oral as executing an explanatory function, an enrichment function, a concentration function and last but not least a beautifying function. Van Staden (ibid), is of the opinion that metaphorical and emotional mystery can only become tangible with the aid

of imagery, and that imagery originates from the metaphorical and emotional life of people. He adds that the enrichment function of imagery makes it easier for the artist to conclude what he/she sees and hears. This argument is supported by assertions advanced by Heese and Lawton (1991, 118-121, as cited in Motebele, 1997) that, "the general function of imagery in literary art is to achieve concentration and forcefulness; a symbol that makes the abstract concrete and is thus more easily understood". In other words, one ought to remember that imagery provides us with a picture of the situation and at the same time evokes the appropriate emotion. This means that a single image may serve a multiplicity of purposes. This is why Motebele (1997), contends that the concentration of the audience is enhanced through the use of imagery; which helps to avoid lengthy descriptions by enabling the delivery of the thoughts or ideas in an emphatic manner. Furthermore, Motebele (ibid), further argues that beautification is a poetical function of imagery. However, it is sensible to point out that the excessive usage of imagery does not only reduce the impact of an image but also decreases the value of the literature itself.

On the basis of the ideas and assertions canvassed above, it can be concluded that virtually all these functions of imagery are manifested and are applicable to Swahili and Arabic proverbs, especially the explanatory, enrichment and beautifying functions. This is due to the fact that some of the Swahili and Arabic Proverbs which talk about women have metaphorical and emotional mystery which becomes tangible with the clear understanding of imagery; and the explanation of the images behind this imagery aids in the examination of the images of women depicted in the proverbs of the two languages. It must be pointed out that there is an extensive use of figurative language and imagery in Swahili and Arabic proverbs; however, in any attempts to point out where and how proverbs are enriched by imagery or figurative language, that enrichment must be interrogated in terms of what agendas are advanced across the gender divide.

2.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to define paremiology and proverbs by looking at what these terminologies mean, as well as what they entail. The study has shown that paremiology is a study interested in the linguistic structure of proverbs and what they entail thematically and functionally; it also deals with proverb collection and classification, tracing the nature and origin of individual proverbs as well as investigating their socio-historical significance. The study also delves in the overt and covert functions of proverbs that entail the role of proverbs, how they

function as well as what informs their genesis, which implicitly suggest a multifaceted and multi-layered involvement of proverbs in the circulation of cultural values in many cultures around the globe. Furthermore, a critical interrogation of the proverbs' definition that integrates masculinity and femininity is undertaken with reference to Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

In highlighting the communicative and behavioural aspects of Swahili and Arabic proverbs the study argues that by employing proverbs in their speech the Swahili and Arabic speaking people wish to strengthen their arguments, express generalisations, influence or manipulate other people, rationalize their own short comings, and question certain behavioural patterns, satirize social ills, or poke fun at ridiculous situations. An in depth study covering the functional, thematic and stylistic-structural classification of Swahili and Arabic proverbs has been undertaken to uncover the diverse roles of proverbs that include: warning, advising, castigating negative social behaviour, consoling victims involved in misfortunes and encouraging good behaviour among other functions. The study affirms that imagery as a foundational structure of cultural inscription makes use of human senses, and is produced by figures of speech. Furthermore, imagery involves describing an object or concept in terms of another by drawing similarities between the two. Last but not least, the study contends that the functions of imagery are four fold being: the explanatory function, the enrichment function, the concentration function and the beautifying function. Simply put imagery aids in the enhancement of the audience's concentration which helps to avoid lengthy descriptions by enabling the delivery of the thoughts or ideas in an emphatic manner.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INSCRIPTION OF SILENCE, SUBSERVIENCE AND MARGINALITY IN THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN SWAHILI AND ARABIC PROVERBS

3.1 Introduction

As a study that premises its methodological procedure on feminism and feminist related theories, this study basically acquiesces to a truism that feminism is a contested field of theoretically competing understandings, perspectives and prescriptions. It acknowledges that in general terms, sex is a foundational and incontrovertible axis of social organization, in which, unfortunately women are subordinated to men in virtually all fields of human endeavour. Thus, feminism in its various manifestations is critically implicated with sex as an organizing principle of social life upon which gender and gender power relations are structured, negotiated and maintained. The subordination of women, it has variously been argued, foments and fosters the circulation of concepts of subservience, silence and marginality across a range of social institutions and cultural practices, including the practices associated with proverb formulation and usage. Male power and female subordination are, thus, socio-structural constructs that find expression in proverb usage in terms of patriarchy actualized in a binary sense, male-headed families, male mastery of things and ultimately male superiority. In view of the foregoing observations, this chapter seeks to engage in an analysis and deconstruction of Swahili and Arabic proverbs depicting, associated or used in reference to women as a way of uncovering the muted patriarchal agendas entrenched in these proverbs.

Deconstruction is used here in the sense of critically re-reading selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs in order to demonstrate and uncover the hushed patriarchal postulations embedded in such proverbs' sub-texts. In particular, the deconstruction envisaged here involves the dismantling of patriarchal and hierarchical conceptualizations underpinning proverb formulation and usage in terms of the binary oppositions of man-woman, father-mother, son-daughter, provider-receiver, protector-protected, and so on. This is so because, in many of the proverbs in this study, men fare far better than women, exercise more power and have higher status and more freedom; they head families, they are allowed multiple spouses and their lives have a sense of permanence as opposed to women's transient existence. Such binaries are critical in understanding how, through subtle inscriptions, certain cultural values are privileged while others are excluded and devalued as

‘inferior’ or ‘unimportant’. The rationale for engaging in this type of deconstruction is not to overturn the order of these cultural binaries but rather to show that they exist and are implicated in the inscriptions of undesirable cultural values. In other words, the overarching aim is an attempt to show proverbial blind-spots, to acknowledge the unacknowledged and hushed functions of proverbs in Swahili and Arab cultures; in essence to render explicit the tensions between what a proverb means to say and what it is constrained to mean.

In order to understand what is involved in this analysis, it is important to affirm the critical parameters of analysis and the attendant deconstruction in terms of assigning contextualized meaning to this study’s critical terminology. First, it is important to understand the role of silence not merely in the establishment of patriarchal power but also how such gendered silence is critical in the circulation of cultural values. The proverbial practices of gendered silence are critical in showing the interconnections between silence, subservience and marginality. Silence in essence entails the unsaid, the unspeakable, the repressed, the erased and the unheard. In this study, silence is regarded as what is imposed by proverbial wisdom, and there are indeed many proverbs in these cultures that are premised on the inscription of silence. The second critical terminology is subservience, herein defined as a subtly imposed “willingness” to do what other people want, and in this understanding, “other people” is critically nuanced**.** Subservience in this study also connotes "compliance", "obedience" and "submissiveness". Finally, marginality is used here to mean the assignment of “lesser importance” or to insinuate an “absent presence,” the objectification and the peripheralization of members of society in terms of place and space as belonging “at the margins” for those not considered important to a society or its culture. Marginality also insinuates disempowerment, that is—the deploying of systematic restraining of strategies of attaining full privilege and self-confidence in one’s skills and a sense of belonging within a society. The actualization of marginality subtly buttresses the bequeathing of hegemony to one section of society, thus allowing that section multiple levels of dominance over another, including the subordinated group’s consent to submit to subtle domination; thus proverb formulation when regarded as a product of joint production, naturalizes the use of ordinary practices and shared values as a means by which one group dominates another in these cultures.

3.2 The Varied Depictions of Women in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

There is no doubt that proverbs as products of folklore and as aspects of cultural "oralities" entail a lot of literary relevance and significance. Proverbs are a rich source of imagery and concise expression; in terms of their verbal methodologies they involve comparisons, use of allusive wordings and ultimately exhibit a habitual metaphorical form. Thus any analysis of the depiction of women in proverb formulation inevitably necessitates paying attention to certain discernible lexical patterns, figures of speech such as satire, symbolism, similes, metaphor, allusions and a myriad of other linguistic forms, because it is in these forms that inscriptions of overt sexism, biting wittiness, derogatory depictions, the embodiment of negative values and female stereotyping become manifest. In this sense, analysing proverbs revolving around or focusing on women enables an understanding of how women in Swahili and Arab cultures have been perceived through millennia through a patriarchal prism. Indeed, a large number of proverbs related to female gender or used in reference to anything feminine, function negatively and harmfully for women such that proverbs mentioning wives, mothers, mothers-in-law, daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters or any other category of women, are more likely to be negatively nuanced in terms of vanity, infidelity, niggling, and unreliability.

Other negatively nuanced proverbs in Swahili and Arab cultures related to women are likely to delve into such negativities as laziness, wickedness, weakness, parasitic existence, unintelligent agency and caring only about their outward appearances. Where proverbs may mention beautiful or intelligent women, it is most likely from a patriarchal prism in which they stick out as trophies or possessions for the advancement of patriarchal interests. Thus, women depiction in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is noticeable through a number of ways in which such proverbs make reference to women metaphorically either in the imagery of property, ornaments—natural or man-made, edible delicacies or in the imagery of tame or tameable animals and birds. Indeed, there are other female related proverbs whose depiction is premised on social values that underpin social institutions such as marriage, culture and religion. Furthermore, where female related proverbs celebrate women, they are most likely focused on women-wives engaged in and restricted to home and family related issues. Understanding the various forms of how women are depicted in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is critical in understanding how such depictions enable the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality.

3.2.1 The Inscription of Silence in the Depiction of Women in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

As already asserted in the introduction of this chapter, silence is a constant trope in Swahili and Arabic proverbs relating to women or focusing on women related issues. There are many proverbs in these cultures which clearly espouse the ethos of the unsaid, thus implicitly encouraging silence as a virtue on the part of women as in the Swahili proverb, "***Mke kipofu huwa mwaminifu—a blind woman is always faithful***". The metaphorical or figurative usage of words which shift the literal meanings of words to non-literal meanings are a constant characteristic that marks things unspeakable, the repressed, the erased and the unheard as emblematic of women in all forms of social interactions. As already noted here "**kipofu**—being blind" is well shifted in the sense that, not seeing naturally facilitates silence, thus proverbial wisdom imposes and inscribes silence. The culture of silence is evident in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs which imply or explicitly demand that women are only seen and not heard. This argument is projected in the proverbs; *"**Kuku hawiki penye jogoo— a hen does not crow in the presence of a cock*"** and *"**Rayi al-mara qurubatu iniqatatu fii alkhilaa—women's opinion is like a leather bag full of water that has been punctured in the desert*".**

Silence is also exhibited in the Swahili and Arabic proverbs' depictions which either support or seem to condone the meting out of punishment to girls/women as a means of education, discipline or simply for fun. This notion is evidenced in the proverbs: *"**Fimbo impigayo mke mwenzio ukiiona itupe mbali—if you come across the stick used to beat your co-wife, throw it very far***" and *"**Thalathatuni maa tarifau minihumu aswaa: al-mara wa al-naqaaratuni wa al-himaaratuni—do not take your stick away from three things: a woman, a drum and a female donkey***". Similarly, silence is echoed in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs which demand of women to obey their husbands without question and not to complain while facing punishment or difficult situations, but rather suffer quietly. This argument is addressed in the Swahili proverb, *"**Mke kumtii mume ndio sheria—a wife obeying the husband is the norm/law***" as well as the Arabic proverb, *"**Dharabatu al-intaya zai mash'ati al-dinnaya—punishing a female is like rubbing butter over the body***."

3.2.1.1 The Portrayal of Ignorance as a Feminine Trait

In order to recognize negative cultural renditions in female related proverbs or in ordinary proverbs used to designate female-male relationships, it is important to note that such renditions need not always be explicit; they are discernible once the given proverbs are subjected to critical re-reading focusing on a given proverb's sub-text and in distinct contexts. It is also important to note that overly non-gendered proverbs when subjected to certain patriarchal usages, may present tensions in terms of what a proverb may mean in various contexts, what it may say and what it may be restrained to mean. Consequently, in order to determine that which is negative in proverb formulation and usage, women are frequently depicted in Swahili and Arabic proverbs in terms of ignorance, that is, presenting women as people in need of guidance, where such guidance is expressed as caution, admonition or as punishment. For instance, such caution is discernible in the Swahili proverb, ***"Fimbo impigayo mke mwenzio ukiiona itupe mbali—if you come across the stick used to beat your co-wife, throw it very far***". It is clear in the proverb's sub-text that corporal punishment, within the patriarchal scheme of things, is allowed and actually practised by Swahili men against their spouses. In essence, within polygamous marriage set ups, and this is a common practise among the Swahili, the male is privileged in those set ups, the relationship is unequal in the sense that the beating inferred from the "fimbo" imagery is not reciprocal; it is unidirectional—men beating women.

When this proverb's sub-text is analysed further, it does not present a positive message, rather it cautions women in a subtle way to get rid of the instruments of punishment while the practice that buttresses it remains unchanged. Thus, even when the act of throwing away the offending stick may be explained as a selfless act executed by one wife as an intervention to save a cowife from corporal punishment, the whole act is presented as clandestine, executed in silence and has a sense of superficiality that focuses on the stick but not the philosophical underpinning of the beatings. Although this may be interpreted as a heroic act especially coming from the women; whose actions are often taken for granted and in many instances ignored all together by Swahili men in their marital arrangements, it lacks a critical engagement that deconstructs the silence perpetuated by the stick—notably the fear of physical harm. Women's wishes in these marital arrangements where they are routinely and physically assaulted are thus unheard, just as they are unspoken in the

proverb itself. This is indeed a very subtle inscription of unedifying cultural value of brutality and ultimately silence.

Just like the Swahili, the Arabs also use proverbs which depict women in terms of ignorance and general lack of knowledge, proverbs which disempower and cunningly project a need for their guidance, thus subtly privileging the patriarchal system in which men provide such guidance. For instance, the Arabic proverb, ***"Zauju al-dharataini qaqhaabaini dirataini—the husband of two parrots is like a neck between two sticks that strike it***". In contexts where this proverb may be used to canvass male-female relations, the metaphor of a parrot in reference to women depicts women as both chatty and noisy people whose talk amounts to nothing. It is important to note the lexical choices embedded in the proverb, "noisy" parrots not parrots with a "voice" which then turns out as a clear case of marginalizing voice knowing that voice has value and may be heard unlike noise that is quickly ignored and is valueless. It is palpable that the sub-text meaning enabled by this proverb presupposes women to be just like parrots, they can only mimic and follow what men offer without any interrogation whatsoever. Furthermore, the corporal punishment trope encountered in Swahili proverb above has cognates in Arabic proverbs as well, as in the proverb, ***"Thalathatuni maa tarifau minihumu aswaa: al-mara wa al-naqaaratuni wa al-himaaratuni—do not take your stick away from three things: a woman, a drum and a female donkey***". The usage of this proverb in contexts involving women or in reference to women, is used as a rationalization for the use of corporal punishment by men against women in the course of imparting, in derogatory sense patriarchal knowledge and discipline.

This idea of unedifying cultural values is alluded to in yet another Swahili proverb, ***"Debe tupu haliachi kutika—an empty tin makes the loudest noise***". Though there is nothing in the proverb that makes it overtly feminine or generally gendered, its usage in contexts that entail male-female relationships may make it become an ingenious and deliberate strategy to belittle women's intelligence by equating women with empty tins. The imagery of an empty tin capable of making copious and incessant noise is critically nuanced especially where this proverb may be used in reference to women, note that there is nothing feminine about an empty tin, it becomes poignantly so in contextualized situations. However, it is important to note that making empty noise is as good as being silent, because such empty noise carries nothing of value, which insinuates that this

proverb belittles the intellectual contributions made by women. The subtlety of inscription enabled by this proverb reduces women to noise makers, to emptiness.

Similar demeaning trajectory of the voices of women is observable in the Arabic proverb, ***"Alkalaam laki ya jaaratuni alaa anti himaaratuni—it is you I speak to, my fair neighbour, but truly you are an ass***". The metaphorical formulation of this proverb presents women as possessing the characteristics of a donkey; the proverb in effect presents women as beasts of burden, people who are incapable of understanding and equally inept at following simple instructions. The ethos enabled by this proverb implies that women lack knowledge and like donkeys they can only learn the hard way. It further intimates that women can only be taught through the hard way, in essence they are better off silent. Additionally, the portrayal of women as being both foolish and obdurate is a trope discernible in the Arabic proverb such as, ***"Atikiraaru yualimu al-himaaru—repetition teaches (even) a donkey***". The use of repetition as an instructional methodology of choice to teach women as suggested in this proverb, portrays women generally as slow learners whose teachers must expend lots of time and effort to teach them. In other words, the lessons circulated by the usage of this proverb draws parallels between women's capacity to understand and that of children. In short, the overarching portrayal of women in these proverbs parallels women's learning abilities to that of donkeys, thus the proverbs denigrate women's self-esteem, making them feel less confident about themselves. Consequently, the cultural philosophy entrenched in these proverbs relegates women's views and ideas to the periphery; which ultimately contributes in the muting of their voices in society.

There are proverbs in these cultures which cunningly encourage and urge women to obey men unquestioningly—another form of subtle silence. For instance, a Swahili proverb such as, ***"Mke kumtii mume ndio sheria—a wife obeying the husband is the norm/law***". The overall thematic nuance emphasized in this proverb is absolute obedience, wives conforming to their husbands' orders and directions. This is a skewed inculcation of a socio-cultural value that works to mute women's voices. It is observable that by vesting absolute authority in men, this proverb strips women of their freedom of thought and expression. The inculcation of a culture of silencing women is extensive in both proverb formulation and usage as in, ***"Kuku hawekwi shahidi wala hajui sheria—the hen cannot be presented as a witness nor does it know the law***". The formulation of this proverb is intricate in terms of its imagery and application. Indeed, in contexts

where it may focus on women, it starts by demeaning them, equating women to chicken, knowing that even in the world of birds, chicken is always dominated by cocks. Secondly, having devalued women that far, it asserts a woman like chicken has no knowledge of law, the hallowed profession, so just like chicken women are ignorant of the law hence lack the ability of witnesses. Clearly, this is one proverb whose trope is restraining, that by denying women the opportunity to be witnesses; the ethos advanced by this proverb inculcates a cultural value that exemplifies the justification of muting women's voices in critical matters of the society; yet in reality women are always present and critical witnesses in the critical moments of life—present and witnesses at birth, in attendance and witnesses in naming ceremonies and attendant rituals, ubiquitous in the nurturing of children, critically embedded in rites of passage, marriages, death and so on. The metaphor of chicken in reference to women is demeaning and derogatory.

Likewise, there is a sense in which certain Arabic proverbs presuppose utter disregard for women's opinions, given that in their formulation women are taken either as useless or inconsequential in decision making processes. Such a notion is observable in the proverb; ***"Rayi al-mara qurubatu iniqatatu fii al-khilaa—women's opinion is like a leather bag full of water that has been punctured in the desert***". The imagery of a punctured leather bag full of water in the desert, insinuates the fact that such opinions are of no value, just like water in a punctured leather bag; it soon goes to waste without benefiting anyone in particular. The overall thematic thrust in this proverb belittles women's intellectual contributions to or in social interactions; it inscribes a vilification of women's views, judgements, evaluations and estimations in virtually all matters of society; ultimately denying, circumventing women's voice in important societal matters that require reasoning and brain power. The positive deployment of women's intelligence is further thwarted through the use of the Arabic proverb such as, ***"Al-mara kaana qalati duqahaa ukhutahaa—if a woman shows disrespect, punish her with another woman***". This proverb's sub-text insinuates that women learn better when they are taught things the hard way. The proverb subtly suggests that women's education and punishment are inseparable, a rather cunning proverb when juxtaposed against the fact that education in this culture is lifelong, and consequently chastisement is also lifelong. As such the proverb inscribes a cultural outlook that makes it possible to mute female voices in a lifelong sense; where punishment in its various manifestations is employed as a tool to silence the women.

Clearly, in the Arabic culture, there is some ubiquitous usage of female related proverbs that are downright denigrating; proverbs that disparage, dissuade and overtly silence women by degrading and maligning anything of value that women can offer. One Arabic proverb that exemplifies this is, ***"Aaqilatu al-niswaani qalibuhaa mitulu habatu al-dukhani—the brain of the wisest woman is like the size of a millet seed***". By explicitly comparing and equating the size of the wisest woman's brain to the millet seed, the proverb not only demeans women's intellectual competency but also refutes to acknowledge its existence; it denies the productive presence of women generally. It also questions their ability to think and make reasonable decisions on their own. There are, indeed, many proverbs in both Swahili and Arabic cultures that ingeniously inscribe silence on the part of their female populations. The actualization in real life of these "silences" is realized through a variety of strategies such as outright threats of physical harm and punishment, devaluation and belittling of women's contribution, ascription of low or no value on women's intellectual contributions, to outlandish disparagements of all that is female, among others. There is evidence that Swahili and Arabic proverbs are centrally implicated in inscribing unedifying ethos which makes a mockery of women's intelligence, erodes their self-esteem, discourages them from engaging in problem solving ventures, but above all, proverb folklore deliberately and in several subtle ways creates self-doubt in women's constructive thinking.

3.2.1.2 The Depiction of Women as Pleasure Objects

One of the most critical notions in gender and feminist studies, generally speaking and regardless of its theoretical persuasion, is the notion of objectification. Objectification is commonly defined as the seeing and/or treating of a person, usually a woman, as an object. The critical focus of objectification in gender studies is usually on sexual and material objectification of women. Nussbaum (1995), has identified a number of critical features that are central to the idea of objectification, that's the treatment of a person/woman as an object— first and foremost is the idea of instrumentality, essentially treating a person as a tool, which in patriarchal contexts would insinuate men treating women as objects of men's purposes—in which case "purposes" intimate variety, range and extent to which women can be used as instruments. Another critical feature in this taxonomy is the idea of denial of autonomy, which in practical terms intimates treating a woman as lacking in independence and self determination thus, making that woman self-dependent on the man. Together with lack of autonomy is the idea of inertness, that's in interactional

situations implying that women generally lack agency and are prone to inactivity. Nussbaum also proposes something she calls “fungibility” that’s the treatment of women as objects capable of interchangeability, essentially interchangeable with other objects—in African contexts this draws attention to dowry as a practical demonstration of this idea of interchangeability.

Also critical to objectification is the idea of ownership; the treatment of women as something that men own, something capable of being bought or sold as experienced in marriages predicated on dowry—women exchanged for material gain. Generally speaking, the treatment of women in gender discourses is overtly biased in that women are always conceptualized in terms of negation of subjectivity, that women are treated as people whose experiences and feelings (if they have any) need not be taken seriously. Langton (2009), while acknowledging Nussbaum's critical observations, observes that objectification also connotes on the part of women, the reduction of the woman’s body from person to parts, such that a woman is seen in terms of body parts rather than being seen as constituting a given whole. Women are also reduced to appearance—that’s treating women primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to patriarchal perceptions and senses. And finally, women are routinely conceptualized in terms of silencing—the treatment of women as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak. Feminist objectification is indeed a conceptual problematic phenomenon in Swahili and Arabic proverbs; it is in many instances overt and pervasive.

Women, whether conceptualized as a group or as individuals, are reduced to the status of mere tools for men's purposes, thus there is an avalanche of Swahili and Arabic proverbs whose sub-texts depict women as men’s pleasure objects. For instance, the Swahili proverb, *“**Anayeonja asali huchonga mzinga—he who tastes honey makes a hive***”. First, there is indeed nothing in the formulation of this proverb that makes it overtly feminine. However, when this proverb is used in contexts of canvassing male-female interactions, it may project a positive message that adds a value, that is, the comparison of women to honey that evokes numerous nutritional benefits, but it nevertheless objectifies women as edible objects. Indeed, honey is popular among the Swahili as a form of medicine, as well as a preservative for a number of foodstuffs. However, a critical re-reading of this proverb that takes cognizance of the fact that honey as deployed at the level of imagery representing women; strips women of their sense of self, their sense of being and

consequently negates any sense of positivity, because the proverb imagery conjures up an edible delicacy in the sense that women are equated to edibles—objects of pleasure. This is because, by drawing a parallel between women and honey; the proverb depicts women as passive objects at the disposal of men's pleasure.

The making of hives symbolically represents the making of homes where women are domesticated for the service of men. What needs to be noted here is the fact that objects don't speak, they have no say in how they are used, and as for the case of honey, in what quantities and frequencies it is served. The honey trope as a basis of women objectification in Swahili proverbs is extensive as observed in the proverb, *"**Bila nyuki hupati asali—without bees you get no honey***". Again, as argued before, this is not an overtly gendered proverb, however when it is used in discussing male-female relationships, it may connote a number of issues. It acknowledges the role women play in the building of relationships. Nevertheless, this proverb's positive message is annulled once the imagery of bees is interrogated. The fact that though bees are known to be hard working and good team players; they are hardly the beneficiaries of their efforts, they are instruments that profit others, something that indeed reflects women's own lives in society, that however much they labour, they are not the beneficiaries. Here again, there is a clear convergence of objectification and silence, just like bees don't have the wherewithal of negotiating the sharing of the products of their effort, so are women as depicted in these proverbs.

The treatment of women as objects is not confined to the Swahili society and culture alone, it is also blatantly pervasive in Arabic proverbs, and consequently it is emblematic of Arab society and culture. There is an extensive circulation and usage of Arabic proverbs which depict women as objects, notably pleasure objects. For example, the proverb, ***"Asa'a al-daaba alsareea wa akhud al-mara al-mutwiya kulaha tumtiya—keep a fast moving animal and marry an obedient woman, as they are the enjoyment of life***". This proverb's imagery draws a parallel between women and beasts of burden in terms of services they offer men. By so doing this proverb ingeniously justifies the fact that the very being of women is meant for the service and gratification of men. Obedient women are culturally bound to follow men's orders and instructions. It will be recalled that the concept of objectification among other things perceives women as lacking in agency; hence they are acquiescent to guidance in virtually every undertaking. Clearly, the ethos advanced by this

proverb is that women are habitually not accorded opportunities to either concur or give dissenting views in any matter whatsoever affecting or relating to their lives; the consequences of which are a subtle silencing and marginalizing of women in society.

The whole idea of objectification of women subtly entails a complex sense of muting women's voices. Objectification finds expression in Swahili proverbs in a variety of ways, for instance, women get depicted as queens and or as flowers as in the proverbs, *"**Mwanamke ni malkia wa moyo—a woman is the queen of the heart***" and *"**Mwanamke ni ua—a woman is a flower***". These proverbs present perceptions which appear to celebrate the inner strength of women, thus equating them with queens who are elevated and adored. On the other hand, the imagery of flowers appeals to both the sense of sight and smell—beauty and fragrance, they are objects of expressing love. As much as these parallels drawn between women and queens on the one hand and between women and flowers on the other, it is perceivable that women in this context are presented as trophies, as something for the self-actualization of the patriarchs. This is so because in reality, Swahili women have no self because before marriage, they are under the guidance and control of their fathers as well as their brothers, and once married that guidance is transferred to their husbands, who they are culturally expected to respect and honour. Furthermore, the beauty and fragrance of the flowers as embedded in the imagery, is ultimately meant for the pleasure of the end users—the husbands. It may be noted that in Swahili culture, regardless of however powerful the "queen" might be, she is bound by tradition to not only respect the husband but also follow his orders and instructions. This means that women as depicted in Swahili proverbs are largely objectified in various ways and forms such that even when presented as positive on the surface, the sub-text presents them as instruments at the service of men regardless of their position or status. Overall, the treatment of women as objects that are silent and lacking the capacity to speak, as affirmed by Langton (ibid), finds several expressions in Swahili proverbs in the sense that women's silence is so strongly nuanced.

In Arab culture, the processes of objectification and silencing of women's voices are mutually interlinked. This is so because it does appear that the social organization of Arab societies is strongly patriarchal, such that any and all gender relational arrangements tend to favour men more than women. For instance, in Arab culture marriage is perceived and celebrated in an overtly

masculine way. This may explain why marriage is hailed in the proverb, ***"Al-zawaji sutra—marriage is a shield***". This is true because Arab culture draws its marital ethos and principles from the Islamic religion, such as discouraging and frowning upon sex outside marriage. Marriage is thus a shield against illicit sex in all its forms. Strictly speaking, when this proverb is interrogated on the surface, marriage safeguards society from immorality and other social ills as such it presages a positive message. However, it will be noted that such marriages are objectified and so are the women who constitute such marriages, because in the long run marriage is seen as a tool, an object to shield a man from shame and ridicule. It is also important to note that a shield, an instrument of war, has always been associated with men through millennia. Therefore, the imagery of marriage as a shield is a masculine imagery, it is an imagery that affords a man protection and avenues for the patriarch's multiple spousal arrangements. It is a known fact that in Arabic contexts, both the culture and the religion that informs it are acquiescent to polygamy and it is rather obvious that in polygamous marriage women's voices in decision making processes are generally muted, disregarded and unheard. The objectification of marriage as an institution as well as the objectification of women in marriage as is discernible in the proverb under discussion enables the circulation of a cultural value that demeans women's views and regards them as belonging at the margins.

The objectification of marriage and women generally is further discernible in a proverb like, ***"Mauti al-maratu tajidiidi al-urusi—the death of a wife is the renewal of the wedding***." This proverb is callously insensitive in the sense that it celebrates the demise of somebody's wife— a woman, and projects a view of women as expendable objects, the death of one occasions the marriage of another wife, something that strongly invokes the sense of expendability always canvassed in gender discourse. This lack of remorse as exhibited by the husband's attitude and as discerned in this proverb, underscores one of the critical tenets of objectification, the denial of autonomy, in which a woman is portrayed as lacking in independence and selfdetermination, projecting the woman's self as an appendage to the man's pleasure repertoire. This proverb is critically primed to advance a patriarchal agenda in which women are men's pleasure objects that are replaceable. In an ideal sense, marriage is an institution where couples ought to be accorded equity in terms of locution and execution of all that affects their lives. It is conceivable to argue

that there are many Arabic proverbs that overtly justify the use of women as pleasure objects, that such proverbs' usage in the long run inscribes an ethos that mutes women's voices.

The other way in which women's voices are silenced is when they are objectified as edible objects, in other words women are presented in Swahili proverbs as objects suitable for eating. It may be noted in this sense that the word "eating" is symbolically loaded both in the literal sense and coitus sense. Women are depicted as victuals or as edible things—literally a cuisine for men. For instance, the Swahili proverb, ***"Chakula bora ni kile ukipendacho—the best food is the one you love***" may appear perfectly tame and asexual for there is nothing male or female about "**chakula—**food". However, when this proverb is used in a contextualized Kiswahili male-female milieu, **chakula** (food) and **kula** (eat) can conveniently take on sexual insinuations because in Swahili context, making love is also referred to as "**kula ureda**" in which case "**chakula**" takes on sexual connotations. While this proverb may overtly seem to address itself to issue of classifying women in terms of taste, as implied in the imagery of sweet tasting food, there is no doubt that a close interrogation of the same proverb readily betrays obvious biases of objectification, that a declaration of a certain food item as tasty (read woman) is in essence a callous objectification of women. Just like in the old adage that "the taste of the pudding is in the eating", this proverb presents women in that prism. Consequently, the idea of "tasting" women not only objectifies women, but it also mutes their voices and strips them of their humanity. The proverb essentially objectifies women by depicting them as edible objects; therefore, their feelings and choices are inconsequential.

There are other Swahili proverbs which, in certain contexts depict women as edible objects such as; ***"Ukila nanasi tunda lingine basi—if you eat a pineapple, you will have no taste for any other fruit***" and ***"Ukila zabibu, utaleta majibu—if you eat grapes, you will give feedback***". Just as argued earlier, strictly speaking there is nothing feminine or masculine about pineapples or grapes as used in these proverbs, they are just that, fruits. However, an interrogation of the eating imagery upon which these proverbs are predicated reveals that these proverbs conjure up the familiar idea of "tasting" encountered. In Swahili contexts, there is a sense in which innuendo and sarcasm are used in the same breath as metaphor; therefore, it is perfectly plausible for the metaphors of pineapples and grapes to refer to women. It can be argued that there is a clear juxtaposition between

the "eater" (read the man) and the "edible objects" (read women) because both the "tasting" in the case of pineapples and the feedback in the case of grapes are attributable to the "eater".

Consequently, when stretched to its logical conclusions, Nussbaum's (ibid) idea of inertness, lack of agency and inactivity is echoed here in the sense that only men—the eaters of fruits— have voice and agency to proffer opinion on the "eaten". Even as to when such fruits can be harvested or eaten as it were, is not a choice that fruits have. This is why a Swahili proverb loudly proclaims, ***"Tunda jema halikawii mtini—a good fruit doesn't last long on the tree***", a rather subtle way in which proverbs of this nature inscribe lack of agency hence lack of voice, because women, just like ripe fruits are indeed at the mercy of men to be plucked at will. The use of the metaphor of fruits in reference to women is in actual sense asking women to be contented with whatever they have. Consequently, it is plausible to argue that by depicting women as honey, edible victuals, fruits—pineapples and grapes, these proverbs are significantly deployed in enabling the inscription of the silence of women in the Swahili society.

On the other hand, it can be argued that objectification of women in Arabic proverbs, is a very convoluted process given that other than projecting women as objects, such proverb formulation is such that whenever men fall victims of their pleasure hunting misadventures, they shift blame to the object (read women) as in the proverb, ***"Azahilaqi al-himaaru wa kaana mini shahiwatu al-himaaru—the ass slipped and fell as a result of the ass driver's desire to see a lady***". In this proverb the blame of the fall by the ass driver is placed on the woman who the ass driver was rushing to see. The view advanced in this proverb attempts to deflect blame from the man's own misadventure to other innocent people. This is a classic example of how proverbs are implicated in an insidious muting of women's voices in a double sense—first by objectifying women and secondly by blaming the object. The fact that this proverb does not accord women an opportunity for their voices to be heard means that women's voices remain unheard. This proverb as such enables the circulation of outright negativity where women's beauty and sense of presence are blamed for men's lustful adventures. The use of such proverbs where women are blamed for anything and everything, in effect degrade, mute and silence women's voices. Women are consistently discouraged from participating in societal activities for fear of being blamed or victimised. When a proverb manifestly objectifies women it subtly celebrates and rationalizes

men's insensitivity towards women in society generally. This may explain why overtly insensitive proverbs find currency and acceptance among men in Arab society as in the proverb, ***"Dharabatu al-intaya zai mash'ati al-dinnaya—punishing a female is like rubbing butter over the body***." In this case, punishment, both physical and psychological as meted out on women is presented as necessary and justifiable, but more importantly, it constitutes some of the aspects of men's pleasure pursuits. Furthermore, this proverb insidiously advocates the use of inflicting physical pain and fear in women as a means of silencing and making them subservient to men.

3.2.1.3 Passivity as Feminine Trait

In order to understand the implication of passivity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, there is need to understand what underpins passivity in the first place. Passivity may be defined generally as the predisposition to remain inactive, to lack initiative, to submit to other's will or external influences without resistance, in essence exhibiting the characteristics of inactiveness, inactivity and inertia. Passivity is thus the exact opposite of agency—that characteristic capacity of individuals to demonstrate initiative, to act independently and to make free choices. In gender discourses, as is the case of the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, agency may relate to those choices that reflect on conduct or competencies deployed to resist oppression or subordination. Agency, as Abrams (1999), has asserted, entails those choices arising out of self-reflection and collective action directed at revising cultural or institutional structures and systems of oppression. Self-reflection or for that matter self-definition according to Abrams (ibid), is the process of determining how one conceives of oneself in terms of the goals one wants to achieve and the kind of person one wants to be in terms of particular values and attributes. This process involves distinguishing one's own values, or sense of oneself, from those that may be externally imposed, that is, values one gets once born into an established milieu—as in the case of the values that are circulated by proverbs in Swahili and Arab cultures. Abrams asserts further that self-definition occurs, first, by becoming aware of the way that one's self, and one's self-conception, are socially constituted.

A woman may become aware that the images or attitudes she has regarding her body, her competencies to perform certain tasks, or her strength or vulnerability in relation to others, are shaped by norms that describe these matters at least partly as a function of gender. Developing this

awareness does not let her to transcend these socially conditioned visions of self, but it allows her greater room in which to affirm, reinterpret, resist, or partially replace them. Self definition is also critical in helping her become aware of them not solely as attitudes that she holds, but as norms embedded in social institutions or practices that are transmitted to her and to others through social practices. This process of reflection and evaluation, which is facilitated by her awareness of certain self-conceptions as socially shaped, may allow her to identify more strongly with certain images and strive for greater distance from others. Another characteristic feature of feminist agency is the recognition of the processes and influences of social norms and their effects on social placement. Social or for that matter cultural norms that exemplify negative judgments about women's bodies, women's competencies, or women's power in relation to men's power are not mere happenstance. They are a product of social and cultural inscriptions, and therefore a means by which, women's subjugation is perpetuated in particular settings. When social influences are pervasive and are pervasively internalized, it is not easy to disentangle oneself from the same but nonetheless the recognition of social influences and awareness of the ways in which social formation may shape one's perception of self are critical standpoints in providing room in which to affirm, reject, or modify some of the criteria for defining women.

The absence of a critically nuanced awareness of feminist agency is indeed the lacuna upon which the depiction of women as passive objects in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is predicated. For instance, the Swahili proverb, ***"Ukipata chungu kipya, usitupe cha zamani—do not throw away an old pot once you acquire a new one***" when used in the contexts of female-male interactions, is indeed predicated on this perception of 'absent presence'. The wisdom enabled by this proverb's imagery of a pot in reference to women; draws its genesis from the stereotypical view that the Swahili people hold about women, viewing women as open vessels capable of being filled, thus insinuating a sexual relationship of conception and birth. Regardless of whatever positivity this proverb entails, its perception of women as open vessels is a perception that is external to women, it is culturally imposed. Furthermore, the same proverb takes into consideration the attributes of the pot imagery in reference to women; thus portraying them as passive people—people though present their voices are unheard, thus underscoring the essence of passivity as lacking in agency.

A similar depiction of passivity is discernible in the proverb, ***"Mwanamke ni maji ya dafu, hayapendezi ila dafuni mwake— a woman is like the water of a young coconut which is not***

pleasant except in its shell". One uncontested view of this proverb's formulation is the close affinity between the proverb's imagery and their natural and physical environments. This proverb creates a parallel and a value system juxtaposing on the one hand women and on the other the young coconut, a crop of immeasurable value and popularity among the Swahili people. There is no doubt that both the women and coconuts are valuable, except that this value system is discernible through a process of objectification in which women are only appreciated as objects and passive ones as such. On further analysis, it is depressing to note that both the objectification and the attendant sense of passivity are appreciated in terms of smallness, the coconut water is only valuable in the smallness of the coconut shell, that the beauty, purity and value of the coconut water is in the smallness of the shell. This proverb's thematic projection is thus used to depict women as passive objects. Clearly, passivity as a feminine trait as observed in this proverb is perceivable in terms of restrictions, the hushed requirement that women remain indoors in their homes. The value teachings embedded in this proverb act as reminders that women are always subjugated to male domination. Undoubtedly, the employment of the imageries of a pot and a coconut's water in reference to women in these proverbs, critically inscribes passivity because in ordinary circumstances pots and coconuts have no say as to their uses.

Passivity as a purported feminine trait is sometimes expressed directly in Swahili proverbs like in the proverb, ***"Kuku hawiki penye jogoo—a hen does not crow in the presence of a cock***"; or indirectly as in the proverb, ***"Uzuri wa mwanamke ni tabia si sura—the decency of a woman is in her character not her beauty***". The parallel insinuated that "a hen does not crow in the presence of a cock", is clearly a contestation about space and voice in the sense that if cocks are equated with men, they are allowed and privileged to crow—that's accorded both space and voice; while on the other hand if hens are metaphorically representing women, they are denied presence (read space) and they don't crow—effectively denied voice. The logical consequence of such denial is silence, that's the silencing of women. The cock's presence and symbolism in African (Swahili included) folklore is pervasive; symbolically the cock signifies might, vitality, activity, freedom and dominion among many other macho representations. The hen on the other hand epitomises weakness, smallness, passiveness and the opposite of all that the cock represents. This proverb is overtly patriarchal both in terms of what it warns against and what it declares within the structures of male and female relationships.

Whereas there is no doubt that there are several Arabic proverbs that depict women in very undignified and shameful ways, such proverbs' formulations manifest themselves in a variety of ways. For example, there are proverbs that are explicitly declarative, proverbs whose patriarchal disdain for women is hardly disguised as in the proverb, ***"Waladaka khairi wa bitaka ikhitariliha—let your son choose his bride, but choose a bridegroom for your daughter***". The proverb's schema of things is a bit too obvious; to all intents and purposes it privileges the male gender at the expense of the female gender. In this proverb it is easy to discern the male sense of agency, the son can make choices but the daughter has to have choices made for her. In her treatise on agency, Abrams (ibid) has asserted that agency entails those choices arising out of self-reflection, choices and actions focussed on revising cultural or institutional structures and systems buttressing women's oppression, for example choices with regard to the contractual obligations in the marriage institution are so glaringly fore-grounded in the proverb above.

An analysis of this proverb on the basis of Abram's view of self-reflection or self-definition, shows clearly that women are not accorded opportunities for self-determination, though their roles, contributions and presence in marriage are critical, their choices, determination and input are hardly acknowledged let alone allowed. This proverb is as such averse to allowing women to determine how they perceive themselves in terms of the goals they want to achieve in marriage, determine what kind of persons they want to be in those marriage arrangements, determine what particular values and attributes work for them in marriage. This proverb does not allow them to decide in their own terms their own values in marriage and their sense of self in marriage. The overall hushed message in this proverb demonstrates a clear bias against daughters (girls generally), it degrades their views, attaches no value to their choices of marriage partners; in short, it neuters their sense of agency. On the other hand, the boys' sense of agency is strongly emphasized; they have a free hand in the selection of their brides, in effect they are accorded opportunities for self-determination. This is a proverb that out rightly undermines, alienates and erodes women's sense of self and selfconfidence; ultimately it mutes their voices.

On the other hand, the Swahili proverb, "***Uzuri wa mwanamke ni tabia si sura—the decency of a woman is in her character not her beauty***" echoes Nussbaum's (1995) affirmation, that oftentimes in the processes of feminist objectification, women are routinely reduced to appearances—that's

treating women primarily in terms of how they look (read beauty), or how they appear to patriarchal perceptions and senses (read conduct). In popular Swahili culture (which is heavily influenced by the Islamic religion), it is claimed that the choice of a woman for marriage is predicated on a scale of four qualities, namely—beauty, wealth, lineage and religion. It is logical, therefore, to argue that by laying emphasis on character and secondly on beauty; the proverb merely advances a patriarchal agenda where it is possible to speculate that the character so desired gravitates towards meekness and submissiveness, especially in its application in marriage. By emphasizing beauty and character as the basis for determining a woman's worth, this proverb down plays other worth aspects of women. For instance, it shuts out women's intellectual prowess, women's organizational skills, their economic endeavours and other critical contributions made by women. Beauty and character are emphasized primarily as a means of determining women's worth outwardly and inwardly, but from a patriarchal perspective. The net effect of what this proverb inscribes is silence, women presented as seen and as categorized by men, the proverb clearly proscribes the possibilities of women's self-definition, it reverses the possibilities of women becoming aware that the attitudes they hold about themselves, the norms that determine the extent of their freedoms, are embedded in social institutions and cultural practices that buttress them.

One constant trope in discourses on feminist agency revolves around the processes of reflection and evaluation, processes which facilitate women with a sense of their self-awareness, a certain sense of self-conceptualization within the parameters of socially constrained circumstances. Apart from socially shaped sense of self, self-definition may take on a psychological dimension allowing for the inclusion of self-esteem, the individual's overall evaluation of self in terms of worth and competence. Indeed, in muting women's voices in proverb formulation and usage in the Arab culture, one constant line of attack has always been to create possibilities of self-doubt on the part of women such that they are not able to see themselves as capable and efficacious, to see themselves as persons of value. Instead the sense of self-esteem for women is conceptualized externally for them and within structures that habitually inhibit self-esteem (Cast & Burke, 2002). For instance, in a proverb such as ***"Al-rijaalu qabaayilu wal al-niswaani nifaayilu—men are with their tribes and women are with their good deeds***", one thing that comes out strongly is the disparity of the value judgements with respect to women's and men's worth. Men are judged

collectively while women are judged individually. The implication here is that women have to do more so as to achieve value, to be worth of anything by cultivating good character, performing good deeds all of which are habitually assessed on the basis of patriarchal parameters. On their part, men need not do much at the individual level since their overall assessment of value and worth is collective such as the dependence on the reputation of their tribes.

The notion of judging men in terms of collective norms such as the reputation of their tribes is in essence a patriarchal schema that not only shields men from individual responsibilities but also privileges them in several senses. This scheme of things is strongly echoed in the proverb, ***"Twaibu al-hadeedah wa al-dharibu naseebu—choose a good wife from a good family and having children is a matter of luck***". In emphasizing that the responsibility of choosing a marriage partner rests exclusively with men, women's sense of agency and self-determination in terms of marriage choices is annulled; in the process, women are variously portrayed as passive incapable of making choices except through the tutelage of their male counterparts. Proverbs which are formulated on the basis of blatant prejudice and partiality against women usually justify the ill treatment of women on the basis of some external determination of women's worth and sense of self. This sense of prejudice is further observed in a proverb like, ***"Lubusu al-buswatu tabuqa urusatuni—dressing a stick turns it into a bride***"; which cunningly derides women's intelligence as well as their sense of self, the invalidation of self esteem. The sole focus on physical appearance becomes a control structure that downplays women's intellectual capabilities.

Overall, Arabic proverbs depict women openly as passive thus allowing the sense of passivity to be pervasive and monotonously intermittent. Women are habitually blamed for mistakes they do not occasion as in the proverb, ***"Tabuusu al-harifu taqilau asinaanihi—he who kisses his lover tears out his teeth***". In this proverb, there is no sense of reciprocity, certain gender relational actions are conceptualized in terms of active-male and passive-female, as in this case, men can kiss but women can only be kissed. Because women are deprived of agency, they are easy to blame, in most cases without proper justification as in the above proverb. The sense of passivity is further discernible in proverbs advising on the virtues of patience as in the proverb, ***"Huratu swabarati baituhaa umarati—a virtuous woman had patience with her husband and her house flourished***". There is a sense of positivity embedded in this proverb that openly acknowledges the

virtue of patience in marriage; patience is critical in marriage for among other things, it contributes to the prosperity of households. However, it is important to note that the patience canvassed here is patience as exercised by women only; it is the kind of patience in which women suffer in silence, in which women's emotional or material concerns must remain unspoken.

Oftentimes women's sufferings, hardships and hopelessness are interpreted as virtue as suggested in the proverb, ***"Alifu ashiiqunu walaa musitahiluni—a thousand lovers rather than one ugly and low class husband for hire"***. In traditional Egyptian culture, a widow was allowed to first sleep with a foreign man, not necessarily legally married to her, for cleansing purposes before remarrying again. Widows were considered unclean after the death of their spouses, thus they had to be sexually cleansed through rituals performed by men who were generally considered poor and ugly and of low or lacking in virtue; which is why a woman would rather prefer to sleep with a thousand lovers rather than one such man. The use of proverbs that advance such rituals, underpins the culture of silencing women; a culture that women have no choice over, but must go through to meet the demands of repulsive cultural acts.

Women's sense of passivity is generally insidious in the sense that women are always depicted as being on the receiving end of things, they do not cause things to happen instead things are caused to happen to them, as in the proverb, ***"Maa akitharu khatwabii wa maa agalu firaashii—how great is the number of my wooers, but how small is the quantity of my furniture***". In this proverb women are depicted as passive people who derive pleasure in receiving men's presents, material gifts especially during courtship; in other words, women are here presented as receivers, takers of material things gotten out of men's endeavour; they are hardly presented as givers or for that matter, providers. The concept of receiving is indeed critically nuanced as to suggest indolence and lassitude on the part of women, but on a broader sense it also insinuates material ownership, control of means of production and all that enables economic viability.

3.2.2 The Inscription of Subservience in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

In the opening section of this chapter, it was posited that subservience is a critical terminology in gender discourses. In this discussion, subservience is still defined as an ingeniously imposed willingness and eagerness to do what other people want, and in this context, "other people" generally means men in their interactions with women in virtually all spheres**.** Subservience also

insinuates compliance, obedience and submissiveness which may not necessarily be self generated but rather insidiously imposed through structures of domination and subordination, as has been asserted by Sultana (2010). These concepts are nonetheless critically implicated in proverb usage in Swahili and Arab cultures in the sense that inscriptions of subservience ordinarily follow a trajectory of objectification in which women are equated or are perceived as objects. The non-existence of resistance to both the processes of objectification and attendant articles of objectification presupposes "acquiescence" on the part of women to be seen and be perceived in terms of the objects with which men choose to describe women. Besides objectification, the subservience ascribed to women is also seen in terms of lowly and undignified character traits where women are either seen or perceived as weak, naïve and pathetic. The projections of women as home makers and housekeepers purportedly buttress the notion of subordination such that the sense of subservience attributable to women is cunningly interpreted as willingness to submit to domination. However, in order to understand subservience, one must understand the interplay and the interconnectedness between the concepts of patriarchy (read domination) and women's subordination.

3.2.2.1 The Conceptualization of Patriarchy and the Inscription of Subordination

In terms of its etymological foundations, patriarchy plainly means the rule of the father or the patriarch, a term originally used to describe a specific type of 'male-dominated family'—a household of the patriarch with a multiplicity of dwellers—women, children, slaves and servants, all under the rule of this dominant male. In contemporary social and literary discourses, patriarchy is used to refer to male dominance and supremacy, as well as refer to the power relationships by which men dominate and control women. It is also used as a concept to characterise a system in which women are kept subordinate in myriad ways (Bhasin, 2006). Patriarchy insinuates pervasive male dominance in virtually all spheres of human interactions. In feminist discourses, the term 'patriarchy' is used to describe the power relationship between men and women as manifested in many social strata. In essence, patriarchy is more than just a terminology; because for feminists, it is a controversially contested concept, a tool deployed to help understand what constitutes women's lived realities.

As much as there is that idea of convergence, various feminists define patriarchy in a variety of ways. Walby (1990:20), defines "patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women." She explains patriarchy as a system because this helps feminists to reject the notion of biological determinism (which says that men and women are naturally different because of their biology or bodies and, are, therefore assigned different roles) or "the notion that every individual man is always in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one" (Walby, ibid). Patriarchy, in its wider definition, means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women in the family and in the wider society in general. It implies that "men hold power in all the important institutions and structures of society" and that "women are deprived of access to such power".

Thus, patriarchy describes the institutionalized systems and structures of male dominance, it portends a set of social relations between men and women, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish and create independence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women (Jagger & Rosenberg, 1984). The patriarchal concept underpinning the relationship between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant, or masculine, roles and women always have the subordinate or feminine ones. In terms of its ideological institutionalization, it accords privilege and craftily over-stresses biological the differences trajectory, patriarchy is so powerfully deployed such that men are typically able to secure the perceptible approval of the very women they oppress—hence the inculcation of subservience as may be discernible in such innocent looking proverbs as, ***"Mume ni kazi, mke ni nguo— the husband works, the wife dresses***" or literally, for men it is work, for women it is to dress. Men, the beneficiaries of patriarchy actualize this subservience through social and cultural institutions—marriage, the family, culture, rites of passage, each of which justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men (Millett, 1977). The patriarchal system is characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition. So patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress, exploit and subordinate women. Consequently, any discussions on subservience as discernible in proverb usage cannot operate outside these parameters.

3.2.2.2 Women's Subordination and the Perceptions of Subservience

Patriarchy, as already insinuated in the preceding debate presupposes the natural superiority of male over female, brazenly espouses women's dependence on, and subordination to men in all spheres of life. Consequently, all the power and authority within family structures, the society and its social institutions, its cultural milieu, remain entirely in the hands of men. Thus patriarchy facilitates and enables systems and processes in which women are deprived of opportunities, denied of their legal rights and patriarchal values restrict women's social and economic mobility; it rejects their freedom over themselves as well as their property. Subordination, which strongly connotes subservience according to Cobuild (2010), means that something else is less important than the other thing—bluntly put, it means women are less important than men. Subordination ordinarily means having less power or authority than somebody else in a group or organization as is the case with Swahili and Arab societies (Hornby, 2003). The terminology women's subordination consequently refers to the inferior position of women, their lack of access to resources and decision making, and so on. So, women's subordination means they are made to feel and indeed occupy inferior positions to men. They are subtly forced to submit to a sense of powerlessness, inequity and experience of limited self-esteem and self-confidence, perceptions which jointly contribute to the subordination of women.

Thus, women's subordination denotes situations where power relationships exist and men are privileged to fair much better than women in the sense they dominate women. The subordination of women is a central feature of all structures of familial, social, material and economic domination, regardless of the locations or causes of subordination. Subordination has been predicated on numerous determinants such as that of Beauvoir that argued that because men view women as fundamentally different from themselves, women are reduced to the status of the second sex and hence subordinate (Beauvior, 1949). On the other hand, Millet's theory of subordination argues that women are a dependent sex class under patriarchal domination (Millet, 1977). These definitions fit well into the perception of patriarchy as a system in which women are kept subordinate in a number of ways and finds expression in various forms–prejudice, disrespect, insult, control, exploitation, subjugation, brutality–within the family as well as within social and cultural structures of society. For instance, there are clear instances of bias in proverb formulations focusing on sons as opposed to proverbs focusing on daughters such as, son preference on the one

hand and discrimination against girls on the other. There are indeed Swahili and Arabic proverbs in which the burden of household work falls on women and girls, proverbs which project lack of opportunities, freedom and mobility for girls and women. On the other hand, there are indeed proverbs that accord boys and men control over women and girls. Consequently, the norms and practices that define women as inferior to men impose controls on girls and women and these are pervasive in family set-ups, social relations, cultural and religious practices. So when patriarchy is perceived as an ideology, the men espoused in the ideology are superior to women, women are objectified and are part and parcel of men's property, so like parcels women are either overtly or subtly controlled by men and this results in women's subordination and subservience.

The use of purposive terminologies in social and gender discourses may be and often are very critically nuanced. For instance, the phrase subordination of women is ingeniously deployed in the sense that subordination is used in such a way that it does not connote evil intention on the part of the dominant male; it is deployed in a tame way as to allow for the possibility of complicity between dominant male and the subordinate female. It allows for the inclusion of the possibility of voluntary recognition of female subordinate status in exchange of protection and privilege as already indicated in the Swahili proverb, ***"Mke kumtii mume ndio sheria—a wife obeying the husband is the norm/law***". Subordination, like subservience is a situation in which one (female) is forced to stay under the control of other (male). So women's subordination means the creation of social situations in which women are subtly forced to stay under the control of men and this is achieved through complex patriarchal structures of some social customs, traditions, and social roles as well as by socialization processes and practices.

The patriarchal system engenders and inculcates perceptions and worldviews which underpin how men and women behave, think, and aspire but in a binary sense because they have been taught to think of masculinity and femininity in ways which condition them to foreground difference. Thus the patriarchal system shows and acknowledges that men have one set of qualities and characteristics, and women have another that is inherently different. It inculcates such 'masculine' qualities as strength, bravery, fearlessness, dominance, competitiveness as being attributable to men and 'feminine' qualities such as caring, nurturing, love, timidity, obedi ence and so on, as being attributable to women. Patriarchal institutions and social relations are responsible for the inferior or secondary status of women in the society. Women as such are victims of the ideology

and processes of subordination such as exploitation and oppression. Therefore, the issues of son preference, girls' discrimination, dowry payments, violence against women, the use of religion in the processes of subordination and the negative portrayal of women in many spheres, are issues routinely canvassed in Swahili and Arabic proverbs and all of these patriarchal practices as they exist, they reinforce both the perceptions and practices of subservience.

3.2.2.3 Objectification as Subservience

As already argued elsewhere in this study, objectification of women in Swahili proverbs is predicated on the imagery of material things where reference is made directly or indirectly equating women with utilitarian things. For instance, the proverb, ***"Mkeka mpya haulaliwi vema—a new sleeping mat is not pleasant to sleep on***". Though there is nothing markedly feminine about the proverb, its use in canvassing female-male interactions can intimate very strong gender biases. As such, the imagery of a new mat as used in this proverb insinuates a new wife; it also insinuates inexperience in marital matters. Regardless of what other images that may be conjured up by the imagery of the mat, what is important to note is that it is equated to women, something to be slept on. Similar material objectification of women is observable in the proverb, ***"Mke mwema pambo la nyumba—a good wife is a home's adornment***" thus portraying women as objects of adoration. This course of proverb formulation is observable in a variety of proverbs such as ***"Mke ni nguo, mgomba kupalilia—a wife is clothing like a banana plant in need of constant weeding***"; ***"Mume ni kazi, mke ni nguo—the husband works, the wife dresses***" and ***"Buibui ni mwanamke, mume wajifanyaje? –hijab is for women why would a man need it***". Indeed, there is a range of women objectification and commodification running through all these proverbs.

In situations where women in Swahili culture are not commodified as argued above, then they are objectified as ornaments and adornments in general. This is what is observed in the proverb, ***"Atakaye lulu hana budi kupiga mbizi—whoever wants pearls must be ready to dive in the sea***" in which sense when this proverb is used in relational contexts involving women and men, women are reduced to ornaments. The fact that pearls are greatly valued notwithstanding, pearls as products are simply ornamental as determined by the user. Similar ornamentation trajectory is observable in the proverb, ***"Chanda chema huvikwa pete—a good finger is adorned with a ring.***" The same is true of the proverb, ***"Anayekaa karibu na waridi hunukia— he who stays near a rose flower smells nice.***" Just like in the case of the pearls, ring and now fragrance, the underlying

value that is advanced is that of viewing women in terms of material adornments that are meant for the end user (read men).

Arabic proverbs are not dissimilar in their use of ornamental imagery to portray women in various ways. For instance, "***Huwa wajuhuka yaa haziinatu fii al-halii waaliziinatu—it is your face, oh woman in grief, when ornamented and attired***". This proverb is predicated on sarcasm so as to underscore the fact that women have no value unless ornamented and adorned. Similarly, the proverb, ***"Na'alu umu geideedi wala mara waleedi—old shoes with holes are better than a woman who has a son***" extends the adornment argument but it at the same time pointedly disparages women.

3.2.2.4 Physical Weakness and the Inscription of Subservience

One observable fact upon which proverbs are formulated and are deployed, is to enable them circulate prejudiced perceptions of women such as biological weakness. There are naive perceptions in Swahili culture intimating that physical weakness and various forms of helplessness are feminine traits. For instance, the Swahili proverb, ***"Mke hukaa katika kivuli cha mumewe—the wife stays in the shadow of her husband***", intimates dependence and submission. The imagery of a shadow as used in this proverb obscures the true picture of a woman's worth while at the same time intimating some sense of weakness. Other examples of Swahili proverbs that depict women as weak include; ***"Mama ni mama ijapokuwa ni rikwama—a mother is a mother even if she is like a hand cart (mkokoteni)"*** and ***"Mla halasa hamziki mamaye—he who eats all his savings cannot bury his mother***". The proverbs; ***"Bibi mzuri hakosi kilema—there is no beautiful wife without a blemish***" and ***"Mwanamke mzuri hakosi kasoro—every beautiful woman has her faults***" would all appear to be attributing some kind of incompleteness to women and by extension intimate weakness. These proverbs in various ways are preoccupied with fault finding as a mechanism for belittling and subjugating women. The same sense of imperfection either in terms of physical make up or inadequacy in executing tasks is observable in the proverbs; ***"Kuku mgeni zawadi ya kunguru—a new chicken is a gift to the crow***" and ***"Dua la kuku halimpati mwewe—the curse of the chicken does not bother the hawk***". When these proverbs are used in the context of the male—female, the metaphor of the chicken in the presence of the mighty crow or hawk underscores the sense of limitation attributed to women. In the final analysis these are patriarchal attributions and insidious mechanisms for subjugating women.

A similar dimension of proverb formulation and usage that is predicated on perceived female weaknesses is also observable in Arabic proverbs. For instance, the proverb, ***"Almutahazinimu bil-niswaani ur-yaani—he who dresses himself with women is naked***" intimates that there is something faulty in associating with women. Similar disparagement is observable in the proverb, ***"Al-mara makusuratu janaha—a woman has broken wings***" where the sense of incompleteness is accentuated connoting women's helplessness. The proverb, ***"Al-raajulu birijaalihi wa al-karimu bi amayaalihi—the brave man is with his men and the generous one is with his wife***" does not tilt away from the familiar trait of innate feminine flaws. Whereas the proverb ***"Al-umu uriyana mabiksi khaalatuhu—he whose mother is naked will not clothe his aunt***" appears to be addressed to men, it nevertheless foregrounds women's nudity. The sense of women portrayed as waiting to be clothed by men gravitates well to the concept of guardianship as practiced in Islamic cultures. This is overly suggested in the proverb, ***"Al-raajul kuluhu wali al-mara—whoever a man is, he is the woman's guardian***". Perhaps the reality of this practice is what accords high status to male children as stated in the proverb, ***"Umu adhukukuru adhaniha baaridahu—the mother of male children has peace of mind***". A similar assertion of men's superiority over women is discernible in the proverb, ***"Ishitihinaa ala dii adalaqa yajii ghulamuni—from the mother's efforts in labour, we expect a male child***". The preference accorded male children as opposed to girls is observable in the proverb, ***"Mani isitahayi mini binti amihi maa khaba minihaa ghulamuni—he who is bashful with his cousin, gets no boy by her***". The ethos of preference of male over female is deeply entrenched in Arab cultures and is regularly encountered in many proverbs. For instance, ***"Al-mara al-aaqiru dhifa fii al-baiti—a barren woman is a visitor in the house***" first and foremost it intimates that barrenness is a feminine trait thus absolving men from taking responsibility. It is therefore a female weakness.

3.2.2.5 Women as Home Makers and House Keepers

There is a truism in patriarchal systems that even very routine functions and chores are appropriated to advance patriarchal agendas. In Swahili culture where home making and housekeeping are chores predominantly performed by women, the same are used as testimony of women's weaknesses and incompleteness. For example, the proverb, ***"Adamu mwenziwe Hawa, mwanamume na mke—Adam's companion is Eve, a wife belongs to a husband***". The proverb ingeniously tilts to focus on women's dependence. These are however contradicted by the presence

of a number of Swahili proverbs that celebrate womanhood. For instance, the proverbs ***"Mke ni nguzo ya nyumba—a wife is a pillar of the house"*** and ***"Nyumba ni mwanamke—a house is a woman***" are indeed celebratory. There is positive portrayal of women especially where a wife is equated to a pillar. Though this is appreciated, many other proverbs within the same milieu confine women to small and obscure spaces. This is what is discernible in the proverbs; ***"Eda ni ada yenye faida— abstinence and self-seclusion is a beneficial culture***" and ***"Eda ya mke hakuna ya mume—abstinence and self-seclusion is for the wife, there is no abstinence and self-seclusion for the husband***".

Marriage is a celebrated institution in both Swahili and Arab cultures. Consequently, marriage in its various manifestations is a constant trope in proverb formulation and usage. This is clearly captured in the proverbs, ***"Aliyemwoa mama yako ndiye baba yako—he who has married your mother is your father***" and ***"Mama wa kambo si mama, mama yako ni aliye kuzaa—a step mother isn't your mother, your mother is the one who gave birth to you***". It is also discernible in the proverb ***"Kosa moja haliachi mke—one mistake does not lead to a divorce***" as well as in the proverbs ***"Mwenye dada hakosi shemeji—he who has a sister cannot miss to have an in-law"*** and ***"Nyumba hutegemea miti kama nchi kwa mabinti—a house depends on trees just like a country depends on girls***". Even though not explicit, similar sentiments are expressed in the proverb ***"Mtoto wa nyoka ni nyoka—the child of a snake is a snake***". Just like in Swahili culture, marriage is regularly expressed in Arabic proverbs where women as home makers are portrayed in various ways. There are purported moments of contentment in marriage as in the proverb, ***"Idhaa kaana zauji raadhi aishi fudhulu al-qaadhi—if my husband is satisfied why should the Kadhi's interference be entertained?***" On yet another level, choice in marriage is restricted in the sense that only men can initiate marriage. This is what is suggested in the proverb, ***"Aduhinu wa'ainu alaihina—let your daughters get married and help their husbands***" where a utilitarian interest can be adduced. However, there are other proverbs that celebrate marriage in an elevated sense as in the proverb, ***"Al-zawaj nisifu al-deeni—marriage is half of religion***". By equating marriage with religion, this proverb elevates the marriage institution in the Arab society. Thus marriage is seen as having cleansing power as suggested in the proverb, ***"Ini taabati al-qahabatu uriswati—if a harlot repents she becomes a procuress***". However, what fails to come out in these

proverbs is the positions occupied by women in marriage and how much space and freedom women are accorded in the institution of marriage.

In Swahili culture, housekeeping is a chore reserved for women. This reality is regularly expressed in Swahili proverbs such as, ***"Mke kipofu huwa mwaminifu—a blind wife is always faithful***". Intertwining faithfulness with blindness as in this proverb is a selfish patriarchal scheme and system of control that takes advantage of women's disabilities. Other proverbs predicated on the marriage paradigm are blatantly accusatory as in the proverb, ***"Mwanamke ana jicho la nje–a woman has a flirting eye***". The insinuation is that infidelity is a feminine trait yet in reality it goes both ways. In the proverb ***"Akataaye kula humwongezea mke mwenziwe—the wife who refuses to eat only benefits the co-wife***" intimates marital competition between co-wives. Competition among co-wives is perceived as counterproductive because it benefits the man in the marriage. Other proverbs that may be seen as predicated on the housekeeping paradigm may include the proverb, ***"Kazi ya mekoni, kazi ya nisiwani—kitchen work is work for women***", a proverb that cunningly absolves men from household chores. However, in the proverbs ***"Mke ni dada mdogo—a wife is like a younger sister***" and ***"Mume si babe kwa mkewe—a husband is not a champion to his wife***", the housekeeping trope can only be inferred, it is not explicit.

Just like in Swahili culture, housekeeping in Arab culture and its expression in proverbs revolves around what may be referred to as homely chores and related issues. For instance, in the proverb ***"Al-mara al-biquuloo mara mini al-ataba wa liwaraa—the woman that is called a real woman is behind her door step"*** the praise given to the women is restrained and accorded to only those confined and hidden behind doorsteps**.** The same is discernible in the proverb, ***"Qadi tubula al-malihatu bitwalaaqa—even the beautiful woman experiences the misfortune of divorce***" where women are subtly warned against divorce. The proverb ***"Arraajulu ainu al-baiti wal-bintu sanad al-baiti—the man is the eye of the house and the girl is the support of the house***" is premised on the sense of role allocation between men and women.

3.2.3 Proverb Usage and the Inscription of Marginality

Marginality as used in this discussion means and entails, in terms of gender relational arrangements within patriarchal structures, the assignment of roles and the perpetuation of perceptions of being of "lesser importance". It also insinuates, particularly in gender discourses, an "absent presence,"

in respect of the female gender—that's acknowledging a physical presence of women and an absence of locution for women. Furthermore, marginality denotes the objectification and the peripheralization of the female members of society in terms of place and space as belonging "at the margins" for those not considered important to a society or its culture. Marginality also insinuates disempowerment, that is—the deployment of systematic and restraining strategies that actively encumber the attainment of full privileges and self-confidence of women's skills and sense of belonging within a society. The actualization of marginality subtly buttresses the bequeathing of hegemony to the male gender as one section of society, thus allowing that section multiple levels of dominance over another, including the subordinated group's consent to submit to subtle domination.

The concept of marginality is, generally speaking used to structure and ground the analysis of cultural, social, economic and political placements attributable to the male and female members of a given society at a given time. It is a conception whose analysis attempts to understand how disadvantaged people struggle to gain access to resources and full participation in social life. In other words, the concept seeks to affirm that marginalized people are habitually, socially, materially and politically ignored, excluded or neglected and therefore susceptible to livelihood changes. Marginality also connotes the relegation of sections of society, for instance, the female gender as a section, to insignificant or powerless positions within social and decision making structures of society, consequently making the processes and outcomes of marginalization, to mean overt and subtle placements of sections of society in the margins and thus excluding them from the privileges and the power of the centre. Marginality as such deals with the socio cultural and human problems of people belonging to various sections of society such as women/females due to their peripheral place. The inscription of marginality through proverb usage as such, must be predicated on the critical understanding of the conceptualizations of marginality canvassed above.

3.2.3.1 Norms and Structures of Interaction as Strategies of Inscribing Marginality

As already observed in the preceding sections of this study, the Swahili and Arab societies are overtly masculine and, therefore, norms and structures of social interactions are predicated on patriarchal conceptualizations. This means that there are characters and behavioural traits expected of women and men. These realities usually find expression in proverb formulation and usage. For instance, the following Swahili proverbs present various behavioural norms expected of women in

this society, that is, ***"Kaburi la mke mwenza li kombo—the grave of the co-wife is crooked***"; ***"Dirishani upendo huruka, umaskini uvukapo kizingitini—love leaves through the window when poverty enters through the door***"; and ***"Mficha uchi hazai—the one who hides nakedness cannot sire children***". ***"Ajuza hawi kijana ingawa ataka sana—an old woman can never be young even though she really yearns for it***" This is because women depictions in the above proverbs focuses mainly on four areas that is: selfishness, being materialistic, being deceitful as well as people living in self-denial.

Women's selfishness and jealousy as expressed in Arabic proverbs, is majorly a patriarchal conceptualization, thus an imposition of a norm or a behavioural expectation not as conceptualized by women. For instance, the proverb, ***"Naakuhaa sakatati aatabuhaa taghanajati—they embraced her, she remained silent, they reproached her and she assumed airs***" cannot be said to have been formulated from a feminine prism. The same is true of the proverbs ***"Ghairatu al-mara mifutaahu twalaaqaha—the jealousy of a woman is the key to divorce***", ***"Al-habulatu shatahatuhu wal-murdhi'at akalatuhu—the pregnant woman longed for it, but the nurse ate it***" ,***"Haasadatihaa tu'utarifu fii sha'aratihaa—may her envy stumble over her hair"***, ***"Zeenani lilrijaal talqaa wa zeenani lilniswaani alma khatwa majiraaha—doing a favour to men brings good and doing a favour to women is like water that has missed its stream***", ***"Al-abuaashiquni wal-umu ghairanatunu fii daari hairanatuni—the husband's lover makes the wife jealous, while the daughter at home is puzzled how to act***", ***"Taabati al-qahabatu lailatu qaala walaa waali yamusiku alqahabatu—a harlot repented the night she demanded that the police arrest all the harlots***" and ***"Al-qar'tu bitatibaaha bisha'ari binti ukhutahaa—the bald woman boasts of her niece's hair".***

The patriarchal systems and structures governing social behaviour in Swahili culture are normally expressed in a number of proverbs. For instance, adultery and immorality are frowned upon and as such find expression in proverb usage as in ***"Chelewa chelewa utamkuta mwana si wako—delay, delay you may find that the child is not yours***". Ideally this proverb is focused on discouraging illicit sex outside wedlock. In the proverbs ***"Mlinzi hulinda ndege mke mzuri halindwi—a guard guards a bird, a beautiful wife cannot be guarded***"; ***"Ndege hulindwa mke mzuri halindwi—a bird is guarded but a wife cannot be guarded***" and "***Mwanamke ana jicho la***

nje—a woman has a roving eye" focus on two issues—mistrust and the confinement of women. The proverb ***"Uzuri wa mwanamke si wa kila mpita njia—the beauty of a woman is not for every passer-by***" is interested in cautioning women against public display of beauty while ***"Ushaufu si heshima ya mwanamke—flirting is not honourable for a woman***" is also focused on discouraging extra marital affairs.

Harlotry is a behaviour seriously abhorred in Arab culture and it regularly finds expression in various proverbs. This is sometimes very extensive in proverb formulation and usage as in the following proverbs; ***"Mani tazawaja fii suuqu al-twairi kaana twalaaqahu tamusuu bilkhairi—the divorce of one who marries in the bird market is as quick as saying goodnight***"; ***"Ghairatu al-qahabatu zinaa wa ghairatu al-huratu bukaa—the jealousy of a harlot is through adultery while that of a virtuous woman is by crying***"; ***"Al-qahabatu al-jawadatu maa turidu laha quwaadatunu—the public woman who is liberal does not wish for a procuress***" and the proverb, ***"Ini twala'ati huratuni uliqi fii wadini juratuni—if you prove to be a virtuous woman, hang a jar on my ear***" all of them look at harlotry from various perspectives that are geared towards the disparagement of women.

Besides harlotry, adultery is another behaviour that regularly finds expression in Arabic proverbs. Such proverbs as, ***"Baa'ti al-manaaratu wash'tarati sitaaratu qaala dii hatiikatu bitahisinu ibaaratu—she sold the lamp to buy curtains to hide her dealings in the bed chamber and it turned out to be a scandal under a fine appearance***" brings this out explicitly. Similar behavioural sentiments are expressed in the proverb, ***"Ba'ada maa naakuhaa asharatu lilghafarati—after they had ravished her, she called out to the watchmen***" and in the proverb, ***"Khatwabuuhaa tamani'ati tarakuuhaa tatwala'ati—they wooed her she refused, they left her and she fell in love***". The proverbs ***"Waahidu yaniiku imraatahu wa jaaratahu itaghanajati—a neighbour embraces his wife and a female neighbour lusts for the same";*** and ***"Yarikabu bilaashi wa yughaamizi imraatu al-raisi—he gets a free ride and winks to the captain's wife***" extend this behavioural discourse as to include lust and indecency.

It is generally assumed in Swahili culture that, women are innately intolerant and this is regularly expressed in various Swahili proverbs such as; ***"Mke mwenza!! Ha! Mezea!—a cowife! No! forget it!"; "Mama wa kambo si mama, mama ni aliyekuzaa—a step mother is not a mother, a***

mother is the one who gave birth to you" and ***"Mafahali wawili hawakai zizi moja—two bulls do not live in the same shed".*** Intolerance also finds expression in Arabic proverbs where it manifests itself in various perspectives. For instance, the proverb, "***Tadhiribu al-qadiritu alaa famiha, taswaliu al-binti liumihaa—the training ability in her mouth, the girl looks to her mother***" is focused on the assumed dangers of inheriting unacceptable behaviours. The proverb, ***"Bakharaa wa tazaahama ala al-buusi—she has an offensive breath, yet presses forward to get a kiss***" is a reprimand that is intended to inculcate good hygiene. A similar sentiment is expressed in the proverb, ***"Qahabatuni masuturatuni wala huratuni mubaharajatuni—a decent public woman rather than an indecent honest woman***".

3.2.3.2 Care Giving and Mentorship in the Depiction of Women

Care giving and mentorship of children are critically ingrained in Swahili culture and as such these functions regularly find expression in both proverb formulation and usage. The range of issues canvassed in proverbs focused on care giving and mentorship is wide such as the joy of motherhood as in the proverb ***"Furaha ya mama ni mtoto—the happiness of a mother is a child***" intimating that the completeness of womanhood and marriage are dependent on the siring of children. The physical challenges and pain of giving birth where mothers are encouraged to bear the pain of labour are also captured in proverbs as in the proverb, ***"Piga kite mama ujifungue—press hard mother to give birth***"**.** Other issues captured in Swahili proverbs relating to care and mentorship include tolerance as in the proverb, ***"Mzazi haachi ujusi—a mother does not stop smelling***" a noble chore that underscores the values of selflessness. The proverb, ***"Ukistahi mke ndugu huzai naye—if you shy away from your cousin's wife, you cannot sire a child with her***" underscores the challenges involved in the fulfilment of marriages and as such encourages pragmatic approaches to marital issues. On its part the proverb ***"Kuku mwenye watoto halengwi jiwe—a hen with chicks is not hit with a stone***" celebrates mothers who have children, advocates love and protection for them.

In several situations care giving may entail the physical biological connection between mother and child, thus underscoring mother's love normally epitomized through the mother's milk to the child as addressed in the proverb, ***"Azaaye kinyago hukinyonyesha—the one who gives birth to a statute suckles it***". This is perhaps one biological function that finds several expressions in proverbs as in, ***"Akosae la mama hata la mbwa huamwa—the one who misses a mother's breast,***

even a dog's breast he/she will suckle" and ***"Titi la mama litamu jingine haliishi hamu—the mother's breast is sweet like no other***". The overall value circulated in these proverbs, is the centrality of a mother's milk as an expression of love, warmth and connectedness. This is an acknowledgement that mothers sacrifice a lot of their time in caring, nurturing and mentoring their children. It is this similar commitment of mothers to their children that is presented in the proverb, ***"Kuku akiatamia hana matembezi—a hatching chicken doesn't promenade"***.

Raising children in any society entails among other things mentoring and moulding children to fit well into society. This is observable in the proverb, ***"Kuzaa si kazi, kazi ni kulea—giving birth is not work, work is to raise the child***". In this proverb, it is strongly suggested that giving birth is an event whereas raising children in terms of nurture and mentorship is a lifelong process. In the proverb ***"Jogoo hawezi kulea wana—a cock cannot raise chicks***" are embedded several sociological issues relating to division of chores and the separation of functions between men and women, the contestation of spaces between fathers and mothers. Raising children is extensively captured in several Swahili proverbs as observable in the proverbs, ***"Kweli mwana ni mamaye na mlezi akalea—indeed the child is to the mother and the baby sitter takes care***", "***Mikono ileayo mtoto ndiyo itawalayo dunia—the hands that raise a child, are the ones that rule the world***", ***"Kipele cha mwana uchungu wa mama— a child's pimple is a pain to the mother***", ***"Uchungu wa mwana ajuaye mzazi—A child's pain is best known by the parent of the child***", ***"Maji na tumbawe, mama na mwanawe—water with the coral and the mother with her child***", ***"Mama kwa mwanawe, mtoto kwa mamaye—a mother to her child, and a child to her mother***" and ***"Mtoto kwa mama hakui—a child to the mother never grows***". Similar care and mentorship proverbs are extensively formulated and used in Arab culture. These include focusing on issues of unconditional love as in the proverbs ***"Alhanifasatu fii aini umiha malihatuni—the beetle in the eyes of the mother is beautiful***" and ***"Al-qirdu fii aini umihi ghazaluni—the monkey is as beautiful as a gazelle in its mother's eyes***". Other proverbs depict mothers' tender care to their children "***Habulatuni wa murudhiatuni qadamihaa aruba'atuni—she is pregnant, nursing a child and has four other children beforehand***".

The depiction of women as mentors in Swahili proverbs is very extensive and it generally acknowledges and celebrates women in that role. In this sense, proverbs such as ***"Uzoefu ndio mama wa maarifa—experience is the mother of knowledge***" though not overtly gender nuanced,

it is predicated on the metaphor of mama—mother. Mothers impart knowledge that enables the children to understand their world and this arises out of their immense experience as mothers. ***"Mjukuu hawezi kumfunza bibiye kunyonya—a grandson/granddaughter cannot teach the grandmother how to suckle***" continues in that same trajectory of acknowledging the enormity of mothers' experience, it surpasses that of the offspring. This is also discernible in the following proverbs, ***"Mtoto akibebwa hutazama kisogo cha mamake— when a child is carried, he looks at the mother's back head***" intimating learning from observation, "***Asiyefunzwa na mamaye, hufunzwa na ulimwengu—the one who is not taught by the mother, is taught by the world***", acknowledging the role played by mothers as the primary givers of education and nurture and ***"Asiye safari husifu upishi wa mama yake tu— the one who has not travelled always praises the mother's cookery***" urging children to acquire more world knowledge than what their mothers give.

Other Swahili proverbs are predicated on the need to appreciate and be thankful for the knowledge, nurture and upbringing that mothers bequeath their children as observed in the proverb, ***"Fadhila mpe mama na Mola atakubariki—honour your mother and God will bless you***" intimating that appreciating mothers comes with blessings. This is the same value inculcated in, ***"Gombea heshima gombea mama—Fight for respect, fight for a woman"; "Mke wa kwanza ni kama mama—the first wife is like a mother***" and ***"Mtu mamaye ni mungu wake wa pili—a person's mother is like his second God***". It is important to note that although this proverb gained its prominence during the time of elections, as a motivation for the voters to offer their support to the female aspirants, however, the proverb is used generally to encourage members of the society to respect and honour women/mothers. Overall, in these proverbs mothers and women generally are honoured and acknowledged because of their contribution in moulding their children. It needs to be pointed out that moulding children entails a lot of issues including discipline and character formation. In several senses this is what is entailed in the Swahili proverb, ***"Teke la kuku halimwumizi mwanawe—the kick of a chicken doesn't hurt its chick***" subtly suggesting that sometimes it is necessary to use physical force to teach children with the understanding that it is not meant to hurt. It is the same value inculcated in, ***"Baa la kuku halimwui mwanawe—a chicken's feather doesn't kill its chick***" and ***"Kuku havunji yaile—a hen does not break her own egg.***" The Swahili do not anticipate that children will have audacity to be rude and insolent to their

parents, hence the availability of proverbs which caution against this as in the proverb, ***"Mwana mtukana nina kuzimu enda kiona—a child who abuses the mother brings a curse to himself/herself.***"

The mentorship role played by mothers to their children is largely acknowledged in Arabic proverbs. Just like in Swahili proverbs, Arabic proverbs also view mothers from various perspectives. For instance, in the proverb, ***"Al-aaqilu yatazawaju lil awuladihi—he who is wise marries for his children"*** there are several values of importance that are suggested—a good mother who will provide nourishment, nurture, discipline, love, protection, and so on, hence the advice to marry for the children**.** In some subtle ways, the same message is echoed in the proverbs, ***"Mani tuhibuhu mini aulaadika qaala alaa kasi umihi—who among your children do you love most? He said the most cared for by my wife from the children***", ***"Rahma ala umuhu kaanati aqiwadu mini abuhu—God bless his mother; she was more provident than his father***". It is worth noting that although most of the proverbs captured in this section appear to celebrate the roles played by mothers and indeed women as care givers and mentors to their children, however, an interrogation of the entire process of raising children raises several pertinent questions that touch on the marginalization of women. The fact that mothers in both the Swahili and Arab societies are solely responsible for the nurturing and mentorship of their children means that they have to sacrifice some of their outside commitments if not all; this pushes them to the periphery hence marginalizing them.

3.2.3.3 Repugnant and Socially Unacceptable Behaviours in the Depiction of Women

The Swahili proverbs abhor norms, behaviours and certain character traits that are considered repugnant and socially unacceptable. This distaste is extensively canvassed in Swahili proverbs. For instance, ***"Kufuga punda madhila kukujambia mashuzi—to rear a donkey is annoying it only farts***" admonishes against stubbornness both as a character trait and behavioural expectation, especially of women. Similar admonition is depicted in the proverb, ***"Kitu usicho nacho usimwahidi mama mkwe—do not promise the mother-in-law something which is not in your possession***". Other character traits abhorred and which find expression in Swahili proverbs include being arduous, destructive and treacherous. This may seem like what is intimated in the proverb, ***"Mwanamke abeden harizi/haridhi—a woman is never satisfied***".

Obduracy as a character trait in Arabic proverbs is depicted in a multifaceted sense— sometimes acknowledging the centrality of mothers/women in social interactions and sometimes out rightly contemptuous of women. This is discernible in the proverbs ***"Maa qadara ala hamaatihi qaama li'imraatihi—he was not a match for his mother-in-law, so he rose against his wife***" and ***"Hamaati munaaqiratun, qaala twaliqi bintahaa—he said; "my mother-in-law is a plague" and someone replied; divorce her daughter***". Obduracy may be depicted as grief, thus focusing on the negative consequences as in the proverb, ***"Khaluhu bi hamihi akhadha waahidatuni qadra umihi—leave him alone with his grief, he has taken one as old as his mother***". There are other cautionary proverbs such as ***"Taalii bila da'awati iqia'adi ala dii al-gharwatu—come without further quarrelling and sit down upon this pelisse***" loathing quarrelling in all its forms. As such stubbornness is regularly discouraged as in the proverb, ***"Adubanu ya'arifu wajihu allubanu—the fly knows the face of the milk seller***" and ***"Al-mara al-naqinaqa qaatwia maal wa qaatwia riziqi—a nagging woman cuts wealth and cuts provision.***"

Another character and behavioural trait that is loathed in Swahili and Arabic proverbs revolves around the sense of being arduous. This is what is expressed in the proverbs; ***"Heri kufuga punda, kama nisiwani—it is easier to domesticate donkeys than women*** and ***"Kazi ya ukwe haina faida—the assistance advanced to the in-laws accrues no benefit***". Similar depictions of arduousness are observable in several Arabic proverbs such as ***"Saa'ad al-banaati nuru albaiti wa qaadaa baqara lilbaiti—girls' marriage is a light to the house and their staying in the parents' house is oppression to the house***", ***"Al-mara kaana ukhutu raajulu hamunu wa kaana qa'dati fii biyataki hamuni—a woman is a burden whether she is married or remains at her parents' house***", ***"Khalifaha al-mara qiribatu damu ini shilitaha kharati wa ini waa'atu—a woman is a leather bag full of blood, if you carry it, it pours out and if you leave it, it becomes pus***", ***"Hamu al-banati lil mamaati***—the ***worries about girls last to death";*** appears to depict women as a life time burden to the male folk, ***"Aazibuni wa yudhwaribu maa bakhala laha swahibu—the brave man is with his men and the generous one is with his wife.***" There is indeed a very strong sense of women presented in a very contemptuous way.

There are quite a number of Swahili and Arabic proverbs which depict women negatively hence circulating views of women being destructive as in, ***"Mtoto wa nyoka ni nyoka—a child of a snake is a snake***". Though not overly feminine, when this proverb is used in female-male

interactions, it is possible it will insinuate destructiveness, a snake as the imagery suggests has never been an admired creature. There is a cognate proverb in Arabic proverb conveying a similar message, ***"La talidi al-hayatu ila hayatu—a snake does not give birth except to a snake***". The supposed sense of destruction is also depicted in the Arabic proverbs ***"Al-nisaai habaaili ash-shaitwaani—women are ropes of Satan***", ***"Naaru wa mara maa indahumu swighaar—fire and women never have a small stage***" and ***"Baina Hanaa wa Banaa dha'ati al-banaa—between Hanaa and Banaa our beards got lost.***"

Treachery is also strongly abhorred in Swahili and Arab cultures and this is regularly observable in both proverb formulation and usage. In terms of imparting knowledge, women get blamed for the imperfections of character that may be seen in their children later in life as in the proverb, ***"Hila hii si ya mwari, aliyetenda ni kungwi—this evil is not from the maiden, it is the hand work of the woman coach***". A similar message insinuating treachery is observable in the proverbs: ***"Maa al-hazinatu al-thikali ka al-nayahatu bakarahaa—the afflicted mother who has lost her children is not like the woman who weeps for hire***" and ***"Ina jaatun adaadatun ihina mina alwalidatu dii baniyatun faasidatun—if the midwife happens to show more affection than the mother, then that is a corrupt feeling***". Sometimes it is assumed that women do not actually show genuine emotions but they may feign emotions for financial gain. This is what may be implied in the proverbs, ***"Dumuu'u al-fawajiru hawaajiru—the tears of an adulterous woman are ever ready***" and ***"Maa tatahazam bil-niswaan faza'ahuna zaghareed wa silahahuna bukaa—do not depend on women, their support is thrilling and their weapon is crying.***" Similar depictions are observable in the proverbs, ***"Iyakum wa khadharaa al-dimunu, qaaloo wa khadharaa al-dimani? Qaala al-hasuna fii manibati alsuu— beware of "Khadhara al-diman" they said what is khadhara al-diman? He said "A pretty woman of evil origin"*** and ***"Haziinatuni maa laha ainaini ishitarati maraayatu bidirihamaini—aggrieved because she had no eyes, she purchased a looking glass for two dirhams.***"

3.3 Conclusions

It is evident that the depictions of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs in this chapter do not accord women an opportunity for their voices to be heard. The depictions are further employed in the circulation of outright negativity where women's beauty and sense of presence are blamed for men's lustful adventures. The apportionment of blame on women for anything and everything, in

effect degrade, mute and silence women's voices. It is obvious that the objective of this blame game is geared towards the inscription of silence that is characterised by the presentation and categorization of women through the male's prism. This state of affairs clearly proscribes the possibilities of women's self-definition, it reverses the possibilities of women becoming aware that the attitudes they hold about themselves, the norms that determine the extent of their freedoms, are embedded in social institutions and cultural practices that buttress them. Its net effect is the constant discouragement of women from participating in societal activities for fear of being blamed or victimised.

There are, indeed, many proverbs in both Swahili and Arab cultures that ingeniously inscribe silence on the part of their female populations. The actualization in real life of these "silences" is realized through a variety of strategies such as outright threats of physical harm and punishment, devaluation and belittling of women's contribution, ascription of low or no value on women's intellectual contributions, to outlandish disparagements of all that is female, among others. There is evidence that Swahili and Arabic proverbs are centrally implicated in inscribing unedifying ethos which makes a mockery of women's intelligence, erodes their selfesteem, discourages them from engaging in problem solving ventures, but above all, proverb folklore deliberately and in several subtle ways creates self-doubt in women's constructive thinking.

Furthermore, there are clear instances of bias in proverb formulations in Swahili and Arab societies focusing on sons as opposed to proverbs focusing on daughters such as, son preference on the one hand and discrimination against girls on the other. There are indeed Swahili and Arabic proverbs in which the burden of household work falls on women and girls, proverbs which project lack of opportunities, freedom and mobility for girls and women. On the other hand, there are indeed proverbs that accord boys and men control over women and girls. Consequently, the norms and practices that define women as inferior to men impose controls on girls and women and these are pervasive in family set-ups, social relations, cultural and religious practices. So when male domination, otherwise referred to as patriarchy in this study is perceived as an ideology, the men espoused in the ideology are superior to women, women are objectified and are part and parcel of men's property; so like parcels women are either overtly or subtly controlled by men and this results in women's subordination and subservience. There are various ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs affirm the existence and execution of marginalization, particularly in terms of

denying the marginalized groups (read women) both space and voice. This denial finds expression in proverbs that underscore the conceptualizations of centre and periphery and thus makes marginality work in terms of binary oppositions of centre and periphery, hegemony and powerlessness, privilege and disadvantage, always making those who are at periphery disempowered to access the centre. Indeed, Swahili and Arab cultures abound with proverbs which strongly espouse marginalization of its female members of society, proverbs in which there is an apparent process of pushing this particular group of people to the edge of society by not allowing them any active voice, identity, or place in it. Swahili and Arabic proverbs through covert subtlety of inscription and through both direct and indirect processes of enculturation make women a marginalized group relegated to inferior positions and feel as if they are less important than their male counterparts who hold more power or privilege in these societies.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INSCRIPTION OF PERCEPTIONS OF FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY IN SWAHILI AND ARABIC PROVERBS

4.1 Introduction

Femininity refers to a set of culturally constructed attributes, behaviors and roles generally associated with girls and women. Femininity is sometimes understood to mean the quality of being female or the quality and behavior of womanliness. Masculinity on the other hand, is defined as the possession of qualities traditionally associated with boys and men; otherwise known as manhood or manliness. It is important to note that those female or male qualities referred to in these definitions, are socially constructed values, orientations and worldviews arising out of socially-defined structures, biologically created and observable factors. This study concurs inter alia with the arguments advanced by Ampofo (2001) that being a man or a woman should be treated as a social contextual framing given the fact that every society has a set of ideals, both overt and covert governing what it means to be recognized as a man and as a woman respectively.

On its part, the *Encyclopedia of Sociology* (2001, citing Burke et al. 1988 and Spence 1985), affirms that femininity and masculinity are terms generally associated with one's gender identity, that is, the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine, but more so acknowledging what specific societies have designated to mean to be a man or woman in that society. Femininity and masculinity are social constructs, organizing principles deeply rooted in the social ethos of a society rather than in the biological attributes of one's sex. Societal members decide what being male or female means such that males will generally respond by defining themselves as masculine while females will generally define themselves as feminine. Because these are social definitions, it is possible to experience a sense of fluidity in their applications in the sense that they are not innate and they are dynamic. It is such sets of social constructs and interpretive ethos that are centrally implicated in the formulation of Swahili and Arabic proverbs and they are critical in shaping the nature of interaction and flow of relationships between men and women as gendered beings.

In order to appreciate the extent of feminization and masculinization of Swahili and Arab societies through the use of proverbs, this study sets out to examine a number of selected proverbs in terms of their overt meanings as well as the meanings embedded in their sub-texts. It also seeks to engage in a de-codification of the metaphors, imageries and similes and the parallels that have been used in the formulation of such selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs. In so doing, this study seeks to make discernible the inscriptions of perceptions of femininity and masculinity as brought out both in the formulation and the use of those proverbs. Thus, this study takes cognizance of the fact that each culture has in its cultural repertoire of what constitutes an ideal man or woman. This is because each society sets up accepted behaviors to which the individual members of either gender are expected to conform. However, it is worth noting that in certain given contexts, there are certain "accepted" perceptions of what constitutes maleness and femaleness that turn out as dominant and therefore, are naturally taken as the norm.

The analyses of the proverbs' sub-texts of the selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs, are predicated on two tenets of the feminist literary theory as expounded by Napikoski (2017), being the postulation that foregrounds identification with female characters and the re-evaluation and counter-reading of the hushed functions of proverbs in the world in which they are utilized as well as the tenet of gender binary. Gender binary, is a tenet that focuses on the classification of gender into two distinctive, opposed, and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine, usually by social system and cultural practice. It is worth mentioning that the deployment of gender binarism in these analyses is to enable explain how proverbs are subtly used in these societies to split their members into one of two sets of gender, allocate them gender identities as well as allocate them privileging or demeaning social and cultural attributes. Such a perspective will enable the study to point out the attributes and characteristics that are critical in the inscription of perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the proverbs in question. Furthermore, the study applies Milner's (1969a:199), definition of a proverb based on the "symmetrical structure, form and content of proverbs" to disclose whether the inscribed perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs, signal positive or negative values.

4.2 The Inscription of the Perceptions of Femininity in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

The study of the attributes/characteristics responsible for the inscription of the perceptions of femininity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, entails the study of the perceptions on women in the

Swahili and Arab societies as they perform their societal roles. Women in these societies are expected to undertake a myriad of roles that include and are not limited to the parenting of children which entails nurturing, education as well as mentorship. Women are also required to take part in the day today running of the household affairs and safeguard their husbands' property whether present or otherwise. The study acknowledges the possible diversity of the actualization of these roles in both the Swahili and Arab societies in its investigation of the inscription of the perceptions of femininity in the proverbs of these societies.

4.2.1 Women, Parenthood and Femininity

In many patriarchal societies women are perceived and almost always categorized as the 'other', thus ascribing to them secondary, subdued and peripheral positions in society. This is because, in patriarchal gendered societies, cultures cunningly teach people how to conduct themselves and live to the expectations of their gendered nature in their societies depending upon their respective perceptions of masculinity and femininity. These subtle trainings are ingeniously imposed and acquired by the members of a given society through multiple and lifelong processes of socialization from childhood to adulthood and this is realized through different socialization institutions like the home, social and cultural institutions and rites of passage, educational and religious institutions and their practices thereof, customs, rituals and work practices. These institutions and practices in both overt and covert ways teach every man and woman how to act in ways that are "acceptable and allowable" in respect of men and women in a given society. These processes thus inscribe certain stereotypical norms for every human being that every gender in terms of him/her should adhere to these specified "acceptable and allowable" norms for attaining the status of a "normal" female or male member of society. Failure to adhere to the gender specified norms may routinely be regarded as an abnormality or as some kind of deviance. Essentially this means that any patriarchal society imposes its expectations on women and men regarding their behavior, attitudes and functions, thus there are given expectations on women regarding their attitudes and functions on parenthood.

It can be argued that patriarchal societies always function on certain subtle ideologies that position women in secondary positions to men and through certain complex ethical and philosophical structures and incredible subtlety of inscription. People in such societies unsuspectingly acquiesce

to pre-established patriarchal ideology in which women are subjugated and dominated by the hegemonic patriarchal power structure. Consequently, the construction and inscription of womanhood (femininity) and manhood (masculinity) in such societies is an outgrowth of the prevailing and dominant cultural beliefs and ideologies of the times. People's belief in such constructs is sometimes covertly strengthened by the performance of certain rituals and activities which prevail in the structure of various cultural texts which eventually find expression in proverb usage. There is no doubt that proverbs, as an aspect of folklore, are a critical part of the traditional knowledge system of any given society. Thus, proverbs being part and parcel of folklore are some of the most important bearers of cultural moralities that are prevalent in a society. Consequently, a critical interrogation of proverbs can lead to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the representation of gender in society such as Swahili and Arab societies. Such an interrogation can enable a better comprehension of the ways in which images of an "ideal" woman are generated, encouraged and entrenched in Swahili and Arab societies. Since proverbs are routinely perceived as carriers of conventional wisdom, they present and circulate values that are spontaneously and instinctively acquired by people. The analysis of Swahili and Arabic proverbs can help us not only understand the depiction of women in proverbs and in society but also in situating the position of women in these societies which are traditional and overly patriarchal. This analysis attempts to explain why women, more often than men, are targeted either as objects of abuse or as ideals of goodness and morality in particular societies, especially after their marriage.

Proverbs in Swahili and Arab societies are replete with different stereotypical images of woman; thus proverbs are a representational medium of society. In Swahili and Arabic proverbs, women are depicted either as weak, emotional, sacrificing, loving and caring or as cruel, jealous and selfish. In order to ascertain the existence of these characteristics and how they get positioned to inscribe femininity, women are always, first and foremost, portrayed in a binary relationship to men; they are subsequently portrayed in relation to other women and eventually to the society at large. However, in order to critically examine the construction and inscription of femininity and masculinity in Swahili and Arab societies as represented in proverbs, it is essential to undertake an analysis that is grounded on the basis of thematic characteristics such as the female body, female beauty, girlhood, daughterhood, sisterhood and motherhood as these form the basis of inscribing femininity and masculinity.

Parenthood, which subtly designates a whole spectrum of "womanhoods"—girlhood, daughterhood, sisterhood and motherhood—in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, is a constant and recurring thematic nuance in many proverbs. For instance, the Swahili proverb ***"Kuzaa si kazi, kazi ni kulea—giving birth is not much work, work is to raise the child***"; is a proverb that intimates a functional obligation that is biological yet socially designated as a lifelong process. The first step towards parenthood is preceded by marriage and then followed by the processes of conception and delivery; before nurturing of the children is undertaken thereafter. Parenthood, like elsewhere in every society, bequeaths Swahili and Arab mothers the responsibilities of educating their children, through the word of mouth; as well as by way of demonstrating what they teach practically through live examples by acting as role models. In this sense, it will be noted, that parenthood coincides with nurturing of children; it thus becomes a socio-biologically sanctioned role through which the inscriptions of the perceptions of femininity in Swahili proverbs are enabled. In this proverb, gender roles are subtly inscribed so as to shape and restrict women's lifelong experiences, impacting on women's aspects of self-expression and self-definition. Accordingly, women as individuals are called upon to draw from the shared cultural conceptions of what it means to be female, giving birth and then notably parenting. This proverb makes women view themselves along a feminine–masculine continuum that specifies and assigns roles, and then using such roles to inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity that guide their behaviour.

4.2.1.1 Marriage, Male Agency and Femininity

The dominant gender identities and their interwoven interconnectedness are embedded in the patriarchal heritage that manifests itself through fastidious relations of dominance and subjugation, depending upon the specific cultural context of such expression (Johnson, 1997). Studies that have focused on gender binaries in terms of either understanding or contesting perceptions of femininity and masculinity, have usually asserted that, patriarchy is conceptualized as a determinant of manhood, which in turn privileges men with greater visibility as providers and women as some marginal, peripheral and indiscernible other (Braidotti, 2000). It has also been argued that both the conceptualizations of femininities and masculinities are in diverse senses plural, meaning that female positions and their gendered roles are always influx and variable. Regardless of the particular femininity that may be focused upon, all femininities are subordinate to hegemonic masculinity at any given time and situation. Patriarchy is as such a social structure ascribing female

subordination to restricted access and control of means of both production and reproduction in the private and public spheres. Consequently, this subjugation is manifested in such social institutions as marriage and its interconnected processes and proverbs are critical in both inscribing and circulating ethos of subjugated femininity.

The whole idea about the selection of marriage partners in several subtle ways insinuates agency on the part of men and curiously coincides with representations of the female body. Human biology is always appropriated and is fundamentally instrumental in understanding human behavior, especially as reflected in proverbs referring to the female body. The female body, as Hussein (2005) argues, is the subject of numerous assumptions and projections in oral traditions (proverbs included) regarding what is good, bad, desirable, and repugnant. It is seen that women in the role of the mother enjoy a more prestigious position in society than any other roles that they may play. Mothers are considered to be the creators of society given that they are the creators of future generations. This is well embedded in the construction of femininity given that primary concepts of fertility and reproduction which are critically nuanced in terms of agency and always reflected in the selection of marriage partners. These concepts are directly related to the concept of motherhood, procreation and lineage longevity. Therefore, though it may remain subdued in the said selection, motherhood is nevertheless critical in informing partner selection because it is a role expected of every woman in Swahili society.

In virtually all Swahili proverbs making reference to mother, mother is more glorified in her role compared with the wife. The wife, on the other hand, is depicted either in complementary roles or in antagonistic and binary oppositions and therefore a threat to her husband's patriarchal privilege and welfare. This also in many subtle ways informs the selection of marriage partners. However, what needs to be critically observed is that, it is the patriarchal perception that moulds women into a particular framework that best suits patriarchal needs. Women are as such, constantly projected in a certain structure which is replete with patriarchal value judgments. Hussein (ibid) has argued that the politics of representing the mother figure in a glorified manner is ingeniously related to the reproduction role; in other words, by projecting women within the paradigm of sex symbols in their respective societies, reproduction is assumed to be their main function. Whether women are depicted in the mother figure, which assigns them an esteemed position or as wives, which projects

them in complementary or antagonistic perspectives, these perspectives are critical in inscribing perceptions of femininity.

Apparently, just like it is in many African proverbs, Swahili proverbs making reference to womanhood subtly affirm the society's denial of the existence of the female self psychologically, emotionally and socially without the male self, usually their husbands, fathers or male relations. This in certain ways reinforces the necessity for marriage, which in virtually all circumstances is not initiated by women—women are deprived of agency—the ability to initiate action, agency is assumed to be male. Hence, the trajectory of marriage presupposes that once married, a woman should exist in the shadow of the male in her life and in harmony with her husband's hallowed wishes, such that what she does or thinks should not crash against her husband's patriarchal privileges. In other words, a wife's identity or personality is subsumed into that of her husband. Thus, marriage in both Swahili and Arab societies is a manifestation of patriarchal hegemony in the sense that in the union between the man and woman, the man has more presence, dominance and visibility. This is partly because, ordinarily it's the man's responsibility to identify the woman he intends to marry, to ensure adherence to cultural marriage obligations and duties; in other words, agency in initiating marriage is patriarchal.

Marriage as an institution and indeed all the subsequent processes, roles and functions pertaining to marriage as such, are subtly imbued with attributes of elevated masculinity and subdued femininity. For instance, the proverb, ***"Mke ni nguzo ya nyumba—a wife is the pillar of the house***", implicitly ascribes a complementary role on the woman which in turn inscribes subdued femininity on the part of the female gender in respect of roles played such as being confined to the domestic chores, ensuring home stability and devotion to the service of others within the confines of the home. By drawing a parallel between the wife's presence in a household and a pillar in the same household, this proverb highlights the pivotal role played by women in the family units; a celebrated role but which nevertheless subjugates and marginalizes the female gender and thus marks femininity in terms of subjugation and marginalization. As much as this parallelism insinuates that women provide the structural stability of homes, it is also true that the stability referred to in the proverb, though critical, it is confined and restricted. This is explicitly echoed in another Swahili proverb analyzed in this study, ***"Nyumba ni mwanamke—a house is a woman",***

which deftly amplifies the confinement trajectory of women and their household chores. The attributes of femininity embedded in this proverb suggest that domestic tasks are by their very nature feminine; hence they coincide with feminine roles undertaken by women. In other words, the use of this proverb celebrates the importance of women in matters household where households are deemed to be incomplete; except through the presence of a woman. Even when a Swahili proverb is formulated as, ***"Mke ni dada mdogo—a wife is like a younger sister***," the patriarchal schema is not obliterated in spite of the apparent presentation of positive attributes such as women being loving, caring and friendly, yet there is the subtle insertion of ***dada mdogo—small sister,*** a kind of clever strategy which ensures the maintenance of men's privileged positions.

Although it is hardly acknowledged, women are not always depicted in a degrading way. However, as evidenced in the aforementioned mentioned proverbs, there are proverbs which portray women in a slightly positive manner; for instance, the proverb ***"Nyumba ni mwanamke—a house is a woman",*** is an acknowledgement that it is the woman who transforms the house into a home. In such proverbs, woman in general and woman in the hallowed role of mother or wife, in particular, can be called a true homemaker. Without her, a house cannot be called a home. Hence, it would appear that such proverbs glorify the status of women. But such proverbs can also be interpreted from a different perspective. It is worth noting that traditionally, in both Arab and Swahili societies, it is always believed that the place of women should be within the house and the homestead where they have authority regarding household activities. Consequently, when such proverbs are used, they tend to depict the idea that man is to the public as woman is to the private, thus femininity and masculinity are perceived in terms of space where, masculinity is public oriented and femininity is private oriented. Therefore, the attributes of femininity as canvassed above are testimony of the perception of women as being a pillar of the house and devoted to serve others, but only in so far as that is seen from a male gaze.

On the other hand, the stereotypical presentation of men in Arab culture appears to be typically predicated on the dictates of aggression and competitiveness, where such attributes are routinely deployed in securing women's sense of passivity and submission. It is rather obvious that these attributes, whether perceived as inherent traits or characteristics of women, are patriarchal in their formulation and circulation. However, it is important to understand that femininity and

masculinity, no matter how intricately formulated, are not innate but are founded upon social and cultural circumstances. They result from specific and particular socialization processes operative in given cultures as well as the cultural expectations held for each sex. Therefore, when Arabic proverbs project various attributes of femininity in respect of their female gender, such attributes as knowledgeability, uprightness, and obedience and devotion to the service of others, such attributes are culturally circumscribed. For instance, the Arabic proverb, ***"Al-aaqilu yatazawaju lil awuladihi—he who is wise marries for his children***"; the patriarchal agency is fore-grounded, subtly subduing women's presence and viability. In this proverb, female presence is severely restricted and prominence is given to the man and secondly the children, it is as if the woman's presence is non-existent. The proverb ingeniously attributes wisdom to men, it advises men to be wise in the selection of their life partners. Women are habitually given an inferior status in this patriarchal society; they are considered to be the 'other', that is, they are supposed to have inferior brains, to be less intelligent. Though it acknowledges the role played by women in marriage in terms of the education and shaping of the children into responsible citizens in the society, such acknowledgement is critical in ascribing attributes of what is perceived as feminine and masculine in this society.

It is apparent that both the knowledge and the devotion are attributes that are externally projected, for the benefit of others. This proverb aptly captures the oft cited notion in gender studies of women perceived in terms of "absent presence", the same notion is echoed in the proverb, ***"Twaibu alhadeedah wa al-dharibu naseebu—choose a good wife from a good family and having children is a matter of luck***", recaps the marginality associated with the female gender; a woman is chosen she does not choose, the good of her family is externally determined, she has no input and her input in the nurturing of children is not attributed to her but rather to luck. By drawing a parallel between good families and good wives, the proverb implicitly advances the view that femininity and marginality somehow tend to coincide. It also insinuates that conformity and hard work undertaken by women for the benefit of the patriarch are some of the parameters that define femininity. This is further advanced in the proverb, ***"Asa'a al-daaba al-sareea wa akhud al-mara al-mutwiya kulaha tumtiya—keep a fast moving animal and marry an obedient woman, as they are the enjoyment of life***". There is a subtle insinuation in this proverb that femininity is also

defined in terms of women's obedience to men, being sources of happiness and enjoyment for their husbands while completely obliterating their own presence and enjoyment.

In order to buttress the patriarchal schema of being served by women, the traits of being unfaithful, immoral and unreliable are presented as being unfeminine. This kind of trajectory is manifested in the proverbs, ***"Mani tazawaja fii suuqu al-twairi kaana twalaaqahu tamusuu bil-khairi—the divorce of one who marries in the bird market is as quick as saying goodnight***" and, ***"Iyakum wa khadharaa al-dimunu, qaaloo wa khadharaa al-dimani? Qaala al-hasuna fii manibati alsuu—beware of "Khadhara al-diman" they said what is khadhara al-diman? He said "A pretty woman of evil origin".*** Whereas there appears to be a genuine caution against the attributes of deceit, unfaithfulness and irresponsibility among women, the caution is not for the benefit of the women folk, but rather for the men. These proverbs deviously engender the circulation of negative attributes of women; hence projecting perceptions of women generally as people who are unfaithful and deceitful. This kind of perception is acquiescent to stereotypical proverbs in Arab and Swahili cultures depicting women as cunning, fatalistic, inferior, quarrelsome, selfish, stupid, and gossipy. They project women with a sense of fatalism, a misplaced belief that women's fate cannot be predicted by anyone as they have to live two lives, one life before marriage and the other, after marriage. Overall, and on the basis of the proverbs presented above, femininity is presented in the most negative forms, it is projected as marginal; it is projected as externally formulated for the benefit of men; it is prudent, therefore, to argue that the use of these demeaning proverbs and others similar to them, is responsible for the inscription of negative perceptions of femininity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

4.2.1.2 Conception, Delivery of Children and the Inscription of Femininity

Anthropologist Mead (1935), has argued that femininity and masculinity are not innate but rather are based on social and cultural conditions of specific societies, usually resulting from differences in socialization and the cultural expectations held for each sex on the basis of their biological make up. Though Mead's study forced anthropological and sociological scholars to rethink the nature of femininity and masculinity, there are still some cultures in which diverse gender-related traits, roles, and identities are inextricably tied to innate biological functions and therefore femininity and masculinity are always explicated in terms of these biological coincidences. Consequently, the

nature–nurture issue is centrally located and presented as hallowed. This is the situation that obtains in quite a number of Swahili and Arabic proverbs in which femininity is closely linked to conception, delivery and nurture of children.

Such sociological-biological coincidence in the explication of femininity is manifested in proverbs such as; ***"Furaha ya mama ni mtoto—the happiness of a mother is a child***" and ***"Kuku mwenye watoto halengwi jiwe—a hen with chicks is not hit with a stone***". These proverbs project attributes of femininity associated with compassion, productivity as well as devotion to serve others. The projection of these attributes is not happenstance, it is deliberate and is informed by the fact that in the Swahili society children are a gift, hence are celebrated by both the parents and the entire society at large. Consequently, it is not uncommon in this culture for femininity to be perceived in the narrow sense of mothers giving birth thus attributing the marginal treatment of women as a function of biology. Though there is a sense of positivity in the perception of women as presented in the proverbs above, unfortunately such positivity runs counter to positivity in the perceptions of femininity. Similarly, the proverb, ***"Piga kite mama ujifungue—press hard mother to give birth***" further projects attributes of femininity in terms of perseverance, patience as well as commitment to the service of others. The sociological-biological dichotomy is echoed in terms of the labour pains that mothers have to endure so as to enjoy the benefits of bearing children.

Additionally, women's determination to become mothers is still entrapped in the sociological-biological as is discernible in the proverb; ***"Mzazi haachi ujusi—a mother does not stop emitting stench smell***" in which attributes of compassion, responsibility and selflessness are ascribed to femininity. On the other hand, the projection of the attributes of being unfaithful, impatient and immoral as in the proverb, ***"Chelewa chelewa utamkuta mwana si wako—if you delay you will find that the child is not yours***"; is still within the sociological-biological trajectory, insinuating that a husband's impediment or failure to offer spousal conjugal rights, is responsible for wives' becoming unfaithful and begetting children from other men outside their marriages. Similarly, the proverb; ***"Mficha uchi hazai—the one who hides nakedness cannot beget a child***" when used in the depiction of male-female relationship; is predicated on the same sociological-biological paradigm such that the attributes of treachery, untrustworthiness and selfishness are projected as being characteristic of femininity. Essentially, all these proverbs presented above emphasize the

essentiality of procreation and motherhood and the mother role in nurturing children and ensuring their sustenance, consequently the roles of mothers and wives are dignified and projected as fulfilling careers. One theme that runs through all the proverbs above is the existence of strong emotional bond between the mother and her children. Another equally important theme echoed in all these proverbs is the theme of woman as the source of life, the source of humanity without which life is impossible. The proverbs also indicate the existence of the inimitable capabilities of each gender in contributing to a better and wholesome family and society.

This sociological-biological dichotomy of framing femininity and masculinity is also discernible in Arabic proverbs such that the gender of the child plays a significant role in the type of reception that is accorded to both the child and mother. Women who get married and have sons sired in their previous marriages are treated in unfriendly manner. The import of this unsavoury treatment is that it is critical in projecting attributes that are perceived as feminine such as being unprincipled, valueless and a liability, in other words femininity is seen within a negative prism where biological attributes are held as less valuable within a patriarchal hierarchy of values as in the proverb, ***"Na'alu umu geideedi wala mara waleedi—old shoes with holes are better than a woman who has a son***". Alternatively, the same patriarchal scale ascribes certain biological functions positive attributes, but this is normally when such attributes are beneficial to the patriarch, for instance, productivity, reliability and responsibility as in the proverb, ***"Umu adhukukuru adhaniha baaridahu—the mother of male children has peace of mind***". That the biological function of giving birth to male children/sons accords the mothers/females positive treatment and respect within the patriarchal scale of values. This discrepancy in the treatment of mothers on account of biological attributes which are assumed to coalesce into cultural socialization is a patriarchal scheming that subtly privileges masculinity at the expense of femininity.

In sociological terms, the definition of gender identity within the paradigm of masculinity–femininity binary (Burke 1989; Burke et al. 1988), is understood in the context of and is taken to constitute an organized collection of hierarchically prearranged identities of self-meanings and self-definitions that serve as a basis of motivation for social behavior. At the same time, feminist-masculinist identities whether self-defined or externally imposed, are subtly structured as control systems that act to maintain congruency between the internalized self-identities and perceptions of

the self as imposed by social situations (Burke, 1991). This is indeed what Arabic proverbs entail when they make comparisons between women who have sons and old shoes with holes, insinuating that women are perceived as being a liability and alternatively women being perceived as fruitful, both of these identities and their attendant attributes are externally imposed and are therefore critically positioned in inscribing what is perceived as feminine and masculine.

On the other hand, it is plausible to assert that an individual's gender identity, whether as privileged masculine or subjugated feminine, is derived from the meanings they have internalized from their involvement with the roles of male or female, in their respective societies. These self-definitions or external definitions of identity within the feminist-masculinist paradigm are usually inferred from the behaviors and language expressions that people engage in. It is critically important to understand that the multiple identities and roles ascribed to women and men do not stand in isolation but are always in constant flux which presupposes and are related to counter roles (Lindesmith & Strauss, 1956). Consequently, the role of mother and its attendant tasks takes on meaning in relation to the role of child on the one hand, and on the other hand the role of mother takes on meaning in relation to the role of father. It, therefore, follows that where femininity is marginalized, the opposite is true that masculinity is mainstreamed. For instance, the effort made by expectant mothers during delivery is critical in making inferences of femininity and masculinity as in the proverb, ***"Ishitihinaa ala dii adalaqa yajii ghulamuni—from the mother's efforts in labour, we expect a male child***". Here the mothers' efforts are only celebrated in terms of ensuring masculine longevity; the expectation of a male child, that mother's efforts are more focused on giving birth to boys than girls is a clear indication of bias, forcing biological functions to take strong and prejudiced sociological signification.

The meanings associated with female/femininity are usually understood relative to the meanings connected with male/masculinity. Hence, the meanings, attributes and identities of femininity and masculinity are unavoidably contrastive; that's to be female/feminine is to be not male/masculine and vice versa (Storms, 1979). Gender meanings, identities and attributes inevitably relate to one another as opposite ends of a single continuum, habitually invoking the dual conceptualization of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity are thus negatively related as alluded to by Spence (1993), such that when femininity is associated with negative meanings and attributes

that legitimize the negative perceptions of women, inevitably masculinity takes the opposite dimension of legitimizing positive perceptions for men. For instance, the proverb, ***"Hamu albanati lil mamaati—the worries about girls last to death***"; which ingeniously intimate that despair, weakness, powerlessness and arduousness are feminine attributes. The foregrounding of these negative attributes as feminine stems from the general believe in the Arab culture that views women as liabilities to the male folk. The constant fear of parents that girls might get pregnant before marriage, that they may bring shame to the family or that they may be divorced after marriage, is negatively projected to reflect women as source of worry, a possible source of injury and ruin, not the ruin of themselves but rather the disruption and ruin of the patriarchal hierarchies and privileges. This is what is entailed in the sub-text of the proverb, ***"Al-mara al-aaqiru dhifa fii al-baiti—a barren woman is a visitor in the house***"; projecting attributes that insinuate that barren women are unrewarding, unsatisfactory as well as liability. This clearly captures Spencer's (ibid), assertion of masculinity and femininity being negatively related in the sense that when proverbs demean women they uplift men on the opposite side. That, whereas Arab and Swahili cultures long for and yearn for the presence of children in a marriage, barrenness is abhorred and hence used to conjure up all manner of negativities about women and use such negativities as the characteristic attributes of femininity.

Whereas there are certain negativities about sons/men as in the proverb, ***"Umu al-darufunu wa lau madufunu—avoid a mother of a son even if it is dead***", it is important to understand that husbands' contempt towards sons only applies in particular and specific circumstances like when the sons in question are sons sired by other men; but doesn't apply to their own progeny. This type of negativity is not blanket in its application; it is very selective, a rather subtle schema meant not to disrupt patriarchal privilege. Perhaps this is what is implied in the proverb, "***Habulatuni wa murudhiatuni qadamihaa aruba'atuni—she is pregnant, nursing a child and has four other children beforehand***" where responsibility, care and nurture are foregrounded as attributes of femininity. Additionally, the proverb, ***"Zaitunaa fii daqiiqinaa—our oil is mixed with our flour***"; projects dependence, cooperation and dedication to the service of others as feminine attributes. These attributes inscribe a negative perception of women despite the fact that they appear to be positive on the surface; although in reality the cooperation envisaged in the proverb is fully

dependent on the ability of the male folk, hence leading to the perception of women in terms of dependency.

4.2.1.3 The Nurturing and Socialization of Children and the Ethos of Feminine Inscriptions

Self-definitions with respect to one's gender are formed in social circumstances involving continuous and mutually reinforcing interactions with other critical people in one's life's circumstances such as family members in its widest sense, age mates, peers, elders and various members of society (Katz, 1986). Though members of a given society may rely upon communal and collective cultural conceptions of what it means to be male or female that are usually passed on through institutions such as family, kinship ties, religion and culture, they may come to adhere to those conceptions or may depart from what is as the masculine or feminine cultural mold as inscribed by society and its socialization processes, depending on emerging definitional trends. In societies that are overtly patriarchal, attributes such as expressiveness, warmth, and submissiveness are considered feminine and therefore critical and associated with the nurturing and socialization of the female children. On the other hand, patriarchal cultures consider attributes such as instrumentality or agency, rationality, and dominance as essentially masculine and therefore inappropriate for the nurturing and socialization of the female children. These perceptions and conceptualizations of femininity and masculinity are variously projected along a feminine–masculine continuum in the formulation of both Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

Often times in patriarchal societies and cultures, social and behavioural attributes such as selflessness, compassion and affection are perceived as feminine, as is the case in Swahili culture, a fact that is variously projected in Swahili proverbs such as, ***"Kuzaa si kazi, kazi ni kulea—giving birth is not work, the real work is to raise the child***" and ***"Kuku akiatamia hana matembezi—a hatching chicken doesn't promenade***". The whole conceptualization of giving birth, nurturing and socializing of children as intimated in the first proverb arises from the sense of self definition which is then culturally reinforced in the sense that collective cultural conceptualization of what it means to be female in a patriarchal society such as the Swahili has inscribed the nurturing and socialization of children as feminine attributes. The same conceptualization is reiterated in the next proverb where the mothering instincts characteristic of chicken, make them sacrifice not only movement but also their diet; in order to hatch their eggs, is shifted to reflect human and therefore feminine instincts. Essentially, the role of nurturing and socialization requires mothers to be totally

devoted in word and deed in raising children. These socially imposed feminine characteristics of maternal responsibility, love and compassion are further echoed in the proverbs: ***"Jogoo hawezi kulea wana—a cock cannot raise chicks***"; ***"Mama kwa mwanawe, mtoto kwa mamaye—a mother to her child, but a child to her/his mother***" and the proverb, ***"Mtoto kwa mama hakui—a child to the mother never grows***". The critical underpinning running through in all these proverb, is the emphasis and re-emphasis of maternal roles in terms of birth, nurturing and socialization of children, which are subtly deployed to inscribe the conceptualization of femininity in this society. That sense of subtlety of inscription is couched in such ways as to exclude men from these responsibilities such that in the "***Jogoo hawezi kulea wana—a cock cannot raise chicks***" no justification is proffered as to why the cock—masculine—cannot raise chicks. In the proverb ***"Mtoto kwa mama hakui—to the mother a child never grows***" ingeniously intimates a lifelong nurturing and socialization role performed by mothers.

It would appear that in Swahili culture love, compassion and dedication are perceived as feminine attributes and they are widely circulated in a variety of proverbs such as; ***"Kweli mwana ni mamaye na mlezi akalea—indeed the child is to the mother and the baby sitter simply takes care***" and ***"Azaaye kinyago hukinyonyesha—the one who gives birth to a statute suckles it***". Whereas it is possible to argue that the surface meaning and attendant teachings of these proverbs are focused on women's maternal love and compassion for their children and the fact that such love transcends all barriers and disabilities—as implied in "**kinyago**—figurine", one must always remember the dual framing of proverbs generally to reflect surface and embedded meanings, and is more so nuanced when such proverbs focus on male-female relationships within patriarchal structures. Equally and on the same frame, the proverb, ***"Titi la mama litamu jingine haliishi hamu—the mother's breast is sweet like no other***", extends that maternal responsibility and therefore the feminine framing trajectory that reiterates the vitality and life-giving of mothers' milk. In celebrating the centrality of mothers in all the critical moments of life, the celebration is subtly male focused, it celebrates reproduction. Similar and other related purported feminine attributes of graciousness, nurturing and dependability are further advanced in the proverb, ***"Akosae la mama hata la mbwa huamwa—in the absence of a mother's breast, even a dog's breast will do.*** This proverb like the others before it projects culturally circumscribed perceptions of motherly roles and therefore frames femininity within those perceptions. Other attributes such

as sensitivity, empathy and thoughtfulness are also considered as feminine attributes and are expressed in proverbs such as; ***"Kipele cha mwana uchungu wa mama—a child's pimple is a mother's pain***"; "***Uchungu wa mwana ajuaye mzazi—A child's pain is best known by the parent of the child***" and the proverb, ***"Maji na tumbawe, mama na mwanawe—water with the coral and the mother with her child***". There are certain schools of thought that affirm that proverbs which enable the circulation of themes such as these are testimony that women have remained true to societal expectations, though such expectations are in most cases contested.

In several Arabic proverbs the inscription of femininity is closely associated with maternal biological attributes. In giving prominence to the attributes as being emblematic of femininity, there is no doubt that such framing is overtly prejudicial against the female gender and such attributes may include among others non-assertiveness, indecision and hesitation. The underlying argument in this is that women's maternal love for their children inhibits their sense of judgement. One observation that can be quickly made about non-assertiveness, indecision and hesitation as feminine attributes is that they are not innate; indeed, even in such societies that are overtly patriarchal, it is possible to find men who exhibit characteristics of non-assertiveness, indecision and hesitation. These are, therefore, culturally framed attributes deployed to advance masculine agenda as in the following two proverbs; ***"Alhanifasatu fii aini umiha malihatuni—the beetle in the eyes of the mother is beautiful***" and ***"Al-qirdu fii aini umihi ghazaluni—the monkey is as beautiful as a gazelle in its mother's eyes***". It should be noted that the beetle and the monkey typify ugliness while the gazelle symbolizes beauty in the Arab society, thus the comparison that juxtaposes the monkey's beauty against that of the gazelles with respect to a mothers' opinion, supposedly demonstrates women's indecision in judgement. This proverb conveys a sense of ambiguity in the sense that it is framed to convey admiration for women's love for their children; yet at the same time it questions their sense of judgement.

It is possible to argue that the general gamut of feminine attributes discernible in Arabic proverbs is by far and large negative, unconstructive and depressing. For instance, such dismal and demeaning attributes like insensitivity, irresponsibility and selfishness are presented as being emblematical of the feminine gender yet there are obvious possibilities of finding men in this society who exhibit the same attributes. They are routinely circulated in proverbs such as, ***"Umu***

al-jabaani maa tahizani—the mother of a coward does not grief for him". This is something that arises out of a cultural ethos that celebrates bravery and courage, a culture that debases what is perceived as cowardice, yet a mother's love does not make these distinctions. This unqualified love for children is what gets regarded as insensitivity. On the other hand, the feminine characteristics of being selfless, compassionate and devoted to the service of others is projected in the proverb, ***"Habulatuni wa murudhiatuni qadamihaa aruba'atuni—she is pregnant, nursing a child and has four other children beforehand***". This proverb highlights the selflessness, compassion and the devotion of the Arab women as they undertake the task of raising children. The femininity attributes in this proverb even though positive, are male centred given that traditionally children belong to the father in the Arab society. In other words, women's labouring efforts in giving birth and raising of children as it were, translates to man's prominence since culturally having many children in the Arab society is a source of pride for the husband.

4.2.1.4 Children's Education and Knowledge Schemas as Criteria for Inscription of Femininity

The critical parameters of understanding femininity in patriarchal societies cannot be unconnected from perceptions of female characters and female images, which in proverb formulation and usage are essentially enduring and ingrained. There is no doubt that femininity is a central plank in the thematic nuances and ethos of proverb usage in Swahili and Arab cultures in the sense that where women are focused on in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, the imagery, lexical choices and even metaphorical framing in such proverbs, usually signal exclusion, marginalization and occasionally minimal acknowledgement of women as human members of the Swahili and Arab societies. In terms of scholarly engagements dealing with Swahili and Arabic proverbs, there is need to recognize these prejudiced presentations, explain how proverbs present women and men and why they do so.

In proverbs dealing with nurture and socialization (the lifelong schooling of children), responsibility and dedication are presented as feminine attributes of service to others, this is not only just an admission of the subjugation of women, it is also a telling of the constitution of men, maleness and masculinity in these cultures. Therefore, a proverb such as, ***"Mikono ileayo mtoto ndiyo itawalayo dunia—the hands that raise a child, are the hands that rule the world***" is a presentation of a complex mosaic of relationships. It essentially entails a stereotypical presentation

of women and men that is unchanging and constant, regardless of historical and temporal changes. The implied ethos of this proverb is that the early knowledge and the continual socialization acquired by children from their mothers, inculcates values such as leadership and life skills that enable them to cope with current and future circumstances. Similar attributes intimate strong cognates in the proverb, ***"Uzoefu ndio mama wa maarifa—experience is the mother of knowledge***". It extends the fact that mothers impart knowledge that enables children to understand how to deal with simple tasks such as eat, sleep and speak and so on from a tender age. In other words, the mothers' early education and its continual socialization enables the children to perform simple tasks that are necessary for their lives and development. The roles of bequeathing children with knowledge and life skills are further projected in proverbs like, ***"Mjukuu hawezi kumfunza bibiye kunyonya—a grandson/granddaughter cannot teach the grandmother how to suckle***". The critical underpinning of this proverb is that mothers provide education, parenting and encouragement to children; hence these also become the grounds of ascribing femininity. Similar ethos is discernible in the proverb, ***"Asiyefunzwa na mamaye, hufunzwa na ulimwengu—he who is not taught by the mother, is taught by the world***".

It may be argued that the few proverbs in Arabic which attribute nobility to women are subtly formulated to acknowledge the educational role that women as mothers and educators play in imparting knowledge to their children. In imparting knowledge, skills and education, mothers must inevitably be caring, dedicated and devoted; education is thus elevated as noble as is implicitly stated in the proverb, ***"Al-aaqilu yatazawaju lil awuladihi—he who is wise marries for his children***". This proverb's formulation is double edged—it initially intimates a general buffoonery among the female members of society and thus purports to caution men against this possible danger. On the other hand, there is an implied advice and encouragement for men to marry from noble homes so as to bequeath their children with good mothers who will raise, educate and provide proper socialization within accepted societal norms and expectations. Obviously, the thematic emphasis in the proverb is the children; they are projected as needing exemplary education and skills necessary to help them become able and functional citizens, the mother's significance and function is silently marginalized. Similar attributes of experience, refinement and devotion to the service of others, as in the education and socialization of children are echoed in the proverb, ***"Mani tuhibuhu mini aulaadika qaala alaa kasi umihi—who among your children do you love most?***

He said the most cared for by my wife from the children". The important thematic nuance discernible in this proverb is the notion of the mothers' observation, judgment and commendation of children on the basis of nurture and socialization, the telling of one's children's character and predispositions; is an acknowledgement of the women's experience in the education of children. Such acknowledgement, however, is not for the benefit of mothers specifically or women generally. Regardless of what biological, maternal and social roles and functions mothers perform, the same are used as a means of inscribing what is perceived as feminine.

4.2.1.5 Role Modelling Children and the Inscription of Femininity

In both Swahili and Arab societies, femininity is curiously linked and constructed around the maternal and biological functions of bringing up and role-modelling of children. Mothers' closeness to their children is by all means instinctive and innate, yet in these societies, that which is natural, inborn and inevitable is slanted within patriarchal structures to serve male conspiracies. For instance, the proverb, ***"Mtoto akibebwa hutazama kisogo cha mamake—when a child is carried, he looks at the mother's nape",*** is in all respects simply a natural observation, that is, as it should be. However, in this society, this proverb is loaded with behavioural and social insinuations focusing on personality and character developments of a child, inevitably implying that whichever way a child turns out to be later in life, mothers must be held accountable. Though it is biologically expected that there will be children's dependency on their mothers for nurture, provision and protection at all times, this innate expectation is tilted to serve social patriarchal functions. The wisdom embedded in the use of this proverb is rooted in the fact that in African societies (Swahili included) mothers carry children on their backs while undertaking different chores; making it possible for the children to observe and learn from their mothers' actions as well as the environment in which maternal functions take place. Given that the children, as suggested in the above proverb, learn mostly by observing their mothers' actions; mothers inexorably play a pivotal role in mentoring children. The implication of this is that, mothers are inescapably accountable to their children's lifelong personalities, behaviours and characters. The proverb thus cautions mothers to be good role models to their children because children emulate what they see, especially if such actions are done by people who are closely linked to them.

A similar message depicting mothers as people commanding a lot of influence on their children is perceivable in the proverb, ***"Asiye safari husifu upishi wa mama yake tu—he who has not travelled always praises the mother's cookery***". In simple terms, the proverb insinuates that a child's experience is as good as what the child has observed of its mother. In this proverb the attributes of compassion, experience as well as devotion are critical in role modelling children, yet the Swahili patriarchal slanting predictably projects them as effeminate and necessary basis for feminine inscriptions. The proverb's imagery of mothers' cooking is a metaphor for varied women's maternal and social functions and expectations equating good cooking to good rolemodel of the children. In Swahili society, femininity is also associated with issues of the frames and structures of honour and respect across a range of relations—children and parents, children and the elderly and other social formations. These expectations are critically nuanced in the use of the proverbs: ***"Fadhila mpe mama na Mola atakubariki—honour your mother and God will bless you";*** and the proverb, ***"Gombea heshima gombea mama—Fight for respect, fight for a woman***". The forms and expectations of respect and honour implied in these proverbs are in the relationships between mothers and their children. In this sense honour, respect and reverence are tilted as feminine. These attributes imply that mothers and indeed women in general are honourable and respectable people in society, given that respect and honour are earned as opposed to being demanded. Additionally, the proverb, ***"Mke wa kwanza ni kama mama—the first wife is like a mother***", suggests women's mentorship role that encompasses not only the children but also the husbands. The aforementioned attributes depict women in positive perceptions, acknowledge the difficulties which women undergo in role-modelling their children as well as their husbands. Consequently, the perception of mothers' respect and honour is equated to the level of the gods as captured in the proverb, ***"Mtu mamaye ni mungu wake wa pili—a person's mother is like his/her second god***". The implication of this is that proverbial depiction of women is not all gloom there are specks of positivity that recognize compassion, understanding, reverence as true feminine attributes.

The role-modelling acumen of women as suggested in the proverb, ***"Rahma ala umuhu kaanati aqiwadu mini abuhu—God bless his mother; she was more profligate than his father***". Clearly, the proverb reiterates the perception of women's generosity as transcending that of their male counterparts. The thematic import of this proverb is that women are willing to assist others as long as it is within their material and physical ability to do so. It would appear that such generosity and

willingness to assist is the wisdom behind the proverb, ***"Maa shatwatuni tumushitwa bintahaa—a hair dresser and she dresses her daughter***". The proverb, therefore, recognizes and acknowledges experience, care and responsibility as positive feminine attributes. The proverb's thematic trajectory is premised on the nurturing role of being spot on, maternally zealous in the realization of their children's material and emotional needs. This trajectory is further advanced in the proverb, ***"Aswidatuni mini twabbiikhi umu Aliyi—a pap of cookery of Ali's mother***" in which mothers as adept tutors with skills is acknowledged. However, it must be observed that this acknowledgement is particular and specific; it does not threaten the disruption of patriarchal privileges. Women's role acknowledgements are within the subdued and marginalized confines to which women have been pushed.

4.2.2 Women, Home-Keeping and Femininity

In the previous chapter, it was argued that the patriarchal assignment of value of "lesser importance" to women also insinuates a patriarchal and methodological placement of women in terms of place and space, thus ensuring that women belong or are confined "at the margins" of what is considered important to a society or its culture. In both Swahili and Arab societies, women are largely confined to the home and household chores, thus they are unavoidably involved in the running of domestic family affairs. This role may in modern parlance be defined as home-keeping; a complex and multi-faceted undertaking within which are weaved varied relationships of authority, seniority and lowliness. There are also differentiated lines of how influence and authority flows in these structures, in which case critical material decisions are reserved for men while women are expected to execute such decisions in the family.

Therefore, an encounter and critical examination of proverbs such as ***"Mke ni nguzo ya nyumba—a wife is the pillar of the house***" and ***"Nyumba ni mwanamke—a house is a woman***", the centrality of the woman in household structures of control is acknowledged. However, this acknowledgement is rather constricted; it is within the narrow spaces of the house and not necessarily the home. It may be observed that in order to be equated to the pillar of the house or actually the house itself, the woman must be seen in terms of certain endowments and accomplishments—endowed with patience, hard work and devotion to all household chores. These attributes are associated with femininity within the prevailing patriarchal structures. However, it must be pointed out that these attributes are not neutral in their application; they are subtly imbued

with a patriarchal agenda. In drawing a parallel between the wife's presence in a household and a pillar, the role played by women in preserving and strengthening relationships in the family units is acknowledged, but it is important to ask, acknowledged for whose benefit? It has been argued that just like structural buildings depend on pillars for their stability, so do the family units depend on women, but this should not be construed to mean stability for women advancement. The symbolical equation and the true meaning of the symbolism of stability must be viewed in terms of binary oppositions, who owns and commands presence in Swahili and Arab households as opposed to homes? Does women presence in those households mean control and dominance of the home?

On the other hand, women's moral, material and emotional contributions to family and households generally are the basis of attributing docility, devotion and non-aggressiveness as feminine attributes as suggested in the proverb, ***"Mke kipofu huwa mwaminifu—a blind wife is always faithful***". In a sense docility and literal domestication of women guarantees their physical presence in the households but only in that domesticated sense. Within these structures are in built certain expectations such as faithfulness and obedience. Other expectations within these confined spaces include the expectation that women should be caring, productive and dedicated to serve others (obviously men). This is partly what the proverb, ***"Nyumba hutegemea miti kama nchi kwa mabinti—a house depends on trees just like a country depends on girls***" entails. On another level, femininity is associated with being overtly polite, homely and subservient. In comparing a wife to somebody's younger sister, that sense of submissiveness is echoed as in the proverb, ***"Mke ni dada mdogo—a wife is like a younger sister***". It is possible that this proverb is intended to admonish against crude treatment of women, advice on the moderation of familial tensions, it therefore advocates on the part of women display of docility, politeness and submission as critical aspects of resolving conflicts. There are further expectations on the part of women in these confined spaces such as the display of tenderness and love. This is perhaps what informs the formulation of the proverb, ***"Mume si babe kwa mkewe—a husband is not a champion to his wife***". This is strategically to placate and make women compliment men in various ways. However, whereas men want to be complimented in undertaking tasks, they appear to shun a reciprocal treatment for women and so there is an apt proverb to do that, ***"Kazi ya mekoni, kazi ya nisiwani—***

kitchen work is work for women". This proverb conveniently excludes men from undertaking domestic chores.

Arabic proverbs are not entirely divergent in the way they portray women and the way they assign women roles. Quite a number of Arabic proverbs analyzed in this study are predicated on the constricting and confinement of women trajectory as in the proverb, ***"Al-mara al-biquuloo mara mini al-ataba wa liwaraa—the woman that is called a real woman is behind her door step***". This proverb essentially buttresses the restriction of women to narrow spaces and the eventual confinement to the household chores at all times. The expectation in this proverb is that women are expected to serve and take care of the family. This is well captured in the proverb, ***"Aduhinu wa'ainu alaihina—let your daughters get married and help their husbands***". This proverb's subtext is predicated on the fact that, traditionally in the Arab society, the public sphere and its affairs were reserved for men; while women took care of domestic chores. Consequently, the proverb subtly re-emphasizes restrictions on the part of women. Similar patriarchal restrictions are echoed in the proverb, ***"Ar-raajulu ainu al-baiti wal-bintu sanad al-baiti—the man is the eye of the house and the girl is the support of the house***". On the whole, it is apparent that patriarchal restrictions and the limited chores that women perform in the household are used as the basis for inscribing the femininity attributes adduced to women in the Arab society.

4.2.3 Femininity in Terms of Objectifying Women as Commodities or Vessels

In a number of ways, African feminist literary theory avers that an apt understanding of a proverb demands a keen acquaintance with the motifs and symbols regularly used in folk oralities. This is because the representational sign, motif or symbol and the context in which they are used, are critical in underpinning their cultural and functional interpretation. For instance, the whole conceptualization and formulation of proverbs in terms of commodities, edibles and vessels is interpretable in relation to other contextual signs and symbols. The underlying thematic projections of formulating proverbs embedded in commodity and vessel symbols or signs are indeed a subtle system through which men manage and control positions of social and material influence in their society. Collins (1996), has aptly observed that by objectifying women, men are able to limit women's participations in domestic, social and material spheres. Indeed, the sense of objectification of women in a number of Swahili and Arabic proverbs usually takes diverse dimensions in which women are presented either as functional commodities, edible things or

vessels. For instance, the Swahili proverb, ***"Ukipata chungu kipya, usitupe cha zamani—do not throw an old pot upon acquiring a new one***" is framed within the vessel imagery. This proverb clearly communicates a mode of objectifying women within the schema of patriarchal structures, potentially implying that the marriage of a young wife must find a way of accommodating the older one. In this sense, though the proverb may be used in a variety of contexts, however when it is used in reference to women, the framing imagery of a pot essentially objectifies them in terms of a vessel that can be used at will. Just like the imagery of pot insinuates, a vessel is passive, it has no sense of instrumentality and it is merely a recipient of externally initiated actions. Consequently, the attributes of passivity, subservience and inactivity that may be ascribed to a vessel are thus used to frame femininity in respect of women.

It the previous chapter, it was argued that in many patriarchal societies, women are projected through the male gaze, thus when one comes across proverbs formulated in terms of objects or edible commodities such as: ***"Anayeonja asali huchonga mzinga—he who tastes honey makes a hive***", ***"Bila nyuki hupati asali—without bees you can't get honey", "Fuata nyuki ule asali—follow the bees to eat honey***", ***"Chakula bora ni kile ukipendacho—the best food is the one you love***", ***"Ukila nanasi tunda lingine basi—if you eat a pineapple, no other fruit can match it***", ***"Ukila zabibu, utaleta majibu—if you eat grapes, you will give feedback***" and ***"Tunda jema halikawii mtini—a good fruit doesn't last long on the tree***", all project women as things that can be appropriated, eaten, possessed or exchanged. Furthermore, the sense of the male gaze insinuates women as things of male admiration as in the proverbs: ***"Mwanamke ni malkia wa moyo—a woman is the queen of the heart***" and ***"Mwanamke ni ua—a woman is a flower***". In this sense, women are depicted as commodities or objects of male craving, a clear sense of framing with the paradigm of patriarchal structures. The continual insinuation of eating and adoration that runs through these proverbs has hushed sexual connotations, thus eating is a sex symbol in this society as is the adoration of female beauty. Thus, by commodifying women within these patriarchal structures, these proverbs and others within the same frame curtail and restrict the role, functions and positions occupied by women in Swahili society. The symbolism embedded in the imagery of honey, savory food, the sweetness of the pineapple and grapes are all conceptualized for the enjoyment of the patriarch. The same is true of the conceptualizations of flowers in terms of their

beauty and fragrance. Thus, femininity is inscribed in terms of edibles, commodities and vessels as well as objects of adoration.

Femininity in Arabic proverbs is equally framed within the trajectory of commodities, vessels or objects of adoration whose sole purpose is to serve the men's interests. This is strongly insinuated in the proverb, ***"Asa'a al-daaba al-sareea wa akhud al-mara al-mutwiya kulaha tumtiya—keep a fast moving animal and marry an obedient woman, as they are the enjoyment of life***". By drawing a parallel between women and the services offered by beasts of burden, this proverb makes a deliberate attempt to justify the fact that the very presence of women in men's lives is meant for their service. This reality is symbolised by the comparison of women to the beasts of burden who are subjected to hard labour as per the wishes of their masters. Undoubtedly, Arabic proverbs are notoriously patriarchal, they are out rightly negative and hardly camouflaged in a language that dulls the masculine agenda as in the above proverb and the following one, ***"Mauti al-maratu tajidiidi al-urusi—the death of a wife is the renewal of the wedding***". This depressing rendition is only geared towards serving the interests of men with total disregard to the women's needs and wishes. The depiction of women as commodities which are meant for the service of men is framed in terms of domesticity, passivity and dependence. The depiction of women as commodities is symbolically nuanced in terms of the excitement that husbands relish in marrying new wives in the event of the death of their spouses. It is prudent to argue that there is a strong chauvinistic perception that runs in many Arabic proverbs that encourage the treatment of women as men's commodities, objects of adoration or vessels that can be used and replaced at the slightest opportunity. It suffices to say that the feminine attributes addressed in the above proverbs portent negative perceptions of women, because they tend to condone the treatment of women as second class citizens by their male counterparts.

4.2.4 Femininity as Denigrating Women in Terms of Physical or Moral Weakness

The construction and perpetuation of feminine physical inferiority and purported moral weakness in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is a framing schema underpinning the inscription of femininity in these societies. In a majority of the proverbs examined in this study, men are always presented as the norm, the standard measure of human wholeness, which is nonetheless a subtle way that debases women's biological and psychological completeness. Such proverbs foreground women's

physical and moral limitations in assuming authoritative positions in society and by extension lay emphasis on the necessity of women's exclusion from critical decision making places. The proverbs ingeniously stress women's material, social and emotional dependence on men. These proverbs subtly perpetuate a stereotypical inferiority of women by projecting it as an inherent physical and moral weakness, thus they proffer a patriarchal excuse to limit women's access to critical and authoritative positions in society. Alternatively, the patriarchal schema in Swahili and Arabic proverbs depicts women as innately weak and thus unfit to be entrusted with demanding responsibilities. For instance, the patriarchal conspiracy that women are weak, powerless and dependent on men is clearly nuanced in this Swahili proverb, ***"Mke hukaa katika kivuli cha mumewe—a wife stays in the shadow of her husband***". Consequently, this proverb's use of the imagery of a shadow inculcates privileged masculinity and thus projects physical strength, valor and muscle as masculine attributes. It is important to understand that whereas '**kivuli**' in Kiswahili may insinuate a place of refuge, it is important to understand the extent of the hushed meanings associated with 'shadow'—darkness and gloom. By extension, in remaining under the shadow of the man, nothing much can be expected from the woman, a very ingenious framing schema of femininity in this society.

On another level, Swahili and Arabic proverbs perpetuate both overt and covert hegemonic masculinity which emphasizes men's psychological, physical, social and material potency in their respective societies. The patriarchal stereotypical mosaic that is so deeply embedded in Swahili and Arabic proverbs deceitfully foregrounds what constitutes the masculine ideal as marked by competitiveness, domination, dynamism, fortitude, confrontation, autonomy and risk taking. In emphasizing these loutish patriarchal ideals, women's weaknesses are subtly fore-grounded as in the Swahili proverbs: ***"Mama ni mama ijapokuwa ni rikwama—a mother is a mother even if she is like a hand cart***" and ***"Mla halasa hamziki mamaye—he who eats all his savings cannot bury his mother.***" In essence, these proverbs encourage men to maintain all those attributes and practices that project potent masculinity, they ingeniously persuade men to engage in and practice those masculine ideals. Such proverbs inculcate ideals like bravery and all those ideals mentioned above, consequently inscribing hegemonic masculinity. The perception of women in terms of physical weakness in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is extensively formulated as to encompass such attributes as weakness, powerlessness and innate dependence. The imagery of hand carts subtly

implies that women cannot do anything on their own without men's support, they have to be pushed. The same theme of dependence and helplessness is accentuated in the second proverb, as symbolized by the inability of a bankrupt person to carter for his mother's burial rites—the subtle encouragement for men to be outgoing and engage in risk taking ventures so as to avoid the shame of the inability to inter their mothers. This proverb presents a scenario that is common in the Swahili society, whereby the elderly parents are usually taken care of by their children especially the sons. Ordinarily, that care is supposed to be long term; and only ends by the demise of one's parents.

Furthermore, the perception of women in terms of physical weakness is associated with such attributes as being physically blotched, socially crooked and naively gullible as in the proverbs: ***"Bibi mzuri hakosi kilema—there is no beautiful wife without blemish***" and ***"Mwanamke mzuri hakosi kasoro—a beautiful woman never lacks a blotch***". These are archetypal examples of men refusing to acknowledge women wholeness; they would rather perceive them as people who are prone to faults, deformities and inadequacies, hence are in constant need of men's forgiveness. In this sense women are depicted as objects of subjugation and innately inferior to men, a patriarchal judgment by any standard. In essence these proverbs inculcate the view that a woman is less than whole no matter how well-endowed she may be; it is a rather inverse logic that a woman's sense of wholeness is dependent on men's existence, that women's completeness is dependent on men's approval. The Swahili proverb ***"Kosa moja haliachi mke—one mistake does not lead to a divorce***" presages the idea that women are socially and morally crooked, gullible and innately prone to faults and gaffes. A wife cannot as such be regarded as chaste and her work and deeds cannot be virtuous; this is a rather condescending view that women are to be tolerated given their unending incapacities. Generally speaking, all those Swahili and Arabic proverbs formulated on the trajectory of women's physical and moral weaknesses, present a system that denigrates women as less than whole, deceitful, inconsistent and erratic, but these are rather baseless patriarchal biases against women.

The theoretical argument that proverbs are critically involved in underpinning social representations and constructs which are ideologically structured, is well nuanced in many Swahili proverbs. This is because people in a given social milieu become unconsciously involved in representational activities such that they seem natural as in the use of denigrating proverbs such

as, "***Chelewa chelewa utamkuta mwana si wako—if you delay you will find that the child is not yours***". In this proverb there is some kind of acquiescence to overt vulgarity where feminine moral weakness appears to be acknowledged. Whereas the proverb appears to provide unprejudiced caution, it nevertheless indicts women and projects them as unfaithful, immoral and intolerant. The hushed subtext of the proverb absolves the husbands' indiscretions in failing in their conjugal responsibilities to their spouses, but it cleverly lays blame on the wives who may have strayed to sire children with other men; consequently, insinuating that women are both immoral and unfaithful. In this sense both immorality and unfaithfulness are used as patriarchal structures of constructing femininity. Though the proverb intimates the possibility of married women having illicit sex outside wedlock, the genesis of that possibility is not interrogated rather it is utilized whole as the basis for the society's mistrust of women; this Swahili proverb thus depicts women as morally weak.

Another schema of inscribing femininity is predicated on the attributes of unpredictability, unfaithfulness and immorality that are projected as being feminine and discerned in the proverbs: ***"Mlinzi hulinda ndege mke mzuri halindwi—a guard guards a bird, a beautiful wife is not guarded***"; ***"Ndege hulindwa mke mzuri halindwi—a bird is guarded but a wife is not guarded***" and ***"Mwanamke ana jicho la nje—a woman has a roving eye***". The thematic trajectory running through these proverbs is predicated on the imagery of the bird; women are likened to birds essentially insinuating that women can be domesticated just like the birds. However, the same imagery of birds is inversed so as to project the view that unlike birds, women cannot be guarded; they are innately unfaithful and unpredictable and need to be watched all the time. The third proverb kind of concludes the trajectory, women having "a roving eye". In this proverb women are depicted as restless, hence in constant search of opportunities to indulge in sexual escapades. Consequently, women are depicted as unfaithful and inclined towards extra marital relationships. In these proverbs a sense of harlotry is intimated in the sense that women use their beauty to attract the men's attention, therefore immorality and deceit are attributable to women and femininity generally. In the proverb, ***"Ushaufu si heshima ya mwanamke—flirting is not honourable for a woman***" there is caution against flirting by women; this is because it is assumed it is deeply embedded in the Swahili culture.

The patriarchal perception of women's physical and moral weakness in Arabic proverbs is more overtly emphasized than it is in Swahili proverbs. In Arabic proverbs women's physical weakness and moral piousness are predicated on such attributes as innate vulnerability, incapability and credulity as insinuated in the proverb, ***"Al-mara makusuratu janaha—a woman has broken wings***". There is in this proverb an obvious conspiracy of denial of women's entitlement to wholeness; in this case the proverb intimates that women are innately malformed which is then naturalized in the proverbs as a bird with broken wings signifying helplessness and defencelessness. Women are as such depicted as powerless creatures; the society's expectations of them are thus subtly curtailed. This is elaborated further by the use of the imagery of clothing and dressing in which a double sense of incompleteness is nuanced, the inappropriateness of cover which is less than what the wearer needs and the non-association of women with women. This is captured in the proverb, ***"Al-mutahazinimu bil-niswaani ur-yaani—he who dresses himself with women is naked***". Simply put, nothing should be expected when a man associates himself with women. The proverb turns out as an apt warning that assignments undertaken by women are bound to be inconclusive.

The notion of women's ineptitude in the achievement of tasks is nuanced in the proverb, ***"Al-umu uriyana mabiksi khaalatuhu—he whose mother is naked will not clothe his aunt***". In this proverb, just like in the one preceding it, the sense of incompleteness is captured in the mother's (read women's) nakedness, it further intimates that women cannot clothe themselves unless it is done by their men. The same thematic trajectory is captured in the proverb, ***"Al-raajulu birijaalihi wa al-karimu bi amayaalihi—the brave man is with his men and the generous one is with his wife***", where men are depicted in terms of hegemonic potency while women are depicted in terms of inherent dependence on men. In this sense both bravery and generosity are presented as masculine attributes—when men are brave they are in company of other men and when generous, they extend the generosity to women. Whatever else is attributed to women, it portents negative feminine inscriptions given that the proverbs present women as weaklings who rely on the potency of their male counterparts. In yet another proverb, ***"Al-raajul kuluhu wali al-mara—whoever a man is, he is the woman's guardian***", man is projected as the ideal human as intimated in the framing of the proverb, whoever it is, man the ideal is a woman's guardian—essentially man is thus a woman's keeper, protector, custodian and sentinel. This is presented as the natural scheme

of things because within patriarchal structures and perceptions women are plainly passive, reliant and socially immature. The thematic ethos of these proverbs is rooted in traditional Arab practices that did not allow women to take part in making important decisions in their lives. This is aptly captured in the proverb, ***"Waladaka khairi wa bitaka ikhitariliha—let your son choose his bride, but choose a bridegroom for your daughter"*** where the son has choice and leeway while the daughter must remain dependent, non-assertive even passive in making such critical decisions as to the choice of a marriage partner.

Just as noted in Swahili proverbs, the overemphasis of women's moral weakness has cognates in Arabic proverbs as well where sloppiness, immorality and infidelity are presented as feminine attributes and consequently as framing basis for femininity. This is what is manifested in the proverbs: ***"Mani tazawaja fii suuqu al-twairi kaana twalaaqahu tamusuu bil-khairi—the divorce of one who marries in the bird market is as quick as saying goodnight***"; ***"Ghairatu alqahabatu zinaa wa ghairatu al-huratu bukaa—the jealousy of a harlot is through adultery while that of a virtuous woman is by crying***" and, ***"Al-qahabatu al-jawadatu maa turidu laha quwaadatunu—the public woman who is liberal does not wish for a procuress***". These proverbs are formulated on the most base of human qualities but unfortunately attributed to women. These qualities range from the imagery of getting married in a bird market, a perverted act by any standards, there is the marriage of public women—definitely women of low virtue, or women without good moral standing; the debasement is continued in the proverb, "the jealousy of a harlot is through adultery, while that of a virtuous woman is by crying"; projects women as morally empty as well as emotionally immature. In these proverbs harlotry, jealousy and covetousness are projected as attributes for inscribing femininity.

The other attributes for inscribing femininity as intimated in these proverbs include childish crying which is perceived as weakness. The proverb that makes reference to public women not worth of any forms of inducement implies indulgence in immorality, thus immorality is a framing basis for femininity. This view is further intimated in the proverb, ***"Baa'ti al-manaaratu wash'tarati sitaaratu qaala dii hatiikatu bitahisinu ibaaratu—she sold the lamp to buy curtains to hide her dealings in the bed chamber and it turned out to be a scandal under a fine appearance***" in which it intimates deceitfulness, decadence and treachery. Further still, the proverb, ***"Ba'ada maa naakuhaa asharatu lilghafarati—after they had ravished her, she called out to the watchmen***"

in which deceitfulness, decadence and unfaithfulness are echoed. There is a general perception that women are immoral and hypocritical people. What emerges in all these proverbs is that femininity is structured on debased human qualities, which unfortunately in these societies are attributed to the female gender.

4.2.5 Women, Education and Femininity

The one thing that stands out overtly in Swahili and Arabic proverbs focusing on women is that women are always allotted secondary or marginal status in virtually all relational arrangements; this is not surprising given that both societies are openly patriarchal. Though women are supposed to have inferior intellect, there is, nevertheless a reluctant acknowledgement of women's skills, methodologies and knowledge in imparting skills and education to children, though this is limited to the confines of the household. However, and in a contradictory sense, generally speaking women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs are perceived as ignorant, undignified and inconsistent and need to be taught and guided by men. This insinuates that femininity is inscribed in terms of ignorance, unintelligence and foolishness as captured in the proverb, ***"Kuku hawekwi shahidi wala hajui sheria—the hen is neither called out as a witness nor does it know the law***". This is one proverb in which Hahn's (1998), assertion that, in a gendered culture, human language is binary in its discourse, is aptly captured. This is very true of this proverb; the hen is obviously a feminine reference as opposed to cockerel which would imply masculine characteristics. The denigration of the hen in terms of its ignorance is equated to the ignorance of women and is overtly expressed, that is women's deficiency of knowledge is equated to that of a hen, therefore, an apt excuse of denying women public participation in important societal matters like appearing as witnesses. It further projects women as being ignorant of the law, thus a justification by men to demand absolute obedience from women.

The proverb, ***"Mke kumtii mume ndio sheria—a wife obeying the husband is the norm***" clearly reflects Cohen's (1993), assertion that language in patriarchal structure reflects the classifying and proprietary tendencies of patriarchy. This proverb, therefore, naturalizes the notion that women's obedience and respect for men comes almost naturally, it is nothing to be contested. The trajectory that started with incapacity to stand as a witness, the invocation of the ignorance of the law are echoed in the emptiness of locution captured in the proverb, ***"Debe tupu haliachi kutika—an***

empty tin makes the loudest noise." When this proverb is used in the portrayal of a male-female relationships, then the patriarchal sense of feminine foolishness, ignorance and dim-wittedness, is thus extended and naturalized. The comparison of women to empty tins is undisguised and therefore, presented as fact that women are unknowledgeable and intellectually blank. This presupposes that women's speech and any act demanding articulation of issues consist of nothing but empty words devoid of content and substance. Given that women are depicted in the manner outlined above, it is possible to argue that these are mechanisms of control and justification for use of physical violence as a further means of control as echoed in the proverb, ***"Fimbo impigayo mke mwenzio ukiiona itupe mbali—if you come across the stick used to beat your co-wife then throw it very far.***" This may be construed as an instructional and teaching methodology used by men to impart education and knowledge to women.

Women are depicted in Arabic proverbs as being irredeemably foolish given many of the proverbs analyzed in this study associate woman with foolishness, mediocrity and brainlessness as articulated in the proverb, ***"Aaqilatu al-niswaani qalibuhaa mitulu habatu al-dukhani—the brain of the wisest woman is like the size of a millet seed***". This proverb makes an explicit and unapologetic declaration about what the patriarchal Arab world thinks about women's wisdom insinuating that there is not much to be expected in a brain as big as the millet seed. This is a contemptuous denigration of women within patriarchal structures; it is an exclusion mechanism deployed to shut out women from all critical positions and moments of decision making. In other words, this proverb seriously doubts women's ability to think, articulate issues and make reasonable decisions on their own. The same denigration trajectory is extended in terms of women depicted as both imprudent and obdurate and therefore a patriarchal proverb asserts, ***"Atikiraaru yualimu al_himaaru—repetition teaches (even) a donkey***". Ideally, what is being addressed here by the use of the metaphor of a donkey is that women are imprudent; they are incapable of understanding even when they have been taught one thing repeatedly. A similar formulation employing the metaphor of a donkey in reference to women's ignorance is echoed in the proverb, ***"Al-kalaam laki ya jaaratuni alaa anti himaaratuni—it is you I speak to, my fair neighbour, but truly you are an ass***". This proverb expands the purported ignorance motif that women are incapable of understanding and following simple instructions. Consequently, femininity is in this instance inscribed in terms of imprudence, obduracy and lack of knowledge.

Just like it was noted earlier, this trajectory of proverb formulation is a consistent patriarchal schema of using both psychological and physical violence as means of controlling women. In the following proverb, there is an overt insinuation that women like donkeys, can only be taught the hard way. The proverb asserts, ***"Thalathatuni maa tarifau minihumu aswaa: al-mara wa alnaqaaratuni wa al-himaaratuni—do not take your stick away from three things: a woman, a drum and a female donkey***"; advances the sense of denigration as well as the justification to inflict physical violence on women. The imagery used in formulating the proverb of categorizing a woman together with a drum and a female donkey is in all sense horrendous. This is based on misogynistic ethos of perceiving women in terms of foolishness, stubbornness and ignorance, and therefore justifying physical violence as a methodology of imparting knowledge, obedience and responsibility in women. Physical violence is coupled with ill treatment as well as the relegation of women's views, knowledge and intellect. Within this frame of perceiving women are also embedded other negative attributes implying that women are less canonical, valueless and unhelpful as insinuated in the proverb, ***"Rayi al-mara qurubatu iniqatatu fii al-khilaa—women's opinion is like a leather bag full of water that has been punctured in the desert***". The imagery of a punctured leather bag full of water in the desert, amplifies the fact that women's opinions amount to nothing; just like the water in the punctured leather bag goes to waste without benefiting anyone in particular.

4.2.6 Women, Labour and Femininity

Gill's (2007), research on popular media identified numerous characteristics of post-feminism in which femininity is construed as a bodily property; a theoretical shift from objectification to subjectification which emphasizes self-surveillance and discipline and focuses on choice, individualism and empowerment. This is a critical paradigm shift which celebrates difference. However, when this is juxtaposed against traditional patriarchal orientations that are emblematic of Swahili and Arab cultures and overtly circulated in proverb usage, men still feel entitled to sexually objectify women. Equally, men still associate household work, home chores and childrearing with women, and so do not play an equal role in household and family responsibilities. These constitute the first traits of culturally influenced division of labour where men regard themselves as breadwinners and providers whereas women are regarded as menial homemakers.

The continual unequal power relations between women and men in terms of division of labour are predicated on ideas about and practices of patriarchal masculinities. In this sense, biological reproduction and physical work in the household in which women are centrally involved are used as basis for the inscription of femininity. When one comes across proverbs such as, ***"Mke ni nguzo ya nyumba—a wife is the pillar of the house***" the celebration of women in this proverb as a feminine attribute is covertly deployed to serve patriarchal agendas. Indeed, the patience and the perseverance that women have to put up with for the stability and betterment of their households and families are aspects of their labour that are routinely hushed. Their sense of domesticity and dedication are directed to serve others as captured in the proverb, ***"Nyumba ni mwanamke—a house is a woman***". The subtext of this proverb insinuates that men are lords when it comes to household chores, inevitably meaning the praise of women in this proverb is a patriarchal scheme, a means of control. Similarly, the celebratory insinuations in proverbs such as: ***"Fuata nyuki ule asali—follow the bees to eat honey***" and ***"Bila nyuki hupati asali—without bees you can't get honey***"; apart from commodifying women into edible things, they have a very strong sexist orientation—men as the eaters and women as the eaten.

The conceptualization of women's activities that runs parallel to the busy routine of the bees; only serves to perpetuate patriarchal schemas given that women's hard work is hardly acknowledged. Consequently, the use of the imagery of bees in reference to women implies a celebratory appreciation of women yet such celebration only serves to marginalize and subjugate women. The operational structures through which femininity is inscribed are in many instances subtly deployed; however, a critical observation of the proverbs lexical formulation will always reveal an underlying patriarchal scheme. Such subtlety of lexical formulation is observable in the following three proverbs, ***"Adamu mwenziwe Hawa, mwanamume na mke—Adam's companion is Eve, a wife belongs to a husband***". In this proverb Adamu (a man) is given priority over Hawa (a woman) and the second part of the proverb gives mwanamume (man) priority over mke (woman). The lexical choices also insinuate possession rather than relation—a wife belongs to the husband. In the next proverb, ***"Mke mwema pambo la nyumba—a good wife is a home's adornment***", a woman is merely presented as an adornment, a methodology of objectification of women; in essence the lexical choices are a disempowerment and deprivation of women's sense of locution. In the

proverb, ***"Kazi ya mekoni, kazi ya nisiwani—kitchen work is work for women***", clearly delimits what men can do in the home, the household and their work places.

The inscription of femininity in Arabic proverbs is by far more patriarchally nuanced given that women are perceived as beasts of burden as evidenced in the proverbs: ***"Asa'a al-daaba al-sareea wa akhud al-mara al-mutwiya kulaha tumtiya—keep a fast moving animal and marry an obedient woman, as they are the enjoyment of life***" and ***"Aduhinu wa'ainu alaihina—let your daughters get married and help their husbands***". These proverbs are a reflection of patriarchal thinking in respect of the division of labour where labour is conceptualized in gender terms, men undertaking what is considered masculine duties while women engage in what is considered feminine duties. Therefore, the imagery of women as fast moving domestic and obedient animals ingeniously brackets women in a particular version, essentially priming them to be devoted as well as to be obedient in serving patriarchal duties. The implication of the hushed agenda in the above proverbs is rooted in the fact that within patriarchal structures, traditionally public affairs in the Swahili and Arab societies were and still are run by men, while women are confined to domestic chores.

These proverbs intuitively suggest that men are destined to go and work outside the homestead so as to bring provisions necessary to sustain their families. Women on the other hand are thought of in terms of menial domestic chores like cooking, washing, feeding the children and so on. These proverbs in many subtle ways inscribe femininity on the basis of what women do as routine duties. This framing trajectory is pervasive in many Arabic proverbs as is noted in the proverb, ***"Al-rijaalu qabaayilu wal al-niswaani nifaayilu—men are with their tribes and women are with their good deeds***", an obvious patriarchal strategy that reliefs men from works and affords them time for leisure. A similar trajectory is echoed in the proverb, ***"Huratu swabarati baituhaa umarati—a virtuous woman had patience with her husband and her house flourished***"; in which the attributes of virtue and patience are emphasized but only for the benefit of men. This underlying philosophy is not very different in the proverb, ***"Ar-raajulu ainu al-baiti wal-bintu sanad albaiti—the man is the eye of the house and the girl is the support of the house***"; in which vision is bequeathed to the man and women accorded secondary and supportive roles. It is obvious that there is an intricate and pervasive strategy where virtually all proverbs focusing on women in these societies have hushed patriarchal agendas that subjugate women generally.

4.2.7 Women, Leadership and Femininity

The absence or marginal presence of women in social, political and economic leadership in patriarchal societies is intricately entwined with the inequality that women experience in the traditional patriarchal workplace, the prejudiced patriarchal perceptions about women, and the subtle discrimination that women experience overall. Therefore, from a purely patriarchal societal perspective, women are considered inferior to men overall. Thus women's inferior societal roles as formulated and circulated in patriarchal systems have been institutionalized, resulting in women's biased treatment in virtually all spheres. In proverb formulation and usage in Swahili and Arab societies, gender inequality and leadership are interwoven, essentially foregrounding the obstacles that women have to overcome to obtain recognizable leadership positions. As Nelson (2001) observes, gender inequality is an unjust, though culturally accepted norm, creating a cognitive bias of the categorization for women that is reinforced through patriarchal societal systems. This is indeed the trajectory that various Swahili and Arabic proverbs investigated in this study project. First and foremost, family leadership roles and responsibilities usually provide the sites for the enactment of power relationships, the manifestations of inequality, and the eventual feminization of leadership occupations in which women leadership is associated with devaluation.

As a general rule, most of the proverbs studied in this work are formulated on a general patriarchal structure in which men have power over women, reflecting a patriarchal society consisting of male dominated power structures in the society as a whole and between individual relationships. In many aspects the proverbs in this study intimate that power is related to privilege in a system in which men have more power than women, that men have some level of privilege to which women are not entitled. Furthermore, these proverbs in many subtle ways explain the stratification of power and privilege on the basis of gender. In proverbs of a patriarchal society, such as Swahili and Arab societies, men routinely hold positions of power and have more privileges; they head family units and they are leaders of social groups. In this sense patriarchy as a social organization where men rule over women through various historical developments, patriarchy has inevitably created cultures which formulate and circulate, as through proverbs, ethos of subjugation and domination of male over female. Proverb formulation in these cultures is ingeniously structured as to make women unconscious that they are subordinated; the possibilities that their gender relations might be otherwise, are severely curtailed and forestalled from slowly and gradually

emerging. Consequently, women in Swahili and Arab societies are generally depicted as weak and morally inferior. This simplicity of stratification demonstrates the dominant sense of inscribing femininity as well as the perceptions of feminine leadership.

Of the large number of Swahili proverbs collected and analyzed in this study, feminine leadership is equated to biological functional attributes as alluded to in the proverb, ***"Piga kite mama ujifungue—press hard mother to give birth".*** In this proverb, leadership is perceived and confined to a woman's labour pains and the eventual siring of a child, a wholly biological function which has been manipulated to serve patriarchal interests. Similarly, the feminine involvement in nurturing and all that it entails as projected in the proverb, ***"Mzazi haachi ujusi—a mother does not stop smelling***", is celebrated yet ingeniously well positioned to perform good nurturing responsibilities in which patriarchy is ensured of reproduction, continuity and longevity. The selflessness exhibited by mothers (read women) in this proverb acknowledges the magnitude of responsibility placed on women as mothers; however, the leadership instincts embedded in it are hushed. This course of argument and perception of female leadership is further emphasized in the proverb, ***"Mtoto akibebwa hutazama kisogo cha mamake—when a child is carried, he looks at the mother's back head***". Indeed, there is an overt acknowledgement highlighted in this proverb that reveals the vital role played by the mothers in shaping, inculcating and influencing the behavior and the eventual development of their children's personality. In other words, there is no doubt that in traditional African societies (Swahili included) and even in present day societies in rural settings, women routinely carry their children on their backs while travelling or doing household chores; hence mentoring them through words and deeds. This is leadership in its most basic interpretation in which are entailed attributes of responsibility, compassion and devotion to the service of others. This is also reflected in the proverb, ***"Mikono ileayo mtoto ndiyo itawalayo dunia—the hands that raise a child, are the ones that rule the world***". However, unlike the previous proverbs presented in this section, this is one proverb that overtly acknowledges the life lessons that mothers impart to their children while inculcating ethical and moral principles in their children. It can be argued that mothers are indispensable in their children's character formation, their children's worldviews, ethics, morality and sense of value.

There is no contesting the fact that women's leadership skills are explicitly demonstrated in terms of the positive contributions they make in their families' wellbeing. Even in overtly patriarchal societies, women's sense of industriousness cannot be denied. Though the lexical choices in the formulation of certain proverbs may appear denigrating, they nevertheless imply a sense of reluctant acknowledgement of women's social, cultural and economic responsibilities. One proverb where this is discernible is in the proverb, ***"Mke mwema pambo la nyumba—a good wife is a home's adornment***. Whereas the imagery in this proverb reduces women's social value to mere adornments, there is nevertheless that sense of reluctant admission that a home is incomplete without a woman. This proverb implicitly admits women's immeasurable contributions to the wellbeing and improvement of their families and consequently their societies. The reluctant admission recognizes that women engage in productive activities both socially and economically for the success of the household. In other words, women use their strength to initiate and undertake activities that are beneficial to the society generally and the household specifically. A similar acknowledgement is discernible in the proverb, ***"Nyumba hutegemea miti kama nchi kwa mabinti—a house depends on trees just like a country depends on girls***". The proverb's acknowledgement of the importance of women in the success of a household is proof of the effectiveness of women's leadership skills. Consequently, the imagery of trees used in depicting women's contributions to family and society; is testimony of the importance of women's participation in the development of the household as well as the society at large. However, even when there is profuse evidence buttressing women leadership, there are equally many proverbs which debase women's contributions whether at family or societal level as in the proverb, ***"Mwanamke abeden harizi/haridhi—a woman is never satisfied***"; therefore, presenting a very dim view of women's chances of holding leadership positions.

Just like in Swahili proverbs, Arabic proverbs are equally reluctant in admitting women's social leadership and material contributions to family and society through various activities (social, cultural, economic, and so on). There are indeed some proverbs that reluctantly admit that men cannot on their own set up and run homes without women's active participation. This is acknowledged on the basis of the responsibilities, the hard work and the devotion to serve that women, particularly mothers, exhibit in serving their families and ultimately their societies. This is aptly captured in the proverb, ***"Al-rijaalu qabaayilu wal al-niswaani nifaayilu—men are with***

their tribes and women are with their good deeds". There is some sense of admission in this proverb that implies that women are proactive given that their success or failure is predicated on their good deeds. The insinuation of good deeds here is prejudicial in the sense that it is men who judge and give value to what good deeds are. In other words, women are expected to be good role models not only to their children but to their entire society. The implication in this argument is that femininity is inscribed in terms of patriarchal uprightness, responsibility and thoughtfulness as captured in the proverb, ***"Twaibu al-hadeedah wa al-dharibu naseebu—choose a good wife from a good family and having children is a matter of luck***". It must be noted here that the choice of a good wife is a man's prerogative, a privilege hardly accorded to women. It is similarly nuanced in the proverb, ***"Aduhinu wa'ainu alaihina—let your daughters get married and help their husbands***". As noted early, again here it is women helping their men and not the reverse.

Furthermore, wisdom is attributed to men as captured in the proverb, ***"Al-aaqilu yatazawaju lil awuladihi—he who is wise marries for his children***". Women's social contributions are at most times entwined with issues of nurture as in the proverb, ***"Mani tuhibuhu mini aulaadika qaala alaa kasi umihi—who among your children do you love most? He said the most cared for by my wife from the children***". It is clear that these proverbs' teachings are predicated on patriarchal ethos and worldviews since they explicitly encourage men in Arab societies to marry from noble homes so as to bequeath their children with good mothers; who will raise them properly within the society's allowable and acceptable norms and expectations. Additionally, femininity is ascribed on the basis of women's sense of generosity, dependability and loyalty to serve others as captured in the proverbs: ***"Rahma ala umuhu kaanati aqiwadu mini abuhu—God bless his mother; she was more profligate than his father***" and "***Huratu swabarati baituhaa umarati—a virtuous woman had patience with her husband and her house flourished***".

No matter how critical the definition of leadership is, women leadership in whatever sphere of life is hardly acknowledged and embraced in the Arab society analyzed in this study. This arises generally out of patriarchal prejudices and misplaced perceptions that women are naturally weak, innately dependent and powerless as projected in the proverb, ***"Al-mara sha'ar tabia' raqaba—a woman is hair that follows the neck"***. In this proverb it is insinuated that women being so weak they cannot do anything on their own; hence their incapacity to perform as good leaders. Where women are not depicted in terms of weakness, they are depicted in other equally lowly and

denigrating terms such as stubbornness, selfishness and destructiveness as discerned in the proverb, ***"Adubanu ya'arifu wajihu allubanu—the fly knows the face of the milk seller***"; this is simply a strategy for limiting women's participation in the leadership of societal affairs.

The sense of women's destructive nature is embedded in the proverb, ***"Al-mara al-naqinaqa qaatwia maal wa qaatwia riziqi—a nagging woman cuts wealth and cuts provision***"; this sense of perception and eventual depiction of women projects women as people who do nothing valuable other than curse and complain all the time without offering any tangible solutions. In other words, women are routinely perceived as being part of the problem rather than the solution. This negative mosaic of purported feminine attributes is pervasively ingrained in Arabic patriarchal structures and worldviews and circulated in proverbs such as, ***"Khalifaha al-mara qiribatu damu ini shilitaha kharati wa ini waa'atu—a woman is a leather bag full of blood, if you carry it, it pours out and if you leave it, it becomes pus***". This kind of depictions of women creates the perception that women's obduracy, troublesomeness, nagging and dependence are a hindrance to women's leadership because good leaders are bequeathed with determination in solving societal problems.

Another way of inscribing femininity is predicated on patriarchal prejudices of depicting women as being loquaciously ridiculous as captured in the proverb, ***"Al-mara quwatihaa fii lisaanihaa—a woman's power is in her tongue***", is perhaps one of the most outrageous reasons advanced in Arabic proverbs deployed to deny women leadership positions. It essentially implies that women are innately garrulous and as such gossip is their only means of expression. Consequently, women's opinions are not valued by their husbands and men generally, hence seeking refuge in fellow women who have capacity to understand them better as well as understand their feminine issues that need to be deliberated upon. The patriarchal negation of women's leadership attributes is again entwined with such prejudices as women being inherently unreliable and dependent as presented in the proverbs: ***"Al-mara maa bawadawuhaa—a consignment will not be given to a woman***" and ***"Al-mara maa baduha rasani—a woman will not be given a leash***"; are clearly advanced by the male chauvinists who detest female leadership as reasons to deny them leadership positions. The circulation of such patriarchal biases as women's weakness, unreliability, dependence, loquaciousness and irrationality through proverb formulation and usage has far reaching implications that justify the relegation of women to the periphery of leadership positions.

The negative messages advanced through the use of such proverbs give blanket justifications for the economic deprivation of women as well as their denial of leadership positions in the society. However, generally speaking women are powerful and important pillars of the family and the society at large as witnessed in some of the analysed proverbs in this study.

4.3 The Inscription of the Perceptions of Masculinity in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

The study of the attributes/characteristics responsible for the inscription of the perceptions of masculinity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs draws from the study of the perceptions on men as husbands and figure heads of families, men as concentration of physical and moral strength, men as sources of authority and command, men's use of violence in asserting their power, men as masters of the freedom of choice, men as the epitome of knowledge and wisdom, as well as the study of the perceptions on men as controllers of resources and means of production.

4.3.1 Men as Leaders and Family Heads in Inscribing Masculinity

There is abundant evidence that in Swahili and Arab societies, proverbs are consistently deployed to reinforce the ethos of the cultural ideal of masculinity in terms of dominance and innate entitlement to leadership. The construction of masculinity in Swahili and Arab societies, therefore, assigns men authority and command over women. The exercise of such authority in Swahili and Arab societies is interweaved with morally uplifting patriarchal norms in which masculinity is conceptualized in terms of aggressiveness, muscularity and audaciousness as in the proverb, ***"Fuata nyuki ule asali—follow the bees to eat honey***". Though this is a neutral and non-gendered proverb, it nevertheless takes on strong gender nuances when used in the conceptualization of a relational arrangement involving men and women, where freedom is accorded to men to pursue self-serving interests. It insinuates agency as a masculine attribute. A similar nuance of male agency is discernible in the proverb, ***"Chanda chema huvikwa pete—a good finger is adorned with a ring***" where the attributes of domineering and protectiveness are projected as masculine and, therefore, form the basis for inscribing masculinity. The ring in this proverb, both as an actual thing and as an imagery, may be interpreted at two levels; first as a physical thing that encircles but also as an imagery signifying ownership and possession, which implies that women who accept rings acquiesce to being possessed and are thus deprived of agency.

Physical strength and behavioural aggressiveness are pervasively circulated in Swahili proverbs as one of the strong foundations of masculinity. For instance, in the proverb, ***"Anayeonja asali huchonga mzinga—he who tastes honey makes a hive***" is implied the sense of hard work that is aroused from tasting honey. It has been noted in earlier discussions that Swahili proverbs have a tendency to objectify women in various ways such as adornments or even as some edibles. These are already implied in two of the proverbs above where women are perceived as edible honey. This eating trajectory is circulated in such other proverbs as: ***"Chakula bora ni kile ukipendacho—the best food is the one you love***" and ***"Ukila zabibu, utaleta majibu—if you eat grapes, you will give feedback***" where eating (suggestive of masculine agency) is bequeathed to men and 'being eaten' (suggestive of lack of feminine agency) is ascribed to women. The symbolism of "eat" "**kula**" and "**onja**" "taste" powerfully intimate aggressiveness and dominion as symbolised in the imageries of tasting honey and eating grapes—framed in terms of active and passive positions.

Another basis for inscribing masculinity is associated with attributes of assertiveness and boldness. This is captured in such proverbs as, *"**Ukistahi mke ndugu huzai naye—if you shy away from your cousin wife, you cannot sire with her***". The hushed patriarchal ethos in this proverb is predicated on the purported advice for men to have courage to engage in coital relationships with women. This proverb has a cognate theme in the Arabic proverb, ***"Mani isitahayi mini binti amihi maa khaba minihaa ghulamuni—he who is bashful with his cousin, gets no boy by her***" that sense of aggression is actively encouraged. Consequently, sexual activity in its aggressive endorsements is supposed to be productive, thus a proverb is formulated to protect the outcomes of such coital aggression as in the proverb, ***"Kuku mwenye watoto halengwi jiwe—a hen with chicks is not hit with a stone***". In this proverb men are depicted as being understanding and protective. Thus, in patriarchal societies such as the Swahili, as intimated in the above proverb, it is obvious that the bearing of children is what cushions mothers from social maltreatment and accords them respect and admiration. Men's aggressive and assertive traits are overtly encouraged and in some proverbs they truly buttress the tradition of multiple marriages popularly referred to as polygamy. A proverb such as, ***"Ukipata chungu kipya, usitupe cha zamani—do not throw an old pot for acquiring a new one***", though not excessively sexist, however when interpreted in gender contexts, it may actually insinuate strong male bias. In this sense, women are depicted in a passive sense, they lack agency and are perceived as objects "**chungu**—pot". The resultant,

connotation embedded in the proverb intimates a polygamous marriage where women are depicted as new and old pots.

Masculinity is also associated with the patriarchal sense of authority, the privilege of making unquestioned decisions over women. This is captured in such Arabic proverbs as, "***Al-mara kaana qalati duqahaa ukhutahaa—if a woman shows disrespect, punish her with another woman***". This is a patriarchal Arab cultural belief that encourages multiple marriages as a methodology of controlling and subjugating women. This is further stretched in the proverb, ***"Mauti al-maratu tajidiidi al-urusi—the death of a wife is the renewal of the wedding***", a rather self-centred and insensitive exaltation of masculinity. It is evident that in this proverb there is a haughty display of patriarchal insensitivity in that the demise of a spouse is not a moment of grief and sadness, but rather an opportunity for excitement that presents new marriage prospects of another wife almost immediately. This disregard for women is also related to unjustifiable apportioning of blame to women whenever men make mistakes which women know nothing about. This is for instance embedded in the proverb, ***"Azahilaqi al-himaaru wa kaana mini shahiwatu al-himaaru—the ass slipped and fell as a result of the ass driver's desire to see a lady***". It is apparent that in this proverb, the falling of the ass driver is caused by nothing but his harbouring of licentious feelings towards a lady who is totally unaware, thus occasioning lack of concentration; hence the fall.

4.3.2 Men's Physical and Moral Strength as Basis for Inscribing Masculinity

Hussein (2005), has aptly and convincingly argued that hegemonic masculinity entails the material, social and cultural depiction of the psychological, social and physical potency of men in a chauvinistic and bigoted patriarchal society. The stereo-types about what constitutes the masculine ideal are overtly highlighted through numerous ways including spiritual and secular socialization. In Swahili and Arab societies, proverbs are critically deployed in the circulation and reinforcement of the patriarchal cultural ideals of masculinity conceptualized in terms of surmounting physical and moral challenges, being in command, forcefulness, fortitude, being self-reliant, and demonstrating the courage to take risks. Therefore, these societies actively encourage men to uphold their patriarchal sense of masculinity by shunning material and social practices that portend lowliness and the inferiority of activities and social behaviors associated with femininity. For example, the insistence of displaying endurance, stamina and bravado is pervasively embedded in many Swahili proverbs and sayings such as ***"Jikaze kiume—endure like a man***", actively

encourages men's sense of bravado that only men have what it takes to endure and carry on with what tasks they are confronted with, whereas the saying ***"Wewe ni mwanamume wa kweli—you are a real man***" is often cited when somebody accomplishes a task perceived to be tough or insurmountable. Even in situations of adversaries taunting each other, it is common to hear sayings such as "***Kama wewe ni mwanamume, karibia hapa—if you are a real man advance here***" intimating risk taking and that only men have what it takes to be daring.

There is no doubt that the Swahili society is exceedingly masculine considering the pervasive circulation of the purported masculine attributes in many of the proverbs analyzed in this study. For instance, ideal maleness is associated with cockiness such that is totally routine to hear as standard usage proverbs such as, ***"Kuku hawiki penye jogoo—a hen does not crow in the presence of a cock***". That very act of crowing is considered masculine and, therefore, symbolizes the masculinity in terms of physical strength, haughty assertiveness and cocky domineering. The lexical and imagery formulation of this proverb is such that "**chicken—kuku**" is feminine hence, it refers to women and "**cock—jogoo**" with all its haughtiness, symbolizes the male folk. Similar insinuations are discernible in the proverbs: ***"Kuku mgeni zawadi ya kunguru—a new chicken is a gift to the crow***" and ***"Dua la kuku halimpati mwewe—the curse of the chicken does not bother the falcon***". Clearly, the first proverb uses "kuku" as opposed to "jogoo" so as to portend masculine presence. On the other hand, the second proverb intimates the emptiness of a chicken's cries, curses and complaints made against those that forcefully rob her (read women).

The patriarchal male bravado is presented as bravery in a number of Swahili and Arabic proverbs analyzed in this study. Swahili and Arab societies expect men to be courageous, brave and tough at all times; especially when it comes to standing up for the interests of their families or their entire societies. Consequently, being unemotional is viewed as bravery. It is not uncommon, therefore, to find a crying boy being admonished in the Swahili society, ***"Wacha kulia kama mwanamke—stop crying like a woman***". This is a subtle socialization process meant to discourage boys from exhibiting traits that are considered feminine and therefore weak. Both the Swahili and Arab societies expect men to restrain public display of their emotions because the display of emotions is considered feminine. There is some belief that bravery is necessary in buttressing courage and determination, hence these traits are critical in inscribing masculinity—that is, being brave,

determined and hard working as captured in the proverb (when used in the context of male-female relationship), ***"Atakaye lulu hana budi kupiga mbizi—whoever wants pearls must be ready to dive in the sea***", it intimates that men should be ready to pay any price for the interest of their families. It also intimates that masculine bravery is not obtained on a silver platter; it entails struggling and hard work. Similar ethos is expressed in the Arabic proverb, ***"Al-raajulu birijaalihi wa al-karimu bi amayaalihi—the brave man is with his men and the generous one is with his wife***".

Just like in Swahili society and culture, patriarchal physical and moral strength are critically involved in the formulation and circulation of Arabic proverbs that celebrate masculinity. Strength, vigour or potency are circulated as being masculine, implying that men are obliged to be mentally, emotionally and physically sturdy. This chauvinistic male ethos is discernible in a number of Arabic proverbs analyzed in this study. For example, the proverb, ***"Ishitihinaa ala dii adalaqa yajii ghulamuni—from the mother's efforts in labour, we expect a male child***", the mother's effort is celebrated in as long as it ensures longevity of the male offspring. The formulation, circulation and use of a proverb such as this, socialises the women to revere the men in their lives and societies; given that their very presence is synonymous to toughness and strength. This is reiterated in the proverb, ***"Umu adhukukuru adhaniha baaridahu—the mother of male children has peace of mind***", an obvious elevation of the male sense of strength implying masculine innate sense of responsibility and protection. The celebration of men's strength is acknowledged at the individual as well as societal level as has been demonstrated in the proverbs presented. The collective depiction of men's strength is captured in the proverb, ***"Al-rijaalu qabaayilu wal alniswaani nifaayilu—men are with their tribes and women are with their good deeds***". The implication of this proverb is that the men are encouraged to work collectively so as to maximize their strength overall. This proverb doesn't accord the same status to the women; instead it prefers them to be assessed individually. This fact is reiterated in the proverb, ***"Tabuusu al-harifu taqilau asinaanihi—he who kisses his lover tears out his teeth***".

Arabic proverbs are also formulated on the purported traits of masculine fearlessness and authoritative rigidity, as opposed to the feminine traits of weakness, timidity and powerlessness. For instance, the proverb, ***"Al-mara makusuratu janaha—a woman has broken wings***"; presages men's masculine potency and independence. The imagery of birds or insects with broken wings as

the prism of perceiving women ingeniously signifies women's sense of helplessness and dependency, whereas the proverb, ***"Al-mara sha'ar tabia' raqaba—a woman is hair that follows the neck"***; literally marginalizes and denigrates women as weaklings, people whose presence is insignificant, "hair that follows the neck" consequently always in need of male assistance. The imagery of the "hair" in reference to women compounds their dependency and elevates their subservience. This sense of denigration is further implied in the proverb, ***"Al-mara ini baqati fassi maa batakasi ar-rasu—even if a woman was an axe, she would not break the head";*** insinuates that women are incapable of undertaking demanding chores. It appears that regardless of how Arabic proverbs are formulated, patriarchal masculine traits are given prominence over feminine attributes—note the imagery of the hair and the axe in the two proverbs respectively. The reiteration of masculine traits is stretched further in the proverb, ***"Al-mutahazinimu bilniswaani ur-yaani—he who dresses himself with women is naked***", a clear and deliberate scheme to shun women on all accounts. The imagery of clothing used in this proverb is an admonition to men not to engage with women in whatever activities because the end result is nothingness, just like the nakedness implied in the proverb. This is despite the fact that the accomplishment of a task is not necessarily dependent on the maleness or femaleness of an individual; but on the zeal and preparedness of the person undertaking the task in question.

There is a patriarchal conspiracy in both Swahili and Arab societies that circulates the notion that men have higher moral standing and therefore they possess higher moral strength. Such purported moral strength is thus frequently intimated in Swahili and Arabic proverbs to inscribe masculinity. This fact is alluded to in the proverbs: ***"Mlinzi hulinda ndege mke mzuri halindwi—a guard guards a bird, a good/beautiful wife is not guarded***"; or alternatively stated as ***"Ndege hulindwa mke mzuri halindwi—a bird is guarded but a good/beautiful wife is not guarded***". The imagery of guarding birds used in reference to women in these alternate proverbs implicitly intimates men are protective, responsible just as they are providers. It further suggests that men protect and provide the basic necessities required by women in their material circumstances. The guarding function intimated in this proverb is self-serving given that men protect women for their own selfish reasons, for instance shielding women from indulging in immoral activities is in the men's interests, so the moral fortitude implied here is self-serving. This is the same interest alluded to in the proverb, ***"Mwanamke ana jicho la nje—a woman has a roving eye***". It is not any different

when one examines the proverb, ***"Ushaufu si heshima ya mwanamke—flirting is not honourable for a woman***". The purported masculine moral fortitude hushes the fact that flirting is two ways, it involves women and men. In de-emphasizing male culpability in flirting, the proverb obviously has a clear chauvinistic agenda of presenting men as being morally strong.

The purported chauvinistic masculine traits of being morally strong, upright and independent are pervasively circulated in Arabic proverbs. For instance, the proverb, ***"Mani tazawaja fii suuqu altwairi kaana twalaaqahu tamusuu bil-khairi—the divorce of one who marries in the bird market is as quick as saying goodnight***". The implication and the subtext of this proverb obviously circulates the perception of women as being unfaithful, while on the other hand men are projected as being upright; granting them the moral ground to advise and criticise the women. However, a deeper analysis of these attributes that create the perception of women in terms of unfaithfulness, ingeniously absolves men from the sexual excesses that make women adulterous, yet it always takes two to tangle. This moral trajectory of female weakness and male uprightness is discernible in the proverb, ***"Ghairatu al-qahabatu zinaa wa ghairatu al-huratu bukaa—the jealousy of a harlot is through adultery while that of a virtuous woman is by crying***". In this proverb, two contrasting depictions of women are used to formulate the proverb overall—harlotry and virtue—that is, only women are hypothetically capable of harlotry whereas virtue is expected of them. This subtly depicts men as being morally strong and upright, their indulgence in sexual excesses is cleverly hushed.

This conspiratorial scheme is further circulated in the proverbs: ***"Al-qahabatu al-jawadatu maa turidu laha quwaadatunu—the public woman who is liberal does not wish for a procuress***" and the proverb, ***"Ini twala'ati huratuni uliqi fii wadini juratuni—if you prove to be a virtuous woman, hang a jar on my ear***". The subtexts in these proverbs create the impression that men are the ideal custodians of morality in society owing to their perceived moral strength and uprightness. The reverse is true in reference to women such that where men are morally upright women are morally weak and unfaithful. This is a biased argument that seeks to privilege and elevate masculine traits which implicitly censure women as generally failing the expectations of moral uprightness. The gender implications covertly suggested by these proverbs are many; there is the insinuation that women don't deserve any mercy or good will from the members of the society, they are innately immoral. The same prejudiced projection of women in negative terms is further

circulated in the proverbs: ***"Baa'ti al-manaaratu wash'tarati sitaaratu qaala dii hatiikatu bitahisinu ibaaratu—she sold the lamp to buy curtains to hide her dealings in the bed chamber and it turned out to be a scandal under a fine appearance***" and ***"Ba'ada maa naakuhaa asharatu lilghafarati—after they had ravished her, she called out to the watchmen***". Overall, the pervasive themes circulated in the subtexts of these proverbs project femininity negatively where women are depicted as morally weak whereas men are depicted as being morally strong and upright.

4.3.3 Men, Authority, Command and Masculinity

A critical and in-depth examination of various gender theories reveals that, gender shapes power and bequeaths authority, regardless of whether this is at the level of the 'private' relationships of the household to the highest levels of political decision-making. Consequently, inequalities between men and women are one of the most constant patterns in the allocation of power and authority between the genders. In terms of gender and power relations particularly as circulated in proverb formulation and usage in Swahili and Arab cultures, it is frequently intimated that to be a 'woman' is to be powerless (quiet, submissive, accommodating). To be a 'real man', by contrast, is to be authoritative, powerful (outspoken, in control, able to impose his will), particularly in relation to women. These gender roles are habitually predisposed to perpetuate the power inequalities that they are based on. For example, there are proverbs circulated as facts that socialize many men and women to think that it's not 'natural' for women to speak up in public, a rather cunning patriarchal strategy that often poses a key barrier to women's access to decision-making positions, hence the curtailment of authority. Such proverbs covertly insinuate that 'power and authority are identical to masculinity', a strategy that helps explain why powerful people (men) often demonstrate dominance in gendered ways as is implied in the proverb, ***"Mke kumtii mume ndio sheria—a wife to obey the husband is the norm***".

Often times the family is an amphitheatre of power and authority in the sense that power dynamics in families and households interact with those in the 'public' sphere in shaping relational outcomes. This, paradoxically, buttresses the social control over women, seen in terms of socialization processes enabled through such strategies as proverb formulation and usage. Consequently, gender shapes all social and organizational institutions and how they affect the allocation of power and authority. It is not surprising, therefore, that most political and economic institutions no matter

how rudimentary, are historically dominated by men, are adapted to (elite) men's experience. Such institutions idealise 'masculine' forms of behaviour and rely on men's power over women. Therefore, these institutions tend to 'lock in' two types of power - men's power over women. They are strategically deployed as prime gatekeepers for women's leadership participation, thus male dominated cultures often make power and authority inaccessible to women. This is because gender shapes how power is understood and subsequently interpreted, thus in patriarchal cultures the widely accepted definition of power is getting women to do what men want them to do.

In view of the assertion above, the dynamics of power distribution reflect a distinctively male experience of the world, a place peopled by antagonistic 'others' (read women) with whom, to survive; they are forced to forge some form of 'allowable and acceptable' social relationship where men are dominant. Women, particularly in their socially assigned roles of wife, mother and bearer of children, may more habitually be inclined to understand themselves as being in continuity with the people (read men), being around them rather than being in opposition to them. They are often socialized to build capacity, bequeath power and authority in others rather than aspire to acquire it for themselves. This does not, however, mean that women cannot sometimes have special forms of influence on decision-making because of the very specific social status allotted to them, for example, women are able to achieve high levels of success where they emphasize their non-threatening roles as sisters, mothers and wives.

It is important, therefore, to note that leadership is thought to be innately a male trait, however, the Swahili and Arab societies recognise husbands (men) as the focal sources of authority, power and command in the family units. In exercising authority and power, it is not uncommon for the men to exhibit behavioural tendencies that patriarchal societies associate with masculinity such as authority and power. There are as such, proverbs which explicitly imply that male physical muscularity equals power and authority. The implication of such proverb formulation and its eventual circulation, is that girls/women are socialised in the Swahili society to be obedient not only to their husbands but to the male folk generally. In order for the men to exercise various types of authority often suggested in proverbs, they strive for material success because such success enables the exercise of power and authority. In other words, men's power and authority are demonstrated through the social attributes of self-reliance, verve and hard work, as captured in the proverb, ***"Mke hukaa katika kivuli cha mumewe—the wife stays in the shadow of her husband***".

This proverb explicitly depicts women as dependent on the men for their needs. The proverb's use of the imagery of a shadow in reference to the men's power and influence, intimates that women are habitually obscured; they are "shadowed" as it were from accessing power and authority. Men's exercise of power and authority is enacted in terms of shunning stereotypically feminine traits, activities as well as occupations. Exercising authority, is thus predicated on masculine attributes of boldness and roughness, for it is assumed they epitomize power and authority as intimated in the proverb, ***"Mke mwema pambo la nyumba—a good wife is a home's adornment***" where the reverse logic implies that men are worth more than adornments thought to be emblematic of women.

Similar masculine trajectories are discernible in a number of Arabic proverbs analyzed in this study. For instance, many Arabic proverbs are formulated with a condescending mind-set towards women, this is aptly captured in the proverb, ***"Al-raajul kuluhu wali al-mara—whoever a man is, he is the woman's guardian***". Besides depriving women of agency, this proverb enables the circulation of patriarchal bigotry in Arab culture; where women regardless of their age and status in society are habitually treated as weak, as people who are always in need of the husbands/male relatives' care and protection as their guardians. The implication of this is that women are raised and socialised in such a manner that encourages them to be dependent on men throughout their entire lives. That dependency starts from the time when they are still under the care of their fathers, brothers or other close male relatives; and later on it is transferred to their husbands and sons after marriage.

This bigotry is pervasive as it renders women hapless and helpless while at the same time it elevates men as epitomizing protection and responsibility as discerned in the proverb, ***"Asa'a aldaaba al-sareea wa akhud al-mara al-mutwiya kulaha tumtiya—keep a fast moving animal and marry an obedient woman, as they are the enjoyment of life***". By drawing a parallel between women and the services offered by beasts of burden, this proverb makes a deliberate attempt to justify the fact that the presence of women is meant for the service of men. In other words, patriarchal structures and systems socialize women to be submissive, to follow men's orders and instructions without question. This scheme of things bequeaths men with absolute power and authority, thus attributing to them assertiveness as a characteristic of masculinity. This is well captured in the proverb, ***"Na'alu umu geideedi wala mara waleedi—old shoes with holes are better than a***

woman who has a son". Ordinarily this proverb is formulated as a caution to men to shun marrying women who have sired sons from previous marriages. This is rather paradoxical that, despite patriarchal cultures preferring sons to daughters, it has negative undertones of blaming women for the failed previous marriages. In this sense, sons are seen as adversaries, potential danger. Similarly, the proverb, ***"Umu al-darufunu wa lau madufunu—avoid a mother of a son even if it is dead***". The hostility extended towards the marriage of women with male children is a very well calculated strategy of depriving women all manner of protection that may come their way including possible protection that their sons may provide.

4.3.4 Men's Use of Violence in Asserting their Power

Masculine cultures expect men to be assertive in exercising their power; this kind of aggressiveness accords men the leeway to use violence against women as a way of asserting that power. The use of violence is by all standards self-serving in the sense that violence against women instils fear rather than respect; it traumatizes, thus allowing men to exercise power. This fact is alluded to in the proverb, ***"Fimbo impigayo mke mwenzio ukiiona itupe mbali—if you come across the stick used to beat your co-wife then throw it very far***". It is evident that physical violence is a reality that women experience in this society; women are physically assaulted in the pretext of administering punishment. The same sense of physical violence is echoed in the Arabic proverb, ***"Thalathatuni maa tarifau minihumu aswaa: al-mara wa al-naqaaratuni wa alhimaaratuni—do not take your stick away from three things: a woman, a drum and a female donkey***". The violence meted on women is equated to the beating of the drum and the donkey. This proverb epitomizes patriarchal bigotry and masculine insensitivity. The fact that such ethos can be found in a proverb that is in popular usage, demonstrates the extent to which patriarchal savagery can go in the pretext of upholding masculine authority and power.

The use of violence by men to assert authority is also echoed in the proverb, ***"Maa qadara ala hamaatihi qaama li'imraatihi—he was not a match for his mother-in-law, he then rose up against his wife".*** Physical punishment of women does not seem to discriminate between daughters, mothers and wives; women are generally subjected to collective punishment, violence is thus employed as a tool to assert men's authority. Men's exercise of power and authority is as such couched in terms of aggressiveness, insensitivity and dominance. Simply put, men use

violence as a means of asserting their power over the people that fall directly under them. Masculine bigotry is further echoed in the proverb, ***"Dharabatu al-intaya zai mash'ati aldinnaya—punishing a female is like rubbing butter over the body***". Both the formulation and circulation of this proverb intimates that patriarchal cultures can go to extremes to justify violence against women even when such violence boarders on the sadistic. Violence is not only applied to inflict pain on women; but also acts as a source of pleasure for men. The embedded teaching in this proverb tends to justify and celebrate the use of violence, infliction of pain and fear by men as means of asserting their authority.

4.3.5 Men, Freedom of Choice and Masculinity

The Swahili and Arab societies perceive masculinity as being predicated on decisiveness; therefore, men are expected to make important choices for and about girls/women in their lives in virtually all material, social and relational issues. This fact is alluded to in the Swahili proverb, ***"Tunda jema halikawii mtini—a good fruit doesn't last long on the tree***." Generally speaking, this proverb's formulation objectifies women and equates them to ripened fruits. By so doing the proverb relegates women's role in decision making to the periphery; given that the decision as to when and who takes them, lies squarely with men. Similar objectification is discernible in the proverbs: ***"Mwanamke ni ua—a woman is a flower***" and ***"Anayekaa karibu na waridi hunukia—he who stays near a rose flower smells nice***". These proverbs create the perception that women are passive people whose decisions on any issue matters very little in comparison to the decisions made by men.

In situations where the proverbs do not objectify women, they alternatively confine them to narrow and constricting spaces where freedom is equally confined as discerned in the proverb, ***"Mwanamke ni maji ya dafu, hayapendezi ila dafuni mwake—a woman is like the water of a young coconut which is not pleasant except in its shell***". The imagery of coconut water that is only pleasant in the coconut shell demonstrates a critical sense of smallness. It is not uncommon in Swahili society to find the men directing women and confining them to constrained spaces. Such spaces limit them to their fathers'/husbands' compounds; as well as other spaces allowing the presence of fellow women. This confinement trajectory is also discernible in the proverb, ***"Uzuri wa mwanamke si wa kila mpita njia—the beauty of a woman is not for every passer-by***". This proverb is predicated on some religious dictum, notably Islamic teachings in which, public display

of women's beauty is considered as being inappropriate except to those who are known as "mahrim" (father, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, husband and their sons). It is apparent that nothing women do or nothing they are naturally endowed with is excluded from male appropriation. Women's beauty, for instance, is subjugated to behavior, meaning that women cannot enjoy what is naturally endowed as captured in the proverb, ***"Uzuri wa mwanamke ni tabia si sura—the beauty of a woman is in her character not her beauty***". The proverb may appear well meaning since it encourages good character overall, yet in so doing there is the hushed subtext that the good character is for the benefit of men.

Arabic proverbs are emblematically masculine and they exceedingly state as much as in the proverb, ***"Aaqilatu al-niswaani qalibuhaa mitulu habatu al-dukhani—the brain of the wisest woman is like the size of a millet seed***". By drawing a parallel between the size of the wisest woman's brain and the millet seed, this proverb not only belittles women's intellect but also questions their ability to think and make reasonable decisions on their own. This is further echoed in the proverb, ***"Rayi al-mara qurubatu iniqatatu fii al-khilaa—women's opinion is like a leather bag full of water that has been punctured in the desert***". The comparison of women's opinions to a punctured leather bag full of water in the desert, amplifies the fact that such opinions are of no value just like the water in the punctured leather bag. The denigrating depiction of women in Arabic proverbs is notoriously pervasive, women cannot make choices even when such choices affect their lives directly as captured in the proverbs: ***"Waladaka khairi wa bitaka ikhitariliha—let your son choose his bride, but choose a bridegroom for your daughter***" and ***"Twaibu alhadeedah wa al-dharibu naseebu—choose a good wife from a good family and having children is a matter of luck***".

There are restrictions everywhere restraining women in terms of exercising their freedom of choice in their day today activities. In the proverb, ***"Imsiki bima'aroofi au tasirihi bi'ihsani—retain in honour, or release in kindness***"; the subtext is apparent in addressing men's sense of decisiveness and wisdom, hence their supposed innate ability to marry and divorce women at will. This is further discerned in the proverb, ***"Alifu ashiiqunu walaa musitahiluni—a thousand lovers rather than one mustahiluni***" in which women are demeaned as unclean simply because of losing a spouse. This proverb is rooted in the Egyptian culture whereby widows were compelled to undergo a sexual ritual, mostly with poor and ugly men for "cleansing" purposes, before being declared

legible for marriage once more. Overall, there are many proverbs in these cultures which demonstrate that men are privileged with freedom of choice while women are denied the same.

4.3.6 Men, Knowledge, Wisdom and Masculinity

Patriarchal structures as well as systems of socialization equate masculinity with innate wisdom and understanding. This is overtly expressed in the proverb, ***"Kuku hawekwi shahidi wala hajui sheria—the hen is not taken as a witness because it does not know the law***". The proverb intimates that women are innately ignorant, naïve and uncertain of the law, whereas on the other hand men are considered inherently knowledgeable, bold and decisive. The cultural ethos in this proverb is that women do not have the requisite knowledge of the law; consequently, they cannot be witnesses in matters of law. In the proverb, ***"Mkeka mpya haulaliwi vema—a new sleeping mat is not pleasant to sleep on***"; women's innate sense of ignorance is nuanced. The imagery of new sleeping mat objectifies women thus projecting them as ignorant people in dire need of knowledge and direction from their husbands. It is suggested in this proverb that new wives (new sleeping mats) require coaching and tutoring so as to be able to perform their marital/coital duties properly. Additionally, the proverb, ***"Debe tupu haliachi kutika—an empty debe makes the loudest noise***"; extends the ignorance, nuisance and indecision trajectory of depicting women in proverb formulation. Similarly, the proverb, ***"Heri Kufuga punda, kama nisiwani—it is easier to domesticate donkeys than women***"; broadens women's supposed ignorance to include, their supposed arduous and unappreciative traits.

The Arabic proverbs analyzed in this study equally depict women in terms of ignorance, foolishness, stubbornness and low intellect. This is apparent in the proverbs: ***"Atikiraaru yualimu al-himaaru—repetition teaches (even) a donkey"*** and ***"Al-kalaam laki ya jaaratuni alaa anti himaaratuni—it is you I speak to, my fair neighbour, but truly you are an ass***". The suggestion that women need to be told things repeatedly before they can understand, implicitly implies that unlike women, men are knowledgeable, objective and understanding. A similar sense of women's purported foolishness and stubbornness is echoed in the latter proverb, in the sense that women are depicted as extremely difficult to understand and follow simple instructions. One Arabic proverb has curiously employed the metaphor of a parrot, ***"Zauju al-dharataini qaqhaabaini dirataini—the husband of two parrots is like a neck between two sticks that strike it***"; so as to

intimate that women are noisy, loquacious and illogical. Overall, the proverbs cited here overtly privilege purported positive masculine traits while denigrating feminine traits by depicting women as generally ignorant and burdensome.

4.3.7 Men, Resource Controllers, Means of Production and Masculinity

In patriarchal societies and cultures, masculinity is entwined with the capacity of men to own resources as well as control the means of material production. This reality is well embedded in Swahili and Arabic proverbs in various ways—as caution, admonition or as advice to men. Consequently, proverbs such as: ***"Mume ni kazi, mke ni nguo—the husband works, the wife dresses"*** and ***"Buibui ni mwanamke, mume wajifanyaje? —buibui is for women and has nothing to do with men***" are predicated on the work and production trajectory. These two proverbs explicitly project men as active bread winners as well as hard workers who provide for their families. This means that masculinity is associated with men's capacity to provide for the needs of the entire family. They essentially cloth, shelter and feed their families. This is the notion advanced in the proverbs: ***"Mke ni nguo, mgomba kupalilia—a wife is to clothing as a banana plant is to weeding***" and ***"Mla halasa hamziki mamaye—he who eats all his savings cannot bury his mother***". It is apparent that masculinity is associated with hard work, active and responsible resource management.

Masculinity in Arabic proverbs is closely associated with the men's ability to provide material support to the women all the time including the time of courtship as alluded to in the proverb, ***"Maa akitharu khatwabii wa maa agalu firaashii—how great is the number of my wooers, but how small is the quantity of my furniture***". This proverb celebrates men as bread winners, and hard workers. The perception created of men as bread winners implies that men have access to certain entitlements and they enjoy certain advantages inaccessible to women. Even when a proverb such as ***"Khalaahaa alal al-ardhi as-sauda—he left her upon the black ground";*** implicitly intimates men's purported attributes of being providers.

4.4 Conclusions

In both Swahili and Arab societies, femininity is curiously linked and constructed around the maternal and biological functions of bringing up and role-modeling of children. Mothers' closeness to their children is by all means instinctive and innate, yet in these societies that which

is natural, inborn and inevitable is slanted within patriarchal structures to serve male conspiracies. This is strategically to placate and make women compliment men in various ways. However, whereas men want to be complimented in undertaking tasks, they appear to shun a reciprocal treatment for women. In a majority of the proverbs examined in this study, men are always presented as the norm, the standard measure of human wholeness, which is nonetheless a subtle way that debases women's biological and psychological completeness. Such proverbs foreground women's physical and moral limitations in assuming authoritative positions in society and by extension lay emphasis on the necessity of women's exclusion from critical decision making places.

Overall, and on the basis of the proverbs presented above, femininity is presented in the most negative forms, it is projected as marginal and it is projected as externally formulated for the benefit of men. These proverbs deviously engender the circulation of negative attributes of women; hence projecting perceptions of women generally as people who are unfaithful and deceitful. This kind of perception is acquiescent to stereotypical proverbs in Arab and Swahili cultures depicting women as cunning, fatalistic, inferior, quarrelsome, selfish, stupid, and gossipy. They project women with a sense of fatalism, a misplaced belief that women's fate cannot be predicted by anyone as they have to live two lives, one life before marriage and the other, after marriage. Before marriage women in these two societies are mostly under the guardianship of their fathers as well as the other male relatives otherwise known as mahrim. The choice of their marital partners is a prerogative of their fathers or guardians as the case may be, with the guardianship role being taken over by their husbands immediately after marriage. In other words, women in the Swahili and Arab societies are always under the guardianship of men; be it their fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, husbands and so on (whether married or not).

There is abundant evidence that in Swahili and Arab societies, proverbs are consistently deployed to reinforce the ethos of the cultural ideal of masculinity in terms of dominance and innate entitlement to leadership. The construction of masculinity in Swahili and Arab societies, therefore, assigns men authority and command over women. There is no doubt that the Swahili and Arab societies are overtly masculine considering the pervasive circulation of the purported masculine attributes in many of the proverbs analyzed in this study. The patriarchal male bravado is presented

as bravery in a number of Swahili and Arabic proverbs analyzed in this study. Swahili and Arab societies expect men to be courageous, brave and tough at all times; especially when it comes to standing up for the interests of their families or their entire societies. It is important, therefore, to note that leadership is thought to be innately a male trait, consequently, the Swahili and Arab societies recognize husbands (men) as the focal sources of authority, power and command in the family units. In exercising authority and power, it is not uncommon for the men to exhibit behavioral tendencies that patriarchal societies associate with masculinity such as authority and power. There are as such proverbs which explicitly imply that male physical muscularity equals power and authority.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CIRCULATION OF CULTURAL VALUES IN THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN SWAHILI AND ARABIC PROVERBS

5.1 Introduction

A proverb as Miruka (1994), argues, is a brief statement packed with hidden meaning, accepted and used by a community as an expression of truth or wisdom. It is prudent, therefore, to argue that Swahili and Arabic proverbs are expressions of wisdom subtly nuanced in social and cultural discourses in which people's roles, functions and worth are foregrounded and validated. Such attributes may be in tandem with several aspects of acculturation and may thus include but not necessarily limited to such issues as nurturing, admonishing and advising. The presentation of proverbs of advice, moral upbringing, admonition and acculturation in which society is centrally situated are around in the lived experiences of Swahili and Arabic speaking people. In other words, it can be argued that proverbs are powerful rhetorical devices that shape the moral consciousness, opinions as well as the circulation of cultural values of a people. The analysis of the selected proverbs is done to accord with the overall objectives of this study and is informed by the application of the feminist literary theory. It is worth noting that the proverbs under each category have been selected on basis of the themes canvassed in the proverbs in question.

5.2 The Cultural Values Circulated in the Depiction of Women in Swahili and Arabic Proverbs

The study of the cultural values circulated in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs takes cognisance of the fact that different societies and cultures may share similar proverbs, or at least may express similar themes in proverbs in different ways. This study acquiesces to Saidi's (2010) contention, that although proverbs are born out of past incidents and observations, they often persist and continue to exist for thousands of years after their creation. This implies that proverbs are powerful oral traditions that have potential to shape society. The contention in this assertion, therefore, is that Swahili and Arabic proverbs are used to communicate and relay different teachings to the Swahili and Arabic speakers. These Proverbs are used to point out facts of life where there is an anomaly so as to restructure things and to prompt the deviant back to established and accepted norms. In addition, Swahili proverbs are used to warn, caution,

advise, lampoon, console and encourage the different members in the Swahili society. The Swahili proverbs have themes which teach about the entire life of the Swahili speaking people. As such, these proverbs deal with the total mosaic of the society—its geography, its history, religious beliefs, its people—women, men and children, its social and familial relationships, its relationships with its neighbours as well as the images of its men and women (Mumali, 2012). The Swahili speaking people use proverbs frequently in their social gatherings—weddings, funerals, religious celebrations, initiations as well as other significant ceremonies that connote the rites of passage from one stage to another.

Whereas there are many Arabic proverbs that address similar issues like the Swahili proverbs, there is a noticeable tendency that Arabic proverbs largely address hardships faced by the Arabs in their daily life as well as their survival in desert conditions (Brosh, 2013). The harsh desert conditions which are critically implicated in the development of Arab hospitality, in which desert dwellers host, protect and take care of visitors and their needs, are projected in Arabic proverbs. This famed hospitality, together with the values and importance of family ties, the necessity of protecting one's kin; pride, honour and revenge are amongst the themes most noticeable in Arabic proverbs. These age-old proverbs contain references to elements of Arab life that must be studied in order to acquire an appreciation of Arab culture and its development throughout the centuries. Consequently, proverbs are by and large an embodiment of wisdom that relates to everyday Arab life. The Arab people are able to take rational advice that is contained in proverbs, thus proverbs are used as pieces of advice as well as warnings to errant members of the society (Othman, 2004). The Arabs frequently use proverbs in their day-today social interactions at home, in school, and in religious and cultural ceremonies (Isleem, 2009). It is important to note that as much as these thematic concerns are obvious, the circulation of varied cultural values through proverbs is not readily apparent and it is even more so when such values are tied to the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

5.2.1 The Circulation of Sociologically Informed Cultural Values

Proverbs, as argued by Kobia (2016), have specific cultural orientations, significance and interpretation based on social, economic and cultural environments that inform the formulation of these proverbs. Proverbs as such act as effective tools for the transmission of values, thoughts, culture and the philosophy of life of people as well as their worldviews. Swahili and Arabic

proverbs are products of socio-cultural and political experiences of Swahili and Arab cultures. In view of the observations above, the analysis undertaken here focuses on how issues of marriage, motherhood, polygamy and family ties are implicated in the circulation of sociologically informed cultural values.

5.2.1.1 Marriage as the Basis for the Circulation of Cultural Values

Certain schools of thought have argued that the family unit is the foundation of any society. In particular, Bourdieu et al (1996) have asserted that a family is defined by a set of individuals linked either by alliance (marriage) or filiations, or less commonly, by adoption (legal relationship) and living under the same roof (cohabitation). As such, marriage in the Swahili and Arab societies is strictly a union between a man and a woman, it is honoured and both the Swahili and Arab people value marriage and give it a lot of prominence in their proverbs. For instance, the Swahili proverbs: ***"Mke ni nguzo ya nyumba—a wife is the pillar of the house***", ***"Nyumba ni mwanamke—a house is a woman***" and "***Anayeonja asali huchonga mzinga—he who tastes honey builds a hive***" convey the critical essence of marriage. The proverbs implicitly project marriage as being the legitimate avenue to the mutual co-existence of man and woman as husband and wife in accordance with the Swahili norms and customs (which are heavily borrowed from the Islamic religion). The importance of marriage to the Swahili is such that, before the wedding is set aside for the bride to be taught what is expected of her from household chores to keeping the man happy in the bedroom. Marriages are centrally important in the Swahili society; and weddings form part of the most elaborate rituals.

Equally, marriage is highly valued in the Arab society and it is taken as a source of satisfaction and enjoyment as captured in the proverb, "***Asa'a al-daaba al-saree wa akhud, twaliq al-mara almutwiya kulaha tumtiya"–keep a fast moving animal and marry an obedient woman, as they are the enjoyment of your life***". This proverb makes a comparison between an obedient wife to a fast moving animal which is useful in transportation of goods and people and goes ahead to suggest that such a woman is a source of enjoyment because the husband's aspirations are achieved through her. The lessons advanced in this proverb imply that marriage is meant to avail an assistant (read wife) to the husband; as well as offer him an opportunity to enjoy himself raises a number of pertinent issues worth of interrogation. It is prudent, therefore, to assume that Swahili and Arab cultures expect the man to not only look for a marriage partner, but also pay for her dowry before

marriage; perhaps the transactional nature of marriage in these cultures privileges men as the transaction executors thus giving them prominence in the formulations of proverbs. Additionally, the fact that traditionally the provision of the basic necessities of life in Swahili and Arab cultures was the responsibility of the husband, there are as such proverbs that transmit this ethos. Furthermore, when the Kiswahili proverb intimates the making of a hive (shelter), the ethos of responsibility is subtly transmitted; because this proverb advises and teaches a common truth. In other words, men are depicted as being aggressive and go getters, while women are depicted as being passive and on the receiving end; hence the justification for their subservience as projected in the aforementioned proverbs. However, it is worth noting that the passivity of women seems to be countered partly in the same Arabic proverb, in its advice to the husbands to marry not only hard working but obedient women. Undoubtedly, this advice is rooted in the Arab culture where men are encouraged to marry women who appear strong physically and from noble families. This is to ensure that those wives undertake their household chores effectively in accordance to the instructions tendered by their husbands.

The institution of marriage is quite important to the Swahili and Arab people and is critically central in varied social interactions between men and women. It determines relationships, modes of conduct and underpins accepted responses, for instance, in the proverb *"**Aliyemwoa mama yako ndiye baba yako—the one who has married your mother is your father***"; various forms of conduct and relational patterns are emphasized such as the role played by the parents in raising children, the extent of relationships between fathers and foster children especially where such children are from previous marriages and the modes of conduct in terms of respect to step-fathers. Whereas the proverb above circulates values associated with modes of conduct and relational respect, there are other proverbs that are more focused on spousal functions. For instance, in the proverbs: "***Mke ni nguzo ya nyumba—a wife is the pillar of the house***" and "***Nyumba ni mwanamke—the house is not complete without a woman****"* values about functions are emphasized. These proverbs are focused on roles that women play in the households, both as wives and mothers.

Within the Arab society marriage is perceived as a form of protection as in the proverb, "***Al-Zawaj sutra****"—**marriage is protection***". The proverb transmits values related to the functions of marriage in the sense that marriage protects both the husband and wife against various vices which may

befall them; thus making it possible for marriage to subsist optimally. This proverb is infused with both social and Islamic religious teachings which prohibit extra-marital liaisons for married couples. Consequently, the centrality of values of etiquette, norms of behaviour, modes of relations and functions and obligations associated with marriage are subtly circulated in the Arab society. In infusing marriage related proverbs with social and religious values, marriage as protection makes it possible for people to manage their desires and protect themselves against social vices such as prostitution, homosexuality, lesbianism and pimping. Apart from protecting couples, marriage also ensures the protection of children from want and neglect. Swahili and Arab cultural practices that encourage marriage implicitly give prominence to celebrating the roles that women play in the institution of marriage. However, there are some instances in which marriage may become an avenue for debasing women. This is mostly related to the fact that Swahili and Arab cultures demand that women spend most of their time attending to household chores, their children thus limiting women from participating in public functions.

The marriage institution is in several senses perceived as hallowed and thus elevated to the status of religion as in the proverb, "***Al-zawaj nisifu al-deen—marriage is half of religion"***. This proverb is infused with religious values which borrow heavily from Islamic teachings. In equating marriage with religion, marriage is revered within the Arab culture to the extent of considering it as a form of worship. In this culture, marriage has to be approached with a lot of caution as its success or failure has immense ramifications; notably because it is considered as part of fulfilling one's religious obligations. Given that the Swahili and Arab societies' cultural beliefs are patriarchal, that it is women who get married to the men, and are as such socialized to respect and value marriages, marriage is hence perceived as a religious commitment and as a social and cultural value may have both positive and negative outcomes for married couples.

The Swahili and Arab people hold marriage in high esteem because it is variedly beneficial—it provides mutual assistance; with wives assisting their husbands with the household chores, bearing and nurturing children. The marriage institution is foundational in starting families as implied in the proverb, "***Mwenye dada hakosi shemeji—he who has a sister cannot miss to have an inlaw".*** In this sense marriage is a blessing that offers the man and woman a chance to start a family and establish extended family relationships. This is well captured in the Arabic proverb, *"**Saviad al-banaati noor al-banaati noor al-bait wa qaadan saa'ad lilbait—girls' marriage is a light in the***

house and their staying in their parents' house is oppression to the house". In suggesting that when girls get married their parents are happy and relieved, but in remaining unmarried the parents are unhappy, is deeply rooted in the Arab cultural beliefs that look at girls who get pregnant before marriage as a source of shame and disrepute to the parents. The imagery of light employed in the proverb underscores the critical assistance that wives provide in their husbands' households. This fact is further alluded to in the proverb, "***Aduhinu wa a 'ainu alaihina—let your daughters get married and help their husbands***". Wives in the Arab society just like the Swahili, are critical in the execution of household chores. These proverbs as such are critical in transmitting cultural values associated with cooking, washing, feeding their children as well as teaching and acting as role models to the children.

Marriage in Swahili and Arab societies is preferred between cousins and it is largely seen as a way of retaining allegiance within the lineage of their people. Children usually take their fathers' lineage; hence there are proverbs which encourage fathers to play marital roles properly. One such role is the siring of children as in the proverb, "***Ukistahi ndugu, huzai naye—if you are bashful with your cousin you cannot bear a child from her***". The proverb conveys values associated with the siring of children; it thus encourages men to be proactive in siring and nurturing of children. This subtle encouragement is captured in the proverb, ***Chelewa chelewa utapata mwana si wako—if you delay you will find that the child is not yours***". The proverb subtly emphasizes the importance of children in the marriage institution. A similar cultural value is infused in the Arabic proverb, "***Zaitunaa fii daqiiqinaa—our oil is mixed with own flour***". The proverb not only underscores the importance of marriage but also encourages marriage between closely related individuals (cousins). The wisdom embedded in this proverb espouses the promotion of marriages rooted in the Arab culture that encourages the celebration of people's achievements (read men) based on their lineages; as opposed to their individual capabilities. The Swahili and Arab cultural values circulated in these proverbs suggest that marriage and siring children thereof is determined by male agency, thus implying that women are passive participants.

Marriage in the Swahili and Arab society is solemnized mostly in accordance with Islamic laws and religious values. Accordingly, there are a number of conditions which must be fulfilled for marriage to be regarded as legally valid. Three of these conditions are captured in the proverb, "***Idhaa kaana zauji raadhi aishi fadhulu al-qaadhi—if my husband consents, why should the***

Kadhi's interference be entertained?" Consequently, the five conditions to be fulfilled for a marriage contract to be deemed valid include consent of the contracting parties after the choosing of the bride, the payment of dowry, the presence of two male witnesses as well as the blessing of the father/guardian. In choosing the bride, proverbs are routinely deployed so as to emphasize a number of core values and attributes such as being wealthy, beautiful; as well as being noble and morally upright. The brides' religious piety is also a critical attribute. Lifelong obligations are routinely transmitted as critical values sustaining familial relationships as in the proverb, "***Kazi ya ukwe haina faida—the assistance advanced to the in-laws accrues no benefit".*** The values circulated through this proverb are that the assistance advanced by one to his in-laws should be taken as a form of charity. The advancement of such services are necessary in cementing the relationship between the two families (for the bride and bridegroom).

Traditionally, the marriage of young girls in the Swahili and Arab societies was largely encouraged given that the roles most expected of women in these two societies revolve around motherhood. As such, Swahili girls were traditionally coached and instructed by their mothers, grandmothers, aunties as well as other appointed women about the expectations of marriage and motherhood. There are proverbs, therefore, that circulate these values as in the proverb, "***Hila hii ni ya kungwi, si ya mwari—this waywardness is as a result of the female coach and not the bride***". The coaching of girls on issues of motherhood was thus encouraged and this was infused into the formulation of such marriage related proverbs. Indeed, it is on the basis of these assumptions that one comes across Arab proverbs that espouse virginity as a critical value as in the proverb, ***"Khaluhu bihamihi akhadha waahidatuni qadra umihi—leave him alone with his grief for having taken one as old as his mother for a wife***".

An analysis of many Arab proverbs related to marriage and women generally proved a contradictory range of values—that is values that seem to celebrate marriage and women on one level and contradicting the same on another level as in the proverbs: "***Hamaati munaaqiratun, qaala twaliqi bintahaa—if your mother in-law is like a plague, then divorce her daughter"*** and ***"Maa qadara al-hamaa tihi qaama li'imraatihi—he was no match for his mother-in-law, he then rose against his wife***"**.** The Swahili and Arab cultural values that depict women coaches and mothers-in-law as agents of mischief as well as having a negative influence on the brides' and daughters' marriages respectively as brought out in the aforementioned proverbs; make women to be viewed with suspicion by society hence their marginalization.

Other worth values routinely espoused in Swahili and Arabic proverbs about marriage are positive virtues bequeathed to women and their children, care and responsibility as well as character as in the proverb, "***Uzuri wa mwanamke si sura, ni tabia—the worth of a woman is not in the appearance, but in her character***" which is similar to what is espoused in the Arabic proverb, ***"Ghairatu al-qahabatu zinaa wa ghairatu huratu bukaa—the jealousy of a harlot is adultery, while that of a virtuous woman is by weeping***". The Arabs' cultural values concerning a bride's moral uprightness as espoused in this proverb implies disdain for women who exhibit immoral behaviour as an expression of their jealousy. This disdain is also alluded to in the proverb, ***"Mani tazawaja fii suuqu al-twairi kaana twalaaqahu tamusuu al-khairi—he who marries in the bird market, his divorce will be as quick as to say good night***". The imagery of marriage in a bird market implies marriage to a partner (read a woman) that is public, loose and immoral; while the imagery of goodnight transaction is a demonstration of the limited period which such marriages are bound to last. In other words, the proverb subtly transmits values that disapprove of such things as love at first sight. The Swahili and Arab cultural values as advanced in the above proverbs permit men to have some moral high ground in marriage transactions.

Indeed, there are proverbs that are formulated to capture the reality that marriage, just like any other social institution is venerable to disputes and disagreements at one point or other, consequently, such proverbs provide caution and advice intended to uphold the institution of marriage as in the Swahili proverb, "***Kosa moja haliachi mke— one mistake does not lead to a divorce".*** Where the marriage breaks down, there are proverbs that advise the course of action as in the proverb, "***Eda ni ada yenye faida— abstinence and self-seclusion is a beneficial culture".*** A similar advice on the course of action where marriage breaks down is captured in the Arabic proverb, "***Imsiki bima'a roofi au tasirihi bi'ihsani—return in honour or release in kindness".*** The proverb as such espouses values of tolerance, pardon, good faith and kindness on the part of the husband where divorce is inevitable.

5.2.1.2 Motherhood and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Motherhood is highly valued in Swahili and Arab societies because of the importance attached to the siring and nurturing of children in marriage. As such, motherhood as both a biological and social function is venerated and celebrated, and indeed there are proverbs formulated to capture

various perspectives of such veneration. For instance, the Kiswahili proverb, "***Kuku mwenye watoto halengwi jiwe—a hen with chicks is not hit with a stone***" subtly inculcates the values of protection, respect and avoidance of harm to the mother and the offspring. Women with children in the Swahili society are accorded protection and respect. Within this trajectory of protection and respect there is a cognate Arabic proverb which inculcates similar values, "***Ishitini naa ala dii adalaqa yajii ghulamun—from the mother's efforts in labour, we expect the birth of a male child".*** It may be concluded on the basis of these two proverbs that motherhood is admired in the Swahili and Arab societies and as such it gives women hallowed status as mothers. As much as mothers are accorded respect such respect is not uniform because in several instances the sex of the child does indeed determine how much respect the mother earns. There are of course variations that mothers with sons are accorded more respect than mothers with daughters as contrasted in the foregoing proverb and the following proverb, "***Al-mara al-aaqir dhifa fii al-bait—a barren woman is a guest in the house".*** The imagery of a guest in reference to a barren woman in a marriage inculcates cultural values that determine the marital status of barren women. The preference for boys as opposed to girls as demonstrated in the proverb above is a patriarchal scheme that privileges men over women.

Motherhood in Swahili and Arab cultures is traditionally associated with the raising of children and as would be expected there is a proverb that captures this reality in the Kiswahili proverb, "***Jogoo hawezi kulea wana—a cock cannot raise chicks***". This proverb is predicated on a functional binary where cock (male) is absolved from the chores of raising children. Such responsibility is set aside for mothers and this role is captured in many other proverbs such as, "***Kuzaa si kazi, kazi kubwa kulea—giving birth is not much work, the real work is raising of children***". Similar value inculcation is echoed in the Arabic proverb, "***Maa al-hazinatu al-thikali ka al-naye hatu bakarahaa—the afflicted mother who has lost her children is not like the woman who weeps for hire***". On the other hand, there are proverbs that capture the fact that mothers are customarily involved in the discipline of their children as expressed in the proverb, "***Teke la kuku halimwumizi mwanawe—the kick of a hen doesn't hurt its chick***". The care and discipline trajectory in value inculcation is also expressed in the Kiswahili proverb, "***Kipele cha mwana uchungu wa mama—a pimple to the child is a pain to the mother***". Similar cultural values

are discernible in the Arabic proverb, *"**Alhanifasatu fii aini umiha malihatuni—a beetle is a beauty in the eyes of its mother***".

The role of mothers as care givers, educators and role models for their children is variously formulated in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. For instance, the Swahili proverb, "***Mikono ileayo mtoto ndiyo itawalayo dunia—the hands which raise the child are the ones which rule the world***" aptly captures the care and love trajectory. In this proverb is embedded the perception that good leaders are products of good upbringing and nurturing. Overall, motherhood as perceived and variously conceptualized is critically implicated in the circulation of cultural values the most overt being the siring and nurturing of children, a role from which men are insulated. The hushed agendas of motherhood as intimated in the above proverbs are the marginalization of women to functions that are considered menial.

5.2.1.3 Polygamy and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Polygamy is widely practiced among the Swahili and Arab people where apart from personal preferences, the dominant religion, Islam, permits men to marry up to a maximum of four wives. The religion, nevertheless attaches conditions to the practice such as men demonstrating the ability to provide their wives' basic needs with fairness and justice. Consequently, like all cultural and religious practices, there are proverbs which circulate preferred values such as the importance of fairness and justice, harmonious existence between co-wives in polygamous marriages and avoidance of neglect, among others. The idea of justice is, for instance, expressed in the proverb "***Ukipata chungu kipya usitupe cha zamani—don't throw the old pot for getting a new one***". In other words, the proverb underscores the values of fairness and justice, the provision of basic necessities, devoid of bias and prejudice. It is important to note, therefore, that polygamy as a practice is critical in the transmission of values, though most of them are predicated on patriarchal privilege. Beside this, given that polygamy is tolerated as a practice, values of respect and honour as well as modes of relationship between co-wives are infused into proverbs to capture this reality as in the proverbs: "***Mke mwenza! Ha! Mezea—a co-wife! No! Forget it***" and "***Kaburi la mke mwenza li kombo—the grave of the co-wife is crooked***" as well as in the proverb, "***Akataaye kula humwongezea mke mwenziwe—a wife who refuses to eat increases the co-wife's share".*** In the proverb "***Fimbo impigayo mke mwenzio ukiiona itupe mbali—the stick which beats your cowife***

if you see it should be thrown far away" harmonious existence is encouraged because a cowife is presented not as an enemy.

What obtains about polygamy in the Arab society is not entirely dissimilar from what obtains in Swahili society. Thus, in the proverb, "***Baina Hanaa wa Banaa dhati al-hanaa—between Hana and Banaa our beards were lost"*** the benefits of co-wives' cooperation is underscored. In the proverb, "***Zauju al-dharataini qaqhaabaini dirataini—the husband of two parrots (is like) a neck between two sticks (that strike it)"*** both a warning and a caution in terms of relational arrangements in polygamous set ups are spelled out—notably a warning to the potential husbands who wish to venture in polygamous marriages and the potential dangers inherent in polygamy. Indeed, polygamy is centrally implicated in cultural values circulation in diverse ways that entail advice, admonition, and common sense in the execution of responsibilities among others.

5.2.1.4 Family Relations and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Wives in Swahili culture are expected to be under the care and protection of their husbands. This social cultural expectation is embedded in many proverbs and as such familial relationships are a basis for the inculcation and circulation of cultural values. One Swahili proverb that quickly comes to mind is "***Mume si babe kwa mkewe—a husband is not a hero to his wife"***. This in essence means a husband-wife relationship is symbiotic; consequently, such a relationship entails respect and mutual responsibility. In virtually all situations involving men as care givers and protectors of women, there should not be any reward or payment. This sense of mutual relationship between Swahili wives and their husbands is also expressed in the proverb, "***Mke ni dada mdogo—a wife is like a younger sister to the husband***" essentially meaning such a relationship should not be different from the sister-brother relationship. Similar cultural ethos is routinely expressed in the Arabic culture and proverbs as in the proverb ***Alraajul kuluhu wali al-mara—a man is the woman's guardian***. This proverb is insidious as it subtly suggests that Arab women of all ages and status in the society have to be under the guardianship of men throughout their entire lives. Guardianship, both as a concept and practice as embedded in Arab cultural values depicts women as weak and powerless; hence in need of care and protection from men. This is a patriarchal scheme ordering the nature of relationships in this society, consequently Arab wives are viewed in condescending ways as in the proverb, "***Taalii bila da'awati iqia'adi ala dii al-gharwatu—come***

(my dear) without (more) quarrelling, sit down upon this pelisse", as being quarrelsome and irrational.

Family relations in Swahili and Arab societies (just like in any other society) are mutually structured for the benefit of all. As much as husband and wife relations are emotionally driven, they are also intertwined with material benefits that accrue from them. This reality is embedded in the proverb, *"**Dirishani upendo huruka umaskini uvukapo kizingitini—love leaves through the window when poverty enters by the door***". The material benefits in this proverb are clearly nuanced. Similar material returns are expressed in the Arabic proverb, "***Ini Jaataun adaa datuni ihina mina alwalidatu dii hamiyatuni faasi*datun*—if the midwife happens to have more affection than the mother, then that is a corrupt feeling***". A similar material underpinning is discernible in the proverb, **"*Umu jabaani maa tahizani—the mother of a coward does not grief (for him)".*** This proverb transmits values related to the disdain for cowardice given that mothers don't grief for the death of their children who are cowards. The reverse is most probable in the sense that bravery is esteem in the Arab society.

5.2.2 The Circulation of the Biologically Informed Cultural Values

The circulation of cultural values in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs have been predicated on biological/sexual analogy as the determinant of social gender relations. Proponents of this perspective assert that men and women's roles and positions in society are predetermined by their biological categorizations. This biological/sexual analogy refers primarily to the idea that males' "superior" physical strength and the prolonged nurturing role of women in the bearing of children are metaphors for every human action. However, this study concurs with Ellmann's (1968), assertion that these facts have no apparent bearing in the determination and ascription of male and female positions and roles relative to their biological/sexual categorization. Ellmann argues that it is simplistic to ascribe superior roles and positions to men on the basis of their physical strength while ascribing inferior roles for women on the basis of their biological functions, namely childbearing and the subsequent child nurturing responsibilities. The import of Ellmann's assertions is that such views derived from this analogy are simple affirmations of naive and unquestioned stereotypes and images which reproduce and are themselves reproduced by a false sexual analogy. The analysis of the circulation of the biologically informed cultural values is undertaken under three biological sub-issues namely; reproduction, nurturing and development.

5.2.2.1 Reproduction and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Children occupy a central place in marriage in the Swahili society and this biological function is celebrated and expressed in various proverbs. Consequently, motherhood and particularly reproduction is embedded in a variety of proverb formulations as in the proverb, "***Mficha uchi hazai—the one who hides nakedness does not give birth"*** where reference to nudity applies to both male and female, yet within what appears to be neutral is embedded a masculine ethos that the actual act of giving birth is a feminine function. This is further promoted with some insidious encouragement for mothers to exhibit patience and perseverance in giving birth, *"**Piga kite mama ujifungue—push hard mother to give birth".*** Men are as such absolved from the entire process of giving birth. The subtle circulation of masculine and essentially patriarchal ethos in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is insidiously pervasive. This patriarchal conspiracy is captured in the Arabic proverb "***Umm adhukur adhaniha baardah—the mother of male babies has peace of mind",*** a rather obvious and overt bias that this society favours sons as opposed to daughters. The cultural values circulated through these proverbs demonstrate how these cultures appropriate natural biological functions to advance prejudiced and patriarchal schemes, as is demonstrated particularly in the Arabic proverb that the siring of boys begets peace of mind while the siring of girls is a source of worries.

Another biological natural function appropriated to circulate patriarchal and overtly masculine values is connubial relationships. In this respect the Swahili have a proverb, "***Ukistahi mke ndugu huzai naye—if you shy away from your cousin wife you can't sire children with her"*** whereas a similar Arabic proverb, ***Mani isitahayi mini binti amini maa khaba minihaa ghulamuni—he who is bashful (shy) with his cousin wife, gets no boy child from her"*** expresses cognate cultural values depicting men as dominant and therefore justifying their privileged social status. The connubial liaison as a cultural agency in the circulation of cultural values is also demonstrated in the Swahili proverb, "***Mzazi haachi ujusi—a mother doesn't stop emitting an odious smell",*** essentially mothers should be self-sacrificing. Mothers' sense of selflessness is persistently encouraged in virtually all circumstances where men stand to gain as in the Arabic proverb, "***Ishitini naa ala dii adalaqa yajii ghulamun—from the mother's efforts in labour, we expect the birth of a male child".***

Though we had earlier argued that reproduction is critically implicated in the circulation of cultural values, it is important to note that this indeed extends to the whole concept of siring children. Thus Swahili culture is presented as being accommodating and tolerant of disability, that is accepting children who may be born with disabilities as expressed in the proverb, "***Azaaye kinyago hukinyonyesha—whoever gives birth to a statute suckles it",*** overly encourages the mothers to be tolerant and accommodating of their children regardless of their disabilities. The siring of children is further projected into the establishment of families and indeed these cultures recognize the centrality of women in the same. The Swahili proverb, *"**Nyumba inategemea miti kama nchi kwa mabinti—a house depends on trees just like a country depends on girls".*** The proverb lauds the important role played by women in the establishment of families and ultimately the establishment of nations. Similar cultural values have cognate expressions in Arabic proverbs which celebrate women's functions and ability to sire children as in the proverb, "***Habulatuni wa murudhiatuni wa qaadaa mihaa aruba'atuni—she is pregnant with a child, yet nurses a child and has four children before her".*** Arab women are thus encouraged to sire many children; this is a value that is critically embedded in traditional Arab society where children are a sign of wellbeing and strength, especially for fathers.

5.2.2.2 Nurturing and the Circulation of Cultural Values

The nurturing of children is a critical function in virtually all societies the Swahili society included. As such nurture is routinely expressed in a variety of proverbs such as, "***Kuku akiatamia hana matembezi—a hatching hen doesn't promenade".*** This essentially means nurture is a full time engagement that entails patience and sacrifice. A mother with children as in the imagery of a hen with chicks doesn't go far away from the children since they need the mother's care (Kobia, 2016). This sense of nurture can take various dimensions and each of those is critical. For instance, the proverb, "***Akosae la mama hata la mbwa huamwa—whoever misses the mother's breast, will make do with the dog's breast"*** captures the centrality of breast feeding children, it thus underscores nourishment. The essence of nourishment is further expressed in the proverb, "***Titi la mama litamu jingine haliishi hamu—the mother's breast is sweet, like no other***". Indeed, in the Swahili society nurture is much broader than mere nourishment, it also encompasses care and guidance as expressed in the proverb, "***Furaha ya mama ni mtoto—the happiness of a mother is in having a child***", entails mothers providing guidance and leadership for their children.

In the course of nurturing, mothers serve several roles and these are variously expressed as in the following proverbs: "***Mwana ni mamaye na mlezi akalea—indeed the child is to the mother and the baby sitter merely takes care***" and ***Maji na tumbawe, mama na mwanawe—water with the coral and the mother with her child";*** both proverbs demonstrate the Swahili society's cultural demands on mothers and the bonds that arise from nurturing children. This is further captured in the proverb, *"**Uchungu wa mwana ajuaye mzazi—a child's pain is best known by the parent of the child".*** Similar thematic formulations also abound in Arabic proverbs as in the following proverbs, "***Aswidatuni mini twabbiikhi umu Aliyi—a pap of the cookery of the mother of Aliyi"*** captures the essence of nurturing children by mothers in the Arab society in terms of feeding and provision of nourishment all round. In the Arab proverb, ***Baatati jiaanati wa zaujuhaa khabarun—she went to sleep hungry (although) her husband is a baker"*** the provision of nourishment is presented as a shared responsibility.

5.2.2.3 Growth and Development and the Circulation of Cultural Values

By tradition, mothers in the Swahili society are a critical part and parcel of the growth and development of their children. This cultural understanding has numerous expressions in Swahili proverbs such as, "***Mtoto kwa mama hakui—a child to her mother never grows***" essentially underscores the lifelong guidance that mothers provide for their children. This is alternatively expressed in the proverb, "***Mama kwa mwanawe, mtoto kwa mamaye—a mother to a child but a child to her mother***". The cultural values entailed in these proverbs mean that motherhood is a lifelong process. Indeed, this is what is embedded in the proverb, "***Ajuza hawa kijana ingawa ataka sana—an old woman cannot be young, even though she yearns for it so much".*** Similar thematic nuances are also available in Arabic proverbs such as, "***Maa tatahazam bil-niswaan faza'ahuna zaghareed wa silahahuna bukaa—do not depend on women, their support is thrilling and their weapon is crying".*** This proverb epitomises the perceived patriarchal biases that denigrate women generally in terms of the performance of the natural and biological functions.

The mothers' role in their children's development in these two societies also entails instruction, guidance and nurturing the sense of responsibility in their children. The proverb "***Tadhiribu alqadiritu alaa famiha, taswuliual-binti liumihaa –the training ability in her mouth, the girl looks to her mother"*** in a sense does capture this ethos though pointedly more about character. Therefore, mothers in both Swahili and Arab societies are expected to shoulder the blame for any

deviant behaviour exhibited by their children and this is aptly captured in the Swahili proverb, "***Mtoto wa nyoka ni nyoka—the child of a snake is a snake***" also expressed in the Arabic proverb as, "***La talid al-hayat ila hayat—a snake will not give birth except to a snake***".

5.2.3 The Circulation of the Morality Informed Cultural Values

Morality occupies an important position in the Swahili and Arab societies owing to the heavy borrowing of cultural values by these societies from the religion of Islam; that encourages its followers to uphold high moral standards in their private and public lives. As discussed elsewhere, the Swahili and Arab societies being patriarchal, as expected women's moral standards are supposed to be beyond reproach. The Swahili and Arab societies, culturally take morality very seriously such that a woman's worth is directly linked to the perceived degree of her moral standing. That is mainly because a lot of decisions affecting women's lives as projected in the proverbs analysed earlier and here depend on the moral standing of women as individuals. Consequently, the analysis of the circulation of the morality informed cultural values is undertaken under three morality sub-issues being: chastity, respect and integrity.

5.2.3.1 Chastity in the Circulation of Cultural Values

Both the Swahili and the Arabs greatly value chastity especially in women, hence the prohibition of the free mixing between men and women. The philosophical import underpinning chastity in both the Swahili and Arab societies is that the less adventurous a woman is the more she is likely to be chaste. Thus issues of chastity are routinely embedded in proverb formulation and usage as in the Swahili proverb, "***Mke kipofu huwa mwaminifu—a blind woman is always faithful****"* as well as in the Arabic proverb, "***Ini taabati al-qahabatu uriswati—if a harlot repents she becomes a procuress (marriage material)"***. It is apparent that both the Swahili and Arab societies value chastity, especially as demonstrated by women. The importance attached to chastity entails subjecting women to restrictive cultural controls overseen by men. These measures are patriarchal systems of control geared towards the benefit of men (Al-Mannai, 2010). This patriarchal conspiracy is observable in the Swahili proverb, "***Uzuri wa mwanamke si wa kila mpita njia—the beauty of a woman is not for every passer-by***" in which it clearly advances very selfish masculine interests. Therefore, Swahili women are socialized to uphold unblemished chastity, excellent character not for their benefit but rather for the benefit of men. This is further observable in the proverb, *"****Uzuri wa mwanamke ni tabia si sura—a woman's beauty is in her character and not***

her looks" where emphasis is focused on women's chastity, character and manners for the benefit of men.

It may be argued that the value associated with chastity in the Swahili and Arabic proverbs focusing on women is born of male suspicion and mistrust. It is a selfish veneration of a value that only benefits one gender as in the proverb, "***Mwanamke ana jicho la nje—a woman has an outside eye***" a subtle caution against waywardness (Wamutiso, 2005). The same philosophy is observable in other proverbs such as "***Ndege hulindwa mke halindwi—a bird is guarded, but a woman is not guarded***" and "***Mlinzi hulinda ndege mke mzuri halindwi—a guard guards a bird, but a good woman is not guarded***". The sense of guarding and therefore protecting women from a masculine perspective is excessively egocentric. The sense of self-centeredness is not confined to Swahili culture alone, it is also replete in Arabic proverbs such as in: "***Dumuu'u al-fawaajiru hawaadhiru—the tears of the adulteress are ever ready***"; "***Ba'ada maa naakuhaa asharatu swatu lil'ghafarati—after they ravished her, she called out to the watch men***" and, "***Baa'ti almanaaratu wash'tarati sitaaratu qaala dii hatiikatu bitahisinu ibaaratu—she sold the lamp and bought a curtain (to hide her doings) in the bed chamber***". ***"That" said one "is a scandal under a fine appearance***" all point to the denigration of women for the benefit of men.

Arabs, culturally take chastity very seriously such that a woman's worth is directly linked to the perceived degree of her chastity. This is observable in proverbs such as, "***Al-qahabatu al-jawadatu maaturidhi laha quawaadatunu—the public woman who is liberal does not wish for a procuress (inducement)"*** essentially meaning such a woman is of less value hence must be avoided. This is the same sentiment that is embedded in the proverb, "***Ini twala'ati huratuni uliqi fii waadini juratuni—if you prove to be a virtuous woman hang a jar on my ear***" intimating that it is impossible for an immoral woman to repent and become a virtuous woman. Similarly, the proverb, "***Taabati al-qahabatu lailatu qaalati walaa waali yamsiku al-qahabatu—a harlot repented one might when she said "is there no police officer to take upon (lay hold) of harlots?"*** intimates the sense of patriarchal selfishness that is routinely embedded in Arabic proverbs. The same pervasive masculine selfishness is discernible in the proverbs: "***Al-abuaashiquni wal-umu ghairanatunu waabintahumu fii daari hairanatuni—the father has a lover, the mother is jealous and the daughter at home is puzzled how to act***" and "***Waahidu yaniiku imraatahu wa jaaratahu itaghanajati—a person embraces his wife, a female neighbour affects to look as if she herself***

were in the wife's place. It must be pointed out always that whenever and wherever a proverb vilifies a woman, the opposite is assumed to be true of men.

5.2.3.2 Women, Honour, Respect and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Honour and respect are critical values highly regarded in Swahili and Arab societies, they are important in shaping the values and self-conceptions of individuals (Rugh, 1997). For instance, the proverb, "***Fadhila mpe mama na Mola atakubariki—honour your mother and God will bless you***", encourages children to respect and honour their mothers so as to earn their mothers' and God's blessings. A similar trajectory is discernible in the proverb, *"**Gombea heshima, gombea mama—fight for respect, fight for a woman***" in which it is intimated that honouring and respecting mothers is paramount. Disrespecting mothers is abhorred and there is a proverb to caution against that, ***"Mwana mtukana nina kuzimu enda kiona—a child who abuses the mother brings destruction to himself/herself***". In the place of disrespect, another proverb aptly advises unreserved and unconditional respect for mothers however they may be as in the proverb, "***Mama ni mama ajapo kuwa ni rikwama—a mother is a mother even if she is like a hand cart***"; intimating respecting mothers regardless of their physical conditions.

Unlike in Swahili proverb formulation where honour and respect for mothers and motherhood is supposed to be accorded unconditionally, the Arabic proverbs seem to suggest that honour and respect for mothers and motherhood must be earned, they are not an entitlement. This notion is observable in the proverb, "***Al-mara al biquuloo mara minn al-ataba wa liwaraa–the woman that they call a real woman is behind her door step (in her husband's house)"*** intimating that respect must be earned the hard way. There is also a sense in which men are selfishly motivated in giving respect to mothers/wives as observed in the proverb, "**Twaibu *al-hadeedah wa al-dharibu naseebu—choose a good wife from a good family and having children is a matter of luck***". There is no suggestion in this proverb that men have had any responsibility in developing the honourable wives they advise people to marry. Yes, indeed, good morals are praised in the proverb, "***Huratu swabarati baituhaa umarati—the virtuous woman had patience (with her husband) and her house flourished***", this is a subtle scheme of absolving men from taking responsibility. The only time mothers get praised is when men have already benefited from their generosity as in the proverb, "***Rahma alaa umuhu kaanati aqiwadu mini abuhu—God bless his mother for she was more profligate (nice) than his father".***

There are instances of social behaviour in which honour and respect for women are denied and women are routinely blamed for such withdrawal of respect in both the Swahili and Arab societies. For instance, flirting is a social vice that is frowned upon in the Swahili society yet the blame on the vice is heaped on the women. In the proverb, "***Ushaufu si heshima ya mwanamke—flirting is not honourable to a woman***" culpability is on the part of the woman yet the vice of necessity must involve a male participant. The Arabic proverb, *"**Bakharaa wa tazaa hamaal al-buusi—she has an offensive breath yet presses forward to get a kiss***" equally skews culpability to women. Even in the execution of vices like adultery, which naturally involves both genders, culpability is still a feminine issue as in the proverb, "***Ghairatu al-qahabatu zinaa wa ghairatu al-huratu bukaa—the jealousy of a harlot is adultery while that of a virtuous woman is by weeping".***

5.2.3.3 Women, Integrity and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Integrity in its multifaceted understandings is a virtue in both Swahili and Arab societies and it entails honouring and fulfilling promises; talking only when it's necessary; observing decorum in speech; avoiding complaints and nagging; avoiding being quarrelsome; avoiding committing indecent acts especially in public as well as advancing assistance to those under one's care. Keeping and honouring promises as such constitutes integrity and it is highly cherished. There are, therefore, proverbs formulated to advise and caution against making promises that one may not have capacity to fulfil as in the proverb, "***Kitu usichonacho usimwahidi mama mkwe—do not promise the mother-in-law what you don't possess***". In this instance, there is caution that mothers in-law deserve honour and respect. This caution is further observable in the proverb, "***Asemaye mengi, hajui kuwa amemtukana mama mkwe—he who speaks a lot doesn't know when he insults the mother- in-law".*** On their part Arabic proverbs perceive integrity as the avoidance of complaining, nagging or quarrelling by women. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find proverbs cautioning against such vices as in the proverbs: "***Al-mara al naqnaqa qaatwia maal wa qaatwia riziqi—a nagging woman cuts both wealth and provision***" and "***Aazibun wa yudhwaribu maa bakhala laha swahibu—unmarried, quarrelsome and retaining no friend***". There are also instances where proverbs question the absence of sincerity or integrity displayed by women as is observable in the proverb, "***Yarikabu bilaashi wa yughaamizi imraatu al-raisi—he gets passage for nothing (free ride), and winks to the wife of the captain (of the ship)".*** This proverb encourages sincerity and honesty. On another level integrity is associated with morality, thus

immorality is abhorred as in the proverb, "***Qahabatuni masuturatuni wala huratuni mubaharajatuni—a decent public woman (harlot), rather than an indecent honest woman***".

5.2.4 The Circulation of Cultural Values on the Status of Women

The position and status of women is central to Swahili and Arab cultures, having a myriad of variations in terms of how they are depicted and perceived. Indeed, there are numerous proverbs in Kiswahili and Arabic languages that borrow liberally from the various forms of women depictions available in these cultures. In this sense then, it is argued here that the analyses of proverbs that borrow or focus on the position and status of women as mosaic of these cultures, view the circulation of cultural values in terms of the imageries and metaphors employed in the specific proverbs.

5.2.4.1 Women, the Food Imagery and the Circulation of Cultural Values

The Swahili use the imagery of food in reference to women (Wamutiso, 2005). This fact is alluded to in the proverb, "***Fuata nyuki ule asali—follow the bees to eat honey***". Clearly, the cultural values circulated in this proverb implicitly express the relationship between Swahili husbands and their wives; whereby the Swahili husbands are depicted as being go getters while the wives are depicted as being passive. Consequently, it is safe to argue that the cultural values circulated in this proverb depicting Swahili husbands as being sexually aggressive, athletic and go-getters against the passivity of the Swahili wives, gives a voice to the men and promotes the silencing of women at the same time. Similar cultural values are expressed through the use of the proverbs, *"**Ukila zabibu, utaleta majibu—if you eat grapes you will give feedback***" and *"**Ukila nanasi tunda jingine basi—if you eat a pineapple no other fruit can match it***". It is obvious that the cultural values circulated in these proverbs not only depict the Swahili men as being sexually aggressive, but also overtly grants them exclusive right of passing judgement on the suitability of the consumed fruit (read women). Additionally, the circulation of cultural values depicting women as being sexually passive and subservient as opposed to the males' masculinity attributes of being sexually aggressive and assertive is expressed in the proverb, *"**Tunda jema halikawii mtini—a good fruit doesn't stay long on a tree***". A similar scenario of cultural values depicting men from the position of strength against women's position of weakness is projected in the proverb, "***Khalaahaa al-ardhi as-saudaa—he left her upon the black ground***". The proverb demonstrates

how the Arab men employ the power of resources in the Arab society to control women. Clearly, the cultural values circulated through the use of the above proverbs give the male folk in the Swahili and Arab societies a voice, while at the same time mutes the women's voices in these societies. Furthermore, those cultural values are responsible for stripping women off their dignity by reducing them to sex objects as well as dependants to the male folk.

5.2.4.2 Women, the Property Imagery and the Circulation of Cultural Values

There are several senses in which relationships between men and women in Swahili and Arab societies are entwined with property either in terms of material exchanges, exchange of presents or the idealization of persons in relationships within the paradigms of property. For instance, marriage is predicated in various forms of material perceptions which either accentuate a person's worth or depreciates the same. For instance, in advising men about marriage prospects, a proverb such as, "***Atakaye lulu hana budi kupiga mbizi—whoever wants pearls must be ready to dive in the sea"*** may be used to underscore the amount of effort entailed in pursuing a desired worthy partner. In this sense a woman may be referred to as pearls so as to highlight her value that can be likened to precious minerals that can only be gotten by those who are willing to go an extra mile. However, the material or property trajectory does not always entail positive images and therefore positive values; the reverse may actually be true as in the Arabic proverb, "***Khalitaha al-mara qirbat dam inn shiltaha kharat wa inn waa'at—a woman is a leather bag full of blood, if you carry it, it pours out and if you leave it, it becomes pus***" where the range of imagery is negative and nauseating essentially depicting a woman as a burden, liability or a source of trouble. The property imagery employed here is demeaning to the women. This is further heightened in another

Arabic proverb that depicts keeping women's company as a burden, "***Zeenani lilrijaal talqaa wa zeenani lilniswaani almaa khatwa majiraaha—doing a favour to men brings you a good turn and doing a favour to women is water that has missed its stream***". A similar but denigrating depiction of women may be discernible in the Swahili proverb, "***Mkeka mpya haulaliwi vema—a new sleeping mat is not pleasant to sleep on***". This may intimate the uncertainties encountered by couples in the initial stages of either their relationships or marriage. The cultural values circulated in these proverbs have a strong patriarchal leaning where men are depicted from a point of strength while women are depicted as passive creatures. Wamutiso (2005), has argued that the Swahili often times refer to women condescendingly as empty or open vessels on account of social behaviour or

biological make up. Thus such references use imagery that mutes the voices of women, hence enabling the circulation of values related to silence. The Swahili proverb, "***Debe tupu haliachi kutika—an empty tin makes the loudest noise"*** when used in contexts of female-male relationships, aptly captures the essence of silencing the female voice. The emphasis of silence as a cultural value is discernible in the Arabic proverb that appears to question women's ability to do things without men's help, "***Al-muthazim bil-niswaan ur-yaani—he that dresses his own self with women is a naked man***" in essence validates dependency as a feminine trait. The denigration of women as incapable of decision making is also discernible in the proverb, "***Al-umu uriyana mabiksi Khaluhu—he whose mother is naked will not clothe his aunt***". This trajectory is continued in terms of depicting women as weak, helpless and powerless as in the proverb, "***Al-mara sha'ar tabia' raqaba—a woman is hair that follows the neck***" and the proverb, "***Al-mara makusuratu Jannah—a woman has broken wings***".

5.2.4.3 Women the Donkey, Chicken, Ant, House Fly Metaphors and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Culturally, in both the Swahili and Arab societies, it is the men who marry women in which sense marriage is unidirectional. Marriage in these societies is more than emotional attachment; it also entails responsibility in terms of providing food, clothing, shelter as well as the protection of family members. It is not uncommon, therefore, for Swahili and Arab men to exercise a certain amount of authority in the family. This sense of authority unfortunately is so patriarchal such that it assumes married women as owned as in the proverb, "***Kufuga punda madhila hukujambia mashuzi—to rear a donkey is annoying as it only farts***". Thus in terms of cultural value circulation marriage is equated to women's domestication by their husbands. This domestication trajectory is reiterated in the proverb, "***Heri kufuga punda kama nisiwani—it is easier to domesticate donkeys than women***". The vilification of women in proverb formulation and usage is equally extensive in Arabic proverbs. For instance, the Arabic proverb, "***Al-kalaam laki ya jaaratuni alaa anti himaaratuni—it is to you I speak (fair) neighbour, but truly you are an ass***" insinuates that women like asses are slow learners. Similar denigration is observable in the proverb, "***Al-azaalatii ashaatwalatu taghizili birijili himaaruni—a clever spinster spins with an ass foot as her distaff***", depicting women as both childish and desperate. The employment of proverbs that discredit women is very diverse in Arabic culture as in the proverb, "***Azahilaqi alhimaaru wa***

kaana mini shahiwatu al-himaaru—the ass slipped (and fell), this (proceeded) from the ass driver's desire (to see a lady)".

It is important to note that figurative language such as metaphor and simile is extensively used in proverb formulation to create images as vivid as the physical presence of objects and ideas of themselves. In view of this observation, the metaphors of chicken and insects have been used in several Swahili and Arabic proverbs to circulate cultural values touching on women generally. For instance, the Swahili proverbs: "***Kuku mgeni zawadi ya kunguru—a new chicken is a gift to the crow***" and "***Dua la kuku halimpati mwewe—the curse of the chicken does not bother the hawk",*** have employed the metaphor of the chicken to depict women in terms of weakness and powerlessness. The Arab culture is also replete with denigrating proverbs mainly using the metaphor of the ant as in the Arabic proverb, "***Idha arada rabuna halak namlatun, anbata laha ajinihatun—if God wants the destruction of an ant he allows it to grow wings".*** Growing wings in reference to an ant is metaphorically used to suggest that if women are empowered they are likely to become unmanageable and can lead to their "self-destruction". Similarly, where women are not metaphorically equated to the ant they are equated to the housefly as in the proverb, "***Adubanu ya'arifu wajihu allubanu—the fly knows the face of the milk seller***". It is worth mentioning that the metaphor of the chicken can be positively formulated as well and thus employed to transmit positive values in the Swahili society. Chicken may be presented as harmless yet protective of its chicks and its offspring generally (Kobia, 2016). This is what is observable in the Swahili proverbs, "***Kuku havunji yaile—a chicken does not break her own egg***" intimating care and responsibility of Swahili mothers in taking care of the children. On the other hand, "***Baa la kuku halimwui mwanawe—a chicken's feather does not kill its chick*** intimating mentorship and discipline by physical means of teaching their children.

5.2.5 Ornamentation and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Ornamentation either in terms of physical or artistic expression is central to Swahili and Arab cultures. Indeed, there are numerous proverbs in Swahili and Arabic languages that borrow liberally from the various forms of embellishments available in these cultures. In this sense then, it is argued here that the analysis of proverbs that borrow or focus on the ornamentation mosaic is executed with special reference to: objects of adoration, clothing and beauty.

5.2.5.1 Women, Objects of Adoration and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Beauty in the Swahili society is celebrated and expressed in various ways which draw inspirations or make comparisons with what subsists in its natural and physical environment. Sometimes the comparisons are perceptual as in the proverb, "***Mwanamke ni malkia wa moyo—a woman is the queen of the heart***". Ordinarily this is a celebratory proverb that elevates a woman's worth. Though in strict feminist thinking some imageries may be seen as objectifying women, but nevertheless they are used to make women objects of adoration as observable in the following Swahili proverbs: "***Mwanamke ni ua—a woman is a flower***" intimating an object of adoration that brings love and joy to the hearts of men. In the proverb, '***Anayekaa karibu na waridi hunukia—he who stays near a rose flower smells nice***" is suggestive of the need to associate with women of virtue, who are attractive and likeable. In the proverb, "***Mwanamke ni nyumba—a woman is a house***" the woman's role in home-making is suggested. However, in the proverb, "***Mwanamke ni kama maji ya dafu, hayapendezi ila dafuni mwake—a woman is like the water of a young coconut which is not pleasant except in its shell***" is double edged in the sense that it celebrates beauty but in very confined circumstances.

On the other hand, the Arabic proverbs may be seen as circulating cultural values which depict women as people attracted to pretty items. This is captured in the proverb, "***Maa akitharu khatwabii wa maa aqalu firaashii—how great is the number of my wooers, but how small is the quantity of my furniture***" and in a number of senses insinuates the danger of fancying free gifts from suitors/lovers. There are situations in which mothers covertly prepare their daughters for potential suitors, thus mothers adorn their daughters. This is perhaps what informs the proverb, "***Maa shatwatuni watumushitwu bintahaa—a hair dresser and she combs (or dresses the hair of) her daughter***". Regardless of whether women are presented in the imagery of queens, flowers, the water of a young coconut, or as gift seekers, all these perceptions are projected from a male gaze.

5.2.5.2 Women, Clothing, Beauty and the Circulation of Cultural Values

The love for clothing is embedded in many Swahili proverbs and its interesting that most of such proverbs are in reference to women. The one proverb which quickly comes to mind is, "***Mke ni nguo mgomba kupalilia—a wife is to clothing as a banana plant is to weeding".*** The one point to note is biased projection depicting women as lovers of clothes and the insinuation that it is the

responsibility of the men to provide such clothing. Similar cultural depiction is also observable in Arabic proverbs as in, "***Lubusu al-buswatu tabuqa urusatuni—dressing up a stick, turns it into a bride***" intimating that a woman's beauty is entwined with the manner and style of clothing. Indeed, the insinuation that women love clothes and men are obliged to provide is captured in the proverb, "***Mume ni kazi, mke ni nguo—the husband works, the wife dresses***" (Wamutiso, 2005). Clothing in Swahili culture serves other purposes other than adornment; clothing ensures decency and respect as in the proverb, "***Buibui ni mke mume wajifanyaje? —hijab is a women's dress why would a man need it?"*** The same is true of Arabic culture as observable in the proverb, '***Huwa wajuhuka yaa haziinatu fii al-halii wa al-ziinatu—it is your face ooh woman in grief, when ornamented and attired***".

Swahili people value beauty and as such there are several proverbs in Kiswahili which revolve around beauty from several dimensions. In describing beauty, the Swahili borrow imageries from their natural environment, from their material culture and other spheres that may be critical in portraying beauty. From the natural environment beauty is associated with flowers in terms of their physical appearance and even their natural scent. This is why one can find a proverb like, "***Mke mwema pambo la nyumba—a good wife is a home's adornment***". Just like the Swahili, Arabs also value beauty and this routinely finds expression in proverbs such as: '***Haziinatuni maa laha ainaini ishitarati maraayatu bidirihamaini—aggrieved because she had no eyes; she purchased a looking glass (mirror) for two dirhams***", '***Al-qur'atu bitatibaaha bisha'ari binti ukhutahaa—the bald woman boasts of her niece's hair***" and '***Iyakum wa khadhara al-diman, qaaloo wa maa khadharaa al-diman? Qaala al-hasna fi manibati al-suu—beware of "Khadhara al-diman" they said what is khadhara al-diman? He said "A pretty woman of evil origin".*** Essentially these proverbs present various perspectives of beauty as inculcated in Arab culture.

5.2.6 Societal Norms and the Circulation of Cultural Values

The Swahili and Arab cultures are replete with societal norms that more often than not inform the relationship between the two genders, especially the treatment of women. Such norms when communicated through proverbs are bound to be taken seriously and can easily be employed by the male chauvinists to justify the denial of women's rights or their unfair treatment by the various members of these societies. Consequently, the analysis of the Swahili and Arabic proverbs

touching on such norms enables the study to unravel the cultural values circulated through the use of those proverbs.

5.2.6.1 Women, Inequality and the Circulation of Cultural Values

The treatment of women and the varied relationships that obtain between women and men in Swahili and Arab societies are predicated on accepted allowable norms of conduct. For instance, in the proverb, ***"Mke hukaa katika kivuli cha mumewe—a wife stays in the shadow of her husband"*** the norms of relationship between men and women are unequal; the man is privileged such that the woman can only be expected to be a shadow, never to outshine the man. This is further accentuated in yet another proverb where total submission to the husband is subtly intimated, ***Mke kumtii mume, ndio sheria—a wife to obey the husband, is the law".*** Wives' submission to husbands is presented as law intimating that there is a senior and junior position in terms of this relationship. This submission trajectory is sometimes expressed in overt patriarchal arrogance as in the proverb, ***"Kuku jike hawiki penye jogoo—a hen does not crow in the presence of a cock***" meaning that women should not speak in the presence of men.

Similar prejudiced proverbs are found in Arab cultures as in the Arabic proverb, *"**Rai al-mara qirbat iniqatatu fi al-khilaa—a woman's opinion is like a leather bag full of water that has been punctured in the desert***". The implication is that women's opinions don't mean much in the presence of men hence women are habitually ignored. The continued denial of women's space in public participation as suggested in the proverbs above is extensive and very skewed in favour of men with the consequences being women are less empowered and marginalized. This is graphically captured in the proverb, "***Al-mara maa bawadawuhaa—a consignment will not be given to a woman***" which incidentally echoes the Swahili proverb ***"Mla halasa hamziki mamaye—he who eats all the savings cannot burry the mother***" intimating that women are naturally incapacitated and as such things must be done for them.

Although there may be instances where the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs may be positive, they always bear undertones which denigrate women. For instance, though the proverb, ***"Mke wa kwanza ni kama mama—the first wife is like a mother***" may appear to celebrate women generally, it nonetheless contains undertones which subjugate women. The implication here is that wives like mothers must always serve men. This is not strange because the

patriarchal schemes of proverb formulation do also have proverbs that absolve men from certain chores considered feminine as observed in the proverb, ***"Kazi ya mekoni kazi ya nisiwani—kitchen's work is women's work***". On this score, there are a number of cognate Arabic proverbs which inculcate similar values as in proverbs such as: '***Ar-raajul ainu al-bait wal-bintu sanad albait—the man is the eye of the house and the girl is the support of the house***" and "***Al-mara kaana ukhutu raajul hamuni wa Kaana qa'dati fii biyatakhamun wa kaana qa'dati fii biyataki hamuni—a woman is a burden whether she is married or stays at her parents' house."***

It may be argued that marriage as an institution in both Swahili and Arab societies is patriarchally structured as to accord men uncontested authority, effectively making men occupy elevated positions in decision making. Such patriarchal authority is sometimes arrogantly exercised intimated in the following proverbs: "***Thalatha maa tarfau minhum aswaa: Al-mara wa alnaqaara wa al-himara—do not take your stick away from three things: a woman, a drum and a female donkey***" and "***Dharabatu al-intaya zai mash'ati al-dinnaya—punishing a female is like rubbing butter over the body***." Such patriarchal haughtiness is also observable in Swahili proverbs as in the proverb, "***Eda ya mke hakuna eda ya mume— abstinence and self-seclusion is for the wife, there is no abstinence and self-seclusion for the husband***". Similar sentiments are discernible in the Arabic proverb, "***Mauti al-maratu tajidiidi al-urusi—the death of the wife is the renewal of the wedding***".

5.2.6.2 Women, Companionship and the Circulation of Cultural Values

The value system operative in the Swahili society with regard to how women are valued is obviously of a patriarchal system. This valu e system is utilitarian in the sense of seeing women in terms of functions they accord men. For instance, the proverb "***Adamu mwenziwe Hawa mwanamume na mke—Adam's companion is Eve, a wife belongs to a husband***" is predicated on the premises of offering support service to the man, the reverse is hardly anticipated. Even in a proverb like "***Mtu mamaye ni mungu wake wa pili—a person's mother is like his second god***" the functional sense is still embedded. Swahili wives and women generally are subjected to the whims and directions of men.

Arabic proverbs on their part do not express values that elevate women, they are equally belittling as in the proverb, "***Waladaka khairi wa bitaka ikhtar liyha— let your son choose his own wife,***

but choose a husband for your daughter", viewing women as lacking capacity to make choices of their own. The vilification is further observable in other proverbs like, "***Al-mara kaana qalati aatabuhaa duqahaukhutaha—if a woman shows disrespect, punish her with another woman".*** The utilitarian ethos is critically implicated in many other Arabic and Swahili proverbs such as "***Al-rijaalu qabaayilu wal-al niswaan nifaayilu—men are with their tribes and women are with their good deeds***". The importance of belonging to a good tribe for men is purely functional because it is premised on mutual benefits accruing from group associations. Even in the proverb, "***Hamm al-banat lilmamaat—worries about girls last till death***" subtly suggests utilitarian undertones. This is essentially the same as in the proverb, "***Mwanamke harizi/haridhi—a woman is never satisfied***".

5.2.7 Women, Mentorship and the Circulation of Cultural Values

Mothers are critically involved in the education and mentorship of children in both the Swahili and Arab societies. The biological and social function is captured in various proverbs that portray this role in diverse dimensions. For instance, in the Swahili proverb, "***Uzoefu ndio mama wa maarifa—experience is the mother of knowledge***" though the proverb is not overtly making reference to women, it nevertheless intimates that mothers are sources of knowledge. This centrality of mothers in imparting knowledge is discernible in the Arabic proverb, "***Al-aaqilu yatazawaju lil awuladihi—he who is wise marries for his children***". There is no doubt that mothers' role in mentoring of children in the Swahili society is acknowledged just as it is acknowledged in the Arab society. The emphasis placed on mothers to mentor and educate children is variously formulated in Swahili proverbs to demonstrate the various ways in which this role is acknowledged. For instance, the following proverbs demonstrate in very clear terms the mothers' role in mentorship of their children. Thus the proverbs: "***Asiyefunzwa na mamaye, hufunzwa na ulimwengu—he who is not taught by the mother, is taught by the world***", "***Mjukuu hawezi kumfunza bibiye kunyonya—a grandchild cannot teach its grandmother how to suckle***" and "***Mtoto akibebwa hutazama kisogo cha mamake—when a child is carried he looks at the back of the mother's head***" are all predicated on acknowledging mothers in terms of the invaluable knowledge, education and mentorship they impart to the children.

The mentorship trajectory is also observable in proverbs such as, *"**Hila hii si ya mwari, aliyetenda ni kungwi—this evil is not the mistake of the maiden, it is the handwork of the woman coach***"

intimating that mothers are critical in preparing their daughters for marital roles as well. In situations where the proverbs are not celebratory, they serve to caution on matters of correct and acceptable modes of conduct, thus the proverb, "***Mtoto wa nyoka ni nyoka—the child of a snake is a snake***" when used in contexts of mothers and mentorship, it takes on a cautionary function. Women's mentoring function is not very dissimilar in Arab traditions; women are acknowledged and celebrated as mentors and educators. A proverb like "***Mani tuhibuhu mini aulaadika qaala mani yadii alaa kasi umihi—which of your children do you love most***?" "***That one", he replied, "Whose mother's conduct I most strictly watch***", though it may appear contradictory; it nevertheless points to a mother's fidelity in mentoring children equally. In general, the various proverbs in Swahili and Arab cultures that revolve around issues of education, knowledge and mentorship are overtly concerned with both the negative and positive impacts of mentorship.

5.3 Conclusions

The crux of the debate that has been canvassed in this chapter affirms that, Swahili and Arabic proverbs are expressions of perceptions of experiences and knowledge systems subtly embedded in the social and cultural discourses in which people's roles, functions and worth are foregrounded and validated. Proverbs, are as such critically implicated in several aspects of acculturation which entail virtually every aspect of the people's physical, biological, sociological and perceptible world. It has been argued that virtually everything within the observable and perceptible world of the Swahili and Arabic people, is routinely appropriated and subtly deployed to facilitate the circulation of cultural values, which unfortunately, on the basis of the proverbs analysed, do not present an equal gender balance. Such issues as marriage, polygamy and myriad other familial relationships—which are essentially sociological—are appropriated to advance patriarchal privileges. Equally, issues that are purely biological or biological coincidences are appropriated as well for tha advancement of prejudiced cultural values—in this sense, issues such as reproduction, nurture, physical growth and development are infused with proverb formulations which enable to circulate obvious gender biases. Equally appropriated are sociological issues covering such matters as morality like chastity, honour, respect, integrity, cultural statuses and social norms—inequality, companionship, mentorship—appropriation of things from these cultures' material world—ornamentations, clothing and varied objects of adoration. Indeed, this sense of appropriation extends to the world of flora and fauna from which are appropriated characteristics, symbols and

imageries which are then positioned to enable the circulation of cultural values such as matters to do with nurturing, admonishing and advising. They enable the circulation of cultural values associated with moral upbringing, admonition and the total mosaic of acculturation in these societies. Consequently, we conclude that proverbs are powerful rhetorical devices that shape the moral consciousness, opinions as well as the circulation of cultural values of a people. In this study, the position and status of women in its innumerable variations and depiction is denigrating to the status of women. Women are depicted as people who are naturally incapacitated and as such requiring guidance and constant direction.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study set out to analyze and examine the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs so as to understand how proverbs as realities of orature are implicated in framing feminine and masculine identities, inscribing positive and negative attributes on the basis of gender framing and ultimately demonstrate how proverbs generally enable the circulation of cultural values. Consequently, the study sought to answer three research questions namely: how attributes of silence, subservience and marginality are inscribed in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. The second question sought to find out in what ways Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity. The third question was focused on finding out what cultural values the myriad depictions of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs enable to circulate in the respective societies.

6.2 Summary of Study's Findings

At the onset, this study set out by presenting varied definitions of paremiology and proverbs by looking at what these terminologies mean, as well as what they entail structurally, thematically and functionally. The study explored the linguistic structures of proverbs and what they entail thematically and functionally; it enquired the whole idea of proverb collection and classification, tracing the nature and origin of individual proverbs as well as investigating their socio-historical significance. The study also examined the overt and covert functions of proverbs that are entailed in the determination of the roles performed by proverbs in diverse contexts, how they function as well as what informs their genesis, which implicitly suggests a multifaceted and multi-layered involvement of proverbs in the circulation of cultural values in many cultures around the globe. Furthermore, a critical interrogation of the proverbs' definitions that integrates masculinity and femininity was undertaken with reference to Swahili and Arabic proverbs. The study investigated the use of imagery as a foundational structure of cultural inscription, demonstrating how it is produced by figures of speech as well as how it makes use of human senses in describing an object or concept in terms of another by drawing similarities between the two. Additionally, the study delved deep in the four functions of imagery being: the explanatory function, the enrichment

function, the concentration function and the beautifying function. By putting into perspective all aspects of masculinity and femininity as muted schemas in proverb definitions and formulation, this study's objectives being to uncover the covert inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs; thus allowing an investigation of the ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the respective societies, was then undertaken; before finally carrying out a determination of the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in the respective societies.

The theoretical framework selected for this study was the feminist literary theory. The feminist literary theory as used here has drawn a lot of its inspiration from the assertions advanced and expounded by Napikoski (2017), which foreground a feminist viewpoint, feminist theory and feminist place and space concerns. This is so because this theoretical framework is attentive to issues of difference—which abound in proverbs, the questioning of social power— which is circulated by proverb usage and finally projecting the hope that social justice can be realized by exposing covert schemas embedded in proverb formulation and usage. Besides its functional trajectory, the feminist literary theory as expounded by Napikoski (ibid), is predicated on two tenets, that is: identifying with female characters and the re-evaluating of a proverb (as an art form) in the world which the proverb is utilized. Ideally, the identification with the female characters as a tenet, was meant to challenge the male-centred viewpoint of proverbs, which are viewed as presenting women in the proverbs as objects as seen from a male perspective. The tenet's concern on the questioning of society's predominantly valued male proverbs was critical in bringing to the fore the less valued contributions of women in a male dominated world. Additionally, this study employed the feminist literary theory's tenet of gender binary in the analysis of the inscription of the perceptions of femininity and masculinity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. This study was thus based on three tenets of the feminist literary theory namely: the postulation that foregrounds identification with female characters, the revaluation and counter-reading of the hushed functions of proverbs in the world in which they are utilized as well as mainstreaming the centrality of gender binary in gender discourses. These tenets were foundationally critical, particularly in the identification of female depictions, attributes, perceptions and gendered meaning nuances in proverbs and then subjecting them to a revaluation that sought to question whether Swahili and Arab societies have unquestioningly privileged one gender over the other. In a sense this study

was a counter reading of traditional assumptions of the “maleness” and “femaleness” of proverbs in these societies. Thus, a feminist literary theory enabled an examination of how proverbs inscribe patriarchal and matriarchal attitudes or undercut them in the circulation of cultural values.

The debate canvassed in Chapter three sought to acknowledge the fact that silence is not merely implicated in the establishment of patriarchal power but rather also implicated in how such gendered silence is critical in the circulation of cultural values. The proverbial practices of gendered silence are critical in showing the interconnections between silence, subservience and marginality. In this study silence is regarded as what is imposed by proverbial wisdom, and there are indeed many proverbs in these cultures that are premised on the inscription of silence. The second critical issue examined was subservience, which was herein defined as a subtly imposed “willingness” to do what other people want, and in this understanding, “other people” was critically nuanced**.** Subservience in this study also sought to connote "compliance", "obedience" and "submissiveness". Finally, marginality was used here to mean the assignment of “lesser importance” or to insinuate an “absent presence,” the objectification and the peripheralization of members of society in terms of place and space as belonging “at the margins” for those not considered important to a society or its culture. Marginality, as used in the study, also insinuated disempowerment, that is—the deploying of systematic restraining of strategies of attaining full privilege and self confidence in one’s skills and a sense of belonging within a society. The analysis of the selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs was undertaken with the aim of unravelling the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality of women in these two societies.

Chapter four dealt with the inscription of perceptions of femininity and masculinity in Swahili and Arabic proverbs. In order to appreciate the extent of feminization and masculinization of Swahili and Arab societies through the use of proverbs, the study set out to examine a number of selected proverbs in terms of their overt meanings as well as the meanings embedded in their sub-texts. That examination entailed the de-codification of the metaphors, imageries and similes and the parallels that have been used in the formulation of such selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs; that was geared towards the discernment of the inscriptions of perceptions of femininity and masculinity as brought out both in the formulation and the use of those proverbs. The analyses of the proverbs’ sub-texts of the selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs, were predicated on the tenets

of the feminist literary theory, notably the concepy of gender binary, a tenet that focuses on the classification of gender into two distinct, opposed, and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine, usually by social system and cultural practice. The deployment of gender binarism in these analyses was necessary in the unravelling of how proverbs are subtly used in these societies to split their members into one of two sets of gender, allocate them gender identities as well as allocate them privileging or demeaning social and cultural attributes. Such a perspective was vital in enabling the study to point out the attributes and characteristics that are critical in the inscription of perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the proverbs in question.

In summary, the foregoing discussions on the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality as well as what masculinity and femininity entail, were critically important and foundational in understanding the critical issues at the core of this study, namely masculinity and femininity on the one hand, subtle inscriptions of values and attributes and the enablement of the circulation of cultural gender prejudices, views and biases against women on the other hand. An investigation of the ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the respective societies cannot be undertaken without first understanding what these concepts entail and how they are actualized in individual proverbs or in proverbs collectively. It is on the basis of such understanding that chapter five draws on in the determination of the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in these societies.

6.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions can be made from the above findings and the entire study in general. Indeed, a large number of Swahili and Arabic proverbs related to the female gender or used in reference to feminine characteristics, roles and social functions, project negative and harmful depictions of women such that, proverbs mentioning wives, mothers, mothers-in-law, daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters or any other category of women, are mostly negatively formulated with equally negatively nuanced gender meanings focusing on negativities in terms of vanity, infidelity, niggling, and unreliability. Other negatively nuanced proverbs in Swahili and Arab cultures related to women delve into such negativities as laziness, wickedness, weakness, parasitic existence, unintelligent agency and caring only about their outward appearances. Where proverbs mention beautiful or intelligent women, it is from a patriarchal prism in which they stick out as trophies or

possessions for the advancement of patriarchal interests. Thus, women depiction in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is noticeable through a number of ways in which such proverbs make reference to women metaphorically either in the imagery of property, ornaments—natural or manmade, edible delicacies or in the imagery of tame or tameable animals and birds. Indeed, there are other female related proverbs whose depiction is premised on social values that underpin social institutions such as marriage, culture and religion. Furthermore, where female related proverbs celebrate women, they are mostly focused on women/wives engaged in and restricted to home and family related issues. It is evident from the women depictions in the analysed proverbs that whenever and wherever a proverb vilifies a woman, the opposite is assumed to be true of men. It's on the basis of these issues that the tenets of the literary feminist theory as expounded by Napikoski (2017), as well as the tenet of gender binary, were applied in order to determine the inscription of silence, subservience and marginality in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs; investigate the ways in which Swahili and Arabic proverbs inscribe perceptions of femininity and masculinity in the respective societies as well as determine the cultural values that Swahili and Arabic proverbs on women enable to circulate in the respective societies.

It is possible to argue that the general gamut of feminine attributes discernible in Arabic proverbs is by far and large negative, unconstructive and depressing. For instance, such dismal and demeaning attributes like insensitivity, irresponsibility and selfishness are presented as being emblematical of the feminine gender yet there are obvious possibilities of finding men in this society who exhibit the same attributes. On the other hand, women are depicted generally in Swahili proverbs as commodities or objects of male craving, a clear sense of framing with the paradigm of patriarchal structures. The continual insinuation of eating and adoration that runs through these proverbs has hushed sexual connotations, thus eating is a sex symbol in this society as is the adoration of the female beauty. Thus, by adducing demeaning attributes and commodifying women within these patriarchal structures, it can be argued that the Swahili and Arabic proverbs curtail and restrict the role, functions and positions occupied by women, whose objective is either to silence, marginalize or make women subservient to the male folk in these societies.

Silence in this study is regarded as what is imposed by proverbial wisdom, and there are indeed many proverbs in Swahili and Arab cultures that are premised on the inscription of silence. Women

are depicted in the analysed Swahili and Arabic proverbs in terms of ignorance that is, presenting women as people in need of guidance, where such guidance is expressed as caution, admonition or as punishment. Silence is also exhibited in the depiction of women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs through the notion of objectification. The critical focus of objectification in the depiction of women in the selected Swahili and Arabic proverbs is the treatment of women as pleasure objects or tools meant for the service and gratification of men. In other words, women are perceived as people lacking in agency; hence they are acquiescent to guidance in virtually every undertaking. Clearly, the ethos advanced by the depictions of women in the proverbs selected for the study intimate that, women in both the Swahili and Arab societies are habitually not accorded opportunities to either concur or give dissenting views in any matter whatsoever affecting or relating to their lives.

Another way in which silence is projected in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is through the depiction of women as being passive which brings to mind the concept of passivity. Passivity may be defined generally as the predisposition to remain inactive, to lack initiative, to submit to other's will or external influences without resistance, in essence exhibiting the characteristics of inactiveness, inactivity and inertia. Passivity is thus the exact opposite of agency—that characteristic capacity of individuals to demonstrate initiative, to act independently and to make free choices. Consequently, women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs are depicted as people lacking in agency in making choices that reflect on conduct or competencies deployed to resist oppression or subordination. Subservience on the other hand, is critically implicated in proverb usage in Swahili and Arab cultures in the sense that inscriptions of subservience ordinarily follow a trajectory of objectification in which women are equated or are perceived as objects. Besides objectification, the subservience ascribed to women in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is also seen in terms of lowly and undignified character traits where women are either seen or perceived as weak, naïve and pathetic. Furthermore, the projections of women as home makers and housekeepers purportedly buttress the notion of subordination such that the sense of subservience attributable to women is cunningly interpreted as willingness to submit to domination.

Overall the women depictions in Swahili and Arabic proverbs bear an attachment of the patriarchal assignment of value of "lesser importance" to women otherwise known as marginality, which is a patriarchal and methodological placement of women in terms of place and space; thus ensuring

that women belong or are confined “at the margins” of what is considered important to a society or its culture. In both Swahili and Arab societies, women are largely confined to the home and household chores, thus they are unavoidably involved in the running of domestic family affairs. This role may in modern parlance be defined as home-keeping; a complex and multi-faceted undertaking within which are weaved varied relationships of authority, seniority and lowliness. There are also differentiated lines of how influence and authority flows in which case critical material decisions are reserved for men while women are expected to execute such decisions in the family. It may be argued that marriage as an institution in both Swahili and Arab societies is patriarchally structured as to accord men uncontested authority, effectively making men occupy elevated positions in decision making.

Swahili and Arab women, particularly in their socially assigned roles of wife, mother and bearer of children, are made through the use of proverbs to understand themselves as being in continuity with the people (read men) around them rather than being in opposition to them. They are often socialized to build capacity, bequeath power and authority in others rather than aspire to acquire it for themselves. This does not, however, mean that women cannot sometimes have special forms of influence on decision-making because of the very specific social status allotted to them, for example, women are able to achieve high levels of success where they emphasize their nonthreatening roles as sisters, mothers and wives. The one thing that stands out overtly in Swahili and Arabic proverbs focusing on women is that women are always allotted secondary or marginal status in virtually all relational arrangements; this is not surprising given that both societies are openly patriarchal. Though women are supposed to have inferior intellect, there is, nevertheless a reluctant acknowledgement of women’s skills, methodologies and knowledge in imparting skills and education to children, though this is limited to the confines of the household. However, when this is juxtaposed against traditional patriarchal orientations that are emblematic of Swahili and Arab cultures and overtly circulated in proverb usage, men still feel entitled to sexually objectify women.

Equally, both Swahili and Arab men still associate household work, home chores and child-rearing with women, and so do not play an equal role in household and family responsibilities. These constitute the first traits of culturally influenced division of labour where men regard themselves as breadwinners and providers whereas women are regarded as menial homemakers.

Consequently, the continual unequal power relations between women and men in terms of division of labour are predicated on ideas about the practices of patriarchal masculinities. In this sense, biological reproduction and physical work in the household in which women are centrally involved are used as basis for the inscription of femininity. The construction and perpetuation of feminine physical inferiority and purported moral weakness in Swahili and Arabic proverbs is a framing schema underpinning the inscription of femininity in these societies. The proverbs ingeniously stress women's material, social and emotional dependence on men. These proverbs subtly perpetuate a stereotypical inferiority of women by projecting it as an inherent physical and moral weakness, thus they proffer a patriarchal excuse to limit women's access to critical and authoritative positions in society. Alternatively, the patriarchal schema in Swahili and Arabic proverbs depicts women as innately weak and thus unfit to be entrusted with demanding responsibilities.

The critical parameters of understanding femininity in patriarchal societies cannot be unconnected from perceptions of female characters and female images, which in proverb formulation and usage are essentially enduring and ingrained. There is no doubt that femininity is a central plank in the thematic nuances and ethos of proverb usage in Swahili and Arab cultures in the sense that where women are focused on in Swahili and Arabic proverbs, the imagery, lexical choices and even metaphorical framing in such proverbs, usually signal exclusion, marginalization and occasionally minimal acknowledgement of women's contribution as members of the Swahili and Arab societies. However, such acknowledgement is replete with patriarchal tendencies. This trend is evident in most of the analysed proverbs especially those dealing with nurture and socialization (the lifelong schooling of children), whereby responsibility and dedication are presented as feminine attributes of service to others—this is not only just an admission of the subjugation of women, it is also a telling of the constitution of men, maleness and masculinity in these cultures.

The role-modelling acumen of women as well as their feminine attributes of being generous, merciful and dedicated to serve others is advanced in Swahili proverbs. Similar attributes are reiterated in Arabic proverbs with the perception of women's generosity as transcending that of their male counterparts being captured. The thematic import of these attributes is that it depicts women as people who are willing to assist others as long as it is within their material and physical ability to do so. Furthermore, there is recognition and acknowledgement (though on a small scale)

of experience, care and responsibility as positive feminine attributes. These proverbs' thematic trajectory is premised on the Swahili and Arab mothers' nurturing roles of being spot on, maternally zealous in the realization of their children's material and emotional needs. However, it must be observed that this acknowledgement is particular and specific; it does not threaten the disruption of patriarchal privileges. Women's role acknowledgements are within the subdued and marginalized confines to which women have been pushed.

In proverb formulation and usage in Swahili and Arab societies, gender inequality and leadership are interwoven, essentially foregrounding the obstacles that women have to overcome to obtain recognizable leadership positions. The absence or marginal presence of women in social, political and economic leadership in the Swahili and Arab societies is intricately entwined with the inequality that women experience in the traditional patriarchal workplace, the prejudiced patriarchal perceptions about women, and the subtle discrimination that women experience overall. This reality is replete in the hushed agenda present in the analysed proverbs, where deeply rooted is the fact that within patriarchal structures, traditionally public affairs in the Swahili and Arab societies were and still are run by men, while women are confined to domestic chores. Therefore, from a purely patriarchal societal perspective (Swahili and Arab societies included), women are considered inferior to men overall. Thus women's inferior societal roles as formulated and circulated in patriarchal systems have been institutionalized, resulting in women's biased treatment in virtually all spheres.

Proverbs in a patriarchal society, such as Swahili and Arab societies, are more often than not used as an excuse of maintaining the status quo where men routinely hold positions of power and have more privileges; they head family units and they are leaders of social groups. In this sense patriarchy as a social organization where men rule over women through various historical developments, patriarchy has inevitably created cultures which formulate and circulate, as through proverbs, ethos of subjugation and domination of male over female. Proverb formulation in these cultures is ingeniously structured as to make women unconscious that they are subordinated; the possibilities that their gender relations might be otherwise, are severely curtailed and forestalled from slowly and gradually emerging. In Swahili and Arab societies proverbs are critically deployed in the circulation and reinforcement of the patriarchal cultural ideals of masculinity conceptualized in terms of surmounting physical and moral challenges, being in command, forcefulness, fortitude,

being self-reliant, and demonstrating the courage to take risks. Therefore, these societies actively encourage men to uphold their patriarchal sense of masculinity by shunning material and social practices that portend lowliness and the inferiority of activities and social behaviours associated with femininity.

There is abundant evidence that in Swahili and Arab societies, proverbs are consistently deployed to reinforce the ethos of the cultural ideal of masculinity in terms of dominance and innate entitlement to leadership. The construction of masculinity in Swahili and Arab societies, therefore, assigns men authority and command over women. The exercise of such authority in Swahili and Arab societies is interweaved with morally uplifting patriarchal norms in which masculinity is conceptualized in terms of aggressiveness, muscularity and audaciousness. In terms of gender and power relations particularly as circulated in proverb formulation and usage in Swahili and Arab cultures, it is frequently intimated that to be a 'woman' is to be powerless (quiet, submissive, accommodating) whereas, to be a 'real man', by contrast, is to be authoritative, powerful (outspoken, in control, able to impose his will), particularly in relation to women. These gender roles are habitually predisposed to perpetuate the power inequalities that they are based on. The use and circulation of proverbs that advance such ideas as facts are bound to socialize many men and women in these societies to think that it's not 'natural' for women to speak up in public, a rather cunning patriarchal strategy that often poses a key barrier to women's access to decision making positions, hence the curtailment of authority. Furthermore, the formulation, circulation and use of such proverbs, socialises the women to revere the men in their lives and societies; given that their very presence is synonymous to toughness and strength.

Many Swahili and Arabic proverbs analyzed in this study are formulated with a condescending mind-set towards women, by working in the promotion of the circulation of patriarchal bigotry in Swahili and Arab cultures; where women regardless of their age and status in society are habitually treated as weak, as people who are always in need of the husbands/male relatives' care and protection as their guardians. The implication of this is that women are raised and socialised in such a manner that encourages them to be dependent on men throughout their entire lives. That dependency starts from the time when they are still under the care of their fathers, brothers or other close male relatives; and later on it's transferred to their husbands and sons after marriage. The patriarchal male bravado is presented as bravery in a number of Swahili and Arabic proverbs

analyzed in this study. Swahili and Arab societies expect men to be courageous, brave and tough at all times; especially when it comes to standing up for the interests of their families or their entire societies. Consequently, being unemotional is viewed as bravery; hence both the Swahili and Arab societies expect men to restrain public display of their emotions because the display of emotions is considered feminine. There is some belief that bravery is necessary in buttressing courage and determination, therefore, these traits are critical in inscribing masculinity—that is, being brave, determined and hard working. There is a patriarchal conspiracy in both Swahili and Arab societies that circulates the notion that men have higher moral standing and therefore they possess higher moral strength. Such purported moral strength is thus frequently intimated in Swahili and Arabic proverbs to inscribe masculinity.

Masculine cultures expect men to be assertive in exercising their power, this kind of expectation accords men the leeway to use of violence against women as a way of asserting that power. The use of violence is by all standards self-serving in the sense that violence against women imparts fear rather than respect; it traumatizes, thus allowing men to exercise power. The Swahili and Arab societies perceive masculinity as being predicated on decisiveness; therefore, men are expected to make important choices for and about girls/women in their lives in virtually all material, social and relational issues. This is primary because the patriarchal structures as well as systems of socialization (operational in Swahili and Arab societies) equate masculinity with innate wisdom and understanding. There is abundant evidence that in Swahili and Arab societies, proverbs are consistently deployed to reinforce the ethos of the cultural ideal of masculinity in terms of dominance and innate entitlement to leadership, the capacity of men to own resources as well as control the means of material production. The construction of masculinity in Swahili and Arab societies, therefore, assigns men authority and command over women. There is no doubt that the Swahili and Arab societies are overtly masculine considering the pervasive circulation of the purported masculine attributes in many of the proverbs analyzed in this study.

Children occupy a central place in marriage in the Swahili and Arab societies and this biological function is celebrated and expressed in various proverbs. Consequently, motherhood and particularly reproduction is embedded in the variety of proverb formulations of these societies. Swahili women are expected to exhibit perseverance and selflessness, especially during delivery and in the raising of their children. On the other hand, the Arabs view barren women like visitors

who have overstayed their visit. It is important to remember that the cultural values circulated in these societies concur on the fact that the presence of children in a marriage are a source of pride for their parents. The treatment of women and the varied relationships that obtain between women and men in Swahili and Arab societies are predicated on 'accepted and allowable' norms of conduct. The norms of relationship between men and women in these societies are unequal; the man is privileged such that the woman is more often than not expected to be in the background or act as a shadow never to outshine the man. In other words, the men-women relationship as envisaged in the norms driven cultural values in Swahili and Arab societies presents a relationship of seniority (men) and subordinate (women). Lastly, the value system operative in the Swahili and Arab societies with regard to how women are valued is obviously of a patriarchal system. This value system is utilitarian in the sense of seeing women in terms of functions they accord men. The net effect of this is that women are stripped off their humanity and dignity, therefore relegated to the periphery with no voice or opinion on what is happening around or to their own selves.

6.4. Recommendations

Despite the pervasive negativity observable in Swahili and Arabic proverbs in the depiction of women, there is some ephemeral acknowledgement of women in a number of proverbs. This acknowledgement is discernible in proverbs that give recognition to women, especially mothers' unconditional love and constant attention to their children and husbands, their struggles in life, their patience, expertise, mentorship and productivity amongst other social-biological functions. Women are also recognized and acknowledged in proverbs that make reference to their care of material things, traditions and customs as well as maintenance of their physical beauty. This essentially means that Swahili and Arabic proverbs are not all gloom and unjust to women, though the proverbs analysed in this study were predominantly negative in their depictions of women. There is need, therefore, for researchers interested in paremiology to expand their research focus so as to include studies in the cross cultural intertextualities of proverbs, which will involve the exploration of proverbs from a number of possible perspectives, such as comparative studies of proverbs involving a number of languages in temporal terms so as to demonstrate how temporal constraints influence proverb formulation. There is need for researches to be conducted in these cultures in terms of proffering strategies for revising the negativities discerned in proverbs in this study such as revising the obvious stereotypes of women portraiture in Swahili and Arabic proverbs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahams, R. D, Troike, R. C. (1972). *Language and Cultural Diversity in American Education*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.

Abrahams, R. D. (1968). Introductory remarks to a rhetorical theory of folklore. *The Journal of American Folklore, 81*(320), 143-158.

Abrams, K. (1999). From Autonomy to Agency: Feminist Perspectives on Self-Direction, *William and Mary Law Review Journal 40(*3).Retrieved from https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmlr/vol40/iss3/6.

Abudu, M. (1974). *Methali za Kiswahili Maana na Matumizi*, Nairobi, Foundation Books Ltd.

Abudu, M., Baruwa, A. (1981a). *Kitabu cha pili Methali za Kiswahili Maana na Matumizi.* Nairobi, Shungwaya Publishers Ltd.

……. (1981b). *Kitabu cha tatu Methali za Kiswahili Maana na Matumizi*. Nairobi, Shungwaya Publishers Ltd.

Abu Sarhan, T, M., (2011). "Voicing the Voiceless: Feminism and Contemporary Arab Muslim Women's Autobiographies". Unpublished PhD Thesis, Bowling Green State University.

Achebe, C. (2006). *Things fall apart*. Lagos, Penguin Books.

Ahmad, S. (2005). "Educational and Social Values expressed by proverbs in two cultures: Knowledge and use of proverbs in Sudan and England". Unpublished PhD Thesis, Technical University of Berlin.

Akbarian, I. H. (2012). A grey area in translating proverbial expressions: The case of English and Persian. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 47,* 704-710.

Akidah, M. (2012). "A lexical phonological study of Modern Standard Arabic". Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi.

Al-Askari, A. (2005). *Jamharatu Al-amthal.* Cairo, Daaru Namudhajiya.

Al-Mannai, S.S. (2010). The Misinterpretation of Women's Status in the Muslim World. *Domes Digest of Middle East Studies, 19*(1), 82-91.

Ampofo, A. A, (2001). *The Sex Trade, Globalisation and Issue of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Accra, University of Ghana.

Arewa, E., Dundes, A. (1964). Proverbs and the ethnography of speaking folklore. *American Anthropologist Journal of African culture, 66*(6), 70-85.

Asimeng-Boahene, L. (2013). The Social Construction of Sub-Saharan Women's Status through African proverbs, *Mediterranean Journal of social sciences, 4* (1), 123-131.

Badawi, 1.A. (1991). *The Status of Women in Islam.* Buraydah, Foreigners Guidance Centre.

Bailey, N., Fletcher, J. C. C., Lewis, A. (1983). *Divers Proverbs with Their Explication and Illustration.* New Haven, Yale University Press.

Bakella, M. H. (1984). *Arabic Culture Through its Language and Literature*. London, Kegan Paul International.

Balogum, O.A. (2010). Proverbial oppression of women in Yoruba. *Africa journal online, 2*(1). Retrieved from https: //www.ajol.info/index.php/tp/article/view/57663.

Barley, N. (1972). A structural approach to the proverb and maxim with special reference to the Anglo-Saxon corpus. *Proverbium, 20*, 737-750.

Bartlotti, L. N. (2000). "Negotiating Pakhto: proverbs, Islam and the construction of identity among Pashtuns", Unpublished PhD Thesis, The University of Wales.

Barsalou, L. W. (1987). The instability of graded structure: Implications for the nature of concepts. *Concepts and conceptual development: Ecological and intellectual factors in categorization, 101-139.*

Bascom, W. (1965). The forms of folklore: Prose narratives. *The Journal of American Folklore, 78*(307), 3-20.

Bayumi, M. (2004). *A Dictionary of Arabic Proverbs*. Cairo, University of Ainu Shamsi.

Beauvoir, S. (1949). *The second sex*. London, Vintage.

Bennars, G. (1995). *Gender Education and the Pedagogy of Difference: The African Predicament in Basic Education Forum*. Nairobi, Kenyatta University.

Bhasin, K. (2006). *What Is Patriarchy*? New Delhi, Brown miller.

Brosh, H. (2013). Proverbs in the Arabic language classroom, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 3*(5), 19-29.

Borgatta E. F., Montgomery. (Eds.) (2001). *Encyclopedia of Sociology (2nd ed)*, New York, Macmillan.

Bosire-Ogechi, E. (2006). *"Ekegusii Folklore". In J. S. Akama and R. Maxon (eds.). Ethnography of the Gusii of Western Kenya*, New York, The Edwin Mellen Press.

Bourdieu, P., Passeron, J. C., de Saint Martin, M. (1996). *Academic discourse: Linguistic misunderstanding and professorial power*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Braidotti, R. (2000). *Deleuze and Feminist Theory.* Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

Burke, P. J. (1989). Gender Identity, Sex, and School Performance, *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 52, 159—169.

…… (1991). Identity Processes and Social Stress, *American Sociological Review,* 56, 836–849.

Burke, P. J., Jan, E. S & Maureen, A. P., (1988). Gender identity, self-esteem, and physical and sexual abuse in dating relationships. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 51, 272-285.

Burckhardt, J.L. (1972). *Arabic proverbs*. London, Curzon press.

Carson. (2002). *Thoughts and utterances (The pragmatics of explicit communication).* Chicago, Wiley – Blackwell.

Cast, A. D., Burke, P.J. (2002). A Theory of Self-Esteem. *Social Forces,* 80, 1041-1068.

Chavetz, J. S. (1978). *Masculine, Feminine or Human?* Adelaide, Peacock Publishers.

Chesaina, C. (1991). *Oral Literature of the Kalenjin.* Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya Ltd.

…… (1994). "*Images of Women in African Oral Literature: Kalenjin and Maasai Oral Narratives as Case Studies", In Bukenya*, Nairobi University Press.

Chinweizu, I. (1990). *Anatomy of female power: a masculinist dissection of matriarchy*. Lagos, Pero Press.

Christian, B. (1987). "The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse." Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi.

Coates, J. (1988). "Introduction." In J. Coates and D. Cameron (Eds.) *Women in their speech communities*. (pp. 63-73) Harlow, Longman.

Cobuild, C. (2010). *Advanced Illustrated Dictionary*. London, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd.

Cohen, B.B. (1973). *Writing about Literature*. Glenview, Illinois, Scot Foreman & Company.

Cohen, S.D. (1993). *Women and Discourse in the Fiction of Marguerite Duras*. Hampshire & London, The Macmillan Press.

Collins, P.H. (1996). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought. In M.F. Rogers, (Ed.) *Multicultural Experiences, Multicultural Theories,* (pp. 35-58). New York, McGraw-Hill.

Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities.* Cambridge, Polity Press.

Craig, R.T. (1993). Why Are There So Many Communication Theories? *Journal of Communication*, *43*(3), 26-33.

Cruse, A. (2000). *Meaning in language (An introduction to semantics and pragmatics).* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Cuddon, J.A. (1977). *A Dictionary of Literally terms.* Fitzerberg, Whiteside.

Daly, M. (1978). *The Metaethics of Radical Feminism.* Boston, Beacon Press.

Davies, C. B., Graves, A. (1986). *Studies of Women in African Literature,* Toronto, African World Press.

Dierks F.A.J. (1972). “Die inhoud van die spreekwoord in Tswana”. Unpublished M.A. Dissertation. University of South Africa.

Dulz, J. (2016). “Race and Gender and the Perception of Masculinity and Femininity of the American Political Parties”. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Bemidji State University.

Dundes, A. (1975). Comment on ‘Narrative structures in the Book of Judith’. *Alonso-Schökel, 19(75),* 27-29.

……. (1975a). On the Structure of Proverbs, Proverbium: *Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship, 25,* 961–973.

…….. (1975b). Slurs International: Folk Comparisons of Ethnicity and National Character, *Southern Folklore Quarterly, 39,* 15–34.

…….. (1978). *Who are the Folk? In his Essays in Folkloristics,* Meerut, Folklore Institute.

…….. (1980). *“The crowing Hen and the Easter Bunny: male chauvinism in American Folklore”,* Bloomington, Indiana University press.

Elder, E. (1927). *Egyptian colloquial Arabic reader*. London, The American University Press.

Ellmann, M. (1968). *Thinking About women.* New York, Harcourt.

Emecheta, B. (1977). *The Second Class Citizens.* London, George Baziller Inc.

Engels, F. (1844). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.* Chicago, Charles H. Kent and company.

Ennaji, M. (2008). Representation of women in Morocco Arabic and Barber proverbs. *International Journal of Social Languages, 190,* 167-181.

Fakoya, A. A. (2007). Sexually – grounded proverbs and Discourse relevance, insight from Yoruba. *California Linguistic Notes, 32*(2), 1-29.

Farsi, S.S. (1958). *Swahili Sayings*. Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau.

Fasiku, G. (2006). Yoruba Proverbs, Names and National Consciousness. *The Journal of Pan African Studies (Online) 1*(4).

Ferguson, C. A. (1983). God-wishes in Syrian Arabic. *Mediterranean Language Review, 1,* 65-83.

Figes, E. (1986). *Patriarchal Attitudes on Women in Society,* London, Nelson and Sons Ltd.

Finnegan, R. (1970). *Oral Literature in Africa,* Oxford, Clarendon Press.

…….. (1990). *Oral literature in Africa*. Nairobi, Oxford University Press.

…… (1994). *Oral Literature in Africa.* Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers.

Flax, J. (1990). "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," In Linda Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism,* (pp 39-62), New York, Routledge.

Frank, K. (1984). *Feminist Criticism and the Novel in Jones, D.E. and Palmer, African Literature Today.* Nairobi, Heinemann.

Gallagher, M. (1981). *"Unequal Opportunities: The Case of Women and the Media*". Paris, UNESCO.

George, V., Dundes, A. (1978). The gomer: a figure of American hospital folk speech. *The Journal of American Folklore, 91*(359), 568-581.

Gill, R. (2007). *Gender and the media,* Cambridge, UK Malden.

Granborn –Herranen, L. (2010). Women's place in Finnish proverbs from childhood, Folklore. *Electronic Journal of Folklore, 46,* 95-110.

Green, A. (1909). *Modern Arabic Stories, Ballads, proverbs and idioms.* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Green, G. M. (1975). Nonsense and reference; or, the conversational use of proverbs in *Chicago Linguistic Society, 11,* 226-239.

Greene, G., & Kahn, C. (1994). *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism.* London, Routledge.

Grice, H. P. (1989). *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, Harvard University press.

Grzybek, P. (1987). Foundations of semiotic proverb study. *Proverbium, An International Yearbook of Proverb Scholarship, 4,* 39-85.

Hamilton, C. A. (1987). Ideology and Oral Traditions: Listening to the Voices 'From Below'. *History in Africa*, *14,* 67-86.

Hahn, D. F. (1998). *Political Communication: Rhetoric, Government and Citizens.* Pennsylvania, Strata Publishing.

Han, H. (2001). "Gender Discrimination in the Korean language, the Society for Gender Studies in Japanese" (online)http://www.gender.jp/Journal/no6/04Han.html.

Hanki, J. (1897). *A collection of Modern Egyptian proverbs.* Cairo, Bab-el-Hadid.

Hasan-Rokem, G. (1982). *Proverbs in Israeli Folk Narratives: A Structural Semantic Analysis*. Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.

Heese, M., Lawton, R. (1991). *The new owl critic: An introduction to literary criticism*. Hatfield, Nasou.

Hirsch, E.D., Kett, J. F. & Trefil, J. (Eds) (2002). The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, 3rd ed Houghton Mifflin Company.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills, Sage.

Holbek, B. (1970). Proverb style. *Proverbium*, 15(54), 470.

Hollingsworth, L.W., Alawi, Y. (1968). *Advanced Swahili Exercises*. London, Nelson and Sons Ltd.

Honeck, R. P., Voegtle, K., Dorfmueller, M. A., Hoffman, R. R. (1980). Proverbs, meaning, and group structure, *Cognition and figurative language*, 127-161.

Hornby A. S. (2003). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. New York, Oxford University Press.

Hurreiz, S. (1985). *Origins, Foundations and Evolution of Swahili Culture*. Paris, UNESCO.

Hussein, J.W. (2004). A cultural representation of women in the Oromo Society. *African Study Monographs, 25(*3), 103-147.

..... (2005). The social and Ethno- cultural construction of Masculinity and Femininity in African proverbs. *African Study Monographs, 26(2)* 59- 87.

..... (2009). A Discursive representation of women in sample proverbs from Ethiopian, Sudan and Kenya. *Research in Africa Literatures, 40(3),*98-108.

Isleem, N. M. (2009). *Popular Proverbs: An Entrance to Palestinian Culture*. Norwell, Alucen Learning.

Jagger, A., Rosenberg, P. (1984). *Feminist Frameworks*. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Jamal, M. (2009). What is a Proverb? Theoretical Remarks, *Retrieved from www. lingua-jip. de.*

Jayakar, A.S.G. (1987). *Omani proverbs*. Cambridge, The Oleander Press.

Johnson, S. (1997). Theorizing Language and Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective, *In Johnson and Meinhof, 1997, 8–26.*

Kabira, W.M. (1994). "Images of Women in Gikuyu Oral Narratives". Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi.

Karama, S., Said, M. (1983), Maelezo *ya Methali za Kiswahili.* Nairobi, Longman Kenya Ltd.

Katz, P. A. (1986). "Gender Identity: Development and Consequences." In Richard D. Ashmore and Frances K. Del Boca, (eds.), *The Social Psychology of Female-Male Relations: A Critical Analysis of Central Concepts*. New York, Academic Press.

Kerschen, L. (2012). *American proverbs about women: A reference Guide*. Westport, Greenwood Press.

Kezilahabi, E. (1971). *Rosa Mistika*. Nairobi, East Africa Literature Bureau.

Kipury, N. (1983). *Oral Literature of the Masaai.* Nairobi, Heinemann Educational Books LTD.

……. (1993). Oral *Literature of the Masaai.* Nairobi, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

Kiyimba, A. (2006). Gendering social Destiny in the proverbs of the Baganda reflections of Boys and Girls becoming men and Women. *Journal of African cultural studies, 17*(2), 253-270.

Knappert, J. (1975). *Studies on Swahili Proverbs*. London, School of Oriental and African Studies University.

Kobia, J. (2016). A Conceptual Metaphorical Analysis of Swahili Proverbs with Reference to Chicken Metaphor. *International Journal of Education and Research, 4*(2), 217228.

Kolodny, A. (1986). *Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations of the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism*. Florida, University Press of Florida.

Krikmann, A, (1985). Some Additional Aspects of Semantic Indefiniteness of Proverbs, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship, 2,* 58–85.

Lakoff, R. (1973). Language and Women's Place, *Language and Society, 2,* 45– 80.

…… (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. New York, Harper and Row.

Langton, R. (2009). *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Lasersohn, P. (1989). On the readings of plural noun phrases. *Linguistic inquiry, 20*(1), 130-134.

Lau, K. J., Tokofsky, P., Winick, S. D. (2004). *What Goes Around Comes Around: The Circulation of Proverbs in Contemporary Life.* Logan, Utah State University Press.

Lawal, A. (1997). *"Semiotic Perspectives on the Place of Linguistic Competence", Stylistics in Theory and Practice,* Ilorin, Paragon Books.

Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

…… (2000). *Presumptive meanings (The theory of Generalised conversational implicatures).* Massachusetts, MIT Press.

Lewis, I.M. (1985). *Social Anthropology in Perspective: The Relevance of Social Anthropology.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Liber, M. D. (1994). Analogic Ambiguity: A Paradox of Proverb Usage, In Mieder, Wolfgang (ed.) *Wise Words: Essays on the Proverb*, (pp 99-126) New York and London, Garland Publishing,

Lindesmith, A., Strauss, A.L, (1956). *Social Psychology*. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Litovkina, A. T. (1996). A Few Aspects of a Semiotic Approach to Proverbs with Special Reference to Two Important American Publications, *Semiotica, 108,* 307– 80.

Maltz, D., & Borker, R. (1982). A Cultural approach to male-female miscommunication. In J.J. Gumperz (Ed.), *Language and social identity*. New York, Cambridge University Press.

Matsugu, M. (2007). Selection and Efficient Use of Local Features for Face and Facial Expression Recognition in a Cortical Architecture, In K. Delac and M. Grgic (Eds.), *Face Recognition,* (305-320), Vienna, I-Tech Education and Publishing.

Matteru, M.L. (1982). The Image of the Woman in Tanzanian Oral Literature. *Journal of the Institute of Kiswahili Research,* University of Dar-es-Salaam.

Mbaabu, 1. (1996). *Language Policy in East Africa: Dependency Theory Perspective*, Nairobi, Educational Research and Publications.

Mariam, Y.H. (1995). "A critical Analysis of Amharic proverbs on Women". Unpublished M.A Thesis, The Hague, Institute of Social Studies.

Mead, M. (1935). *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. New York, Dell.

Mekacha, R.D.K. (1993). *Mwanamke ni Ibilisi?* Dar-es-Salaam, Dar-es-Salaam University Press.

Mieder, W. (1970). *Das SprichwortimWerke Jeremias Gotthelfs* (Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University. Department of German and Russian).

…… (1985). Popular views of the proverb. *Proverbium*, *2*, 109-143.

……. (1993). *Proverbs are never out of season: Popular wisdom in the modern age*. New York, Oxford University Press.

……... (2000)."Proverbs Speak Louder Than Words": Folk Wisdom in Art, Culture, Folklore, History, Literature and Mass Media. New York, Peter Lang.

…… (2004). *Proverbs: A Handbook.* London, Greenwood Press.

Millard, A. R., Whiting, R. M. (1994). *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire 910-612 BC*. Helsinki, Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.

Millet, K. (1969). *Sexual Politics.* London, RU1Jelt Halt Davies.

…… (1977). *Sexual Politics*. London, Virago.

Milner, G. B. (1969). What is a proverb. *New Society*, *13*(332), 199-202.

……. (1969a). Quadripartite Structures, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship, 14(*3), 79-83.

Miruka, O. (1994). *Encounter with Oral Literature.* Nairobi, East Africa Educational Publishers.

Mitchell, J. Oakley, A., (1986). *What is Feminism?* Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

Mkota, A. (2009). *Kamusi ya Methali za Kiswahili (Maana na Matumizi).* Nairobi, Vide-Muwa Publishers.

Mohamed, S. A. (1977). *Asali Chungu*. Nairobi, East Africa Educational Publishers.

Motebele, M. M. (1997). "Imagery in Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles". Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Johannesburg.

Mugo. M.G. (1975). *The Role of women in the struggle for freedom in Awori and Krystal: The participation of women in Kenya society*. Nairobi. Kenya Literature Bureau.

Mumali, K.H. (2012). "A lexical Semantics and Pragmatics study of words of Arabic origin in Abel Mkota's Kamusi ya Methali za Kiswahili". Unpublished M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi.

Napikoski, L. (2017). Patriarchal Society- Feminist Theories of Patriarchy. What Is a Patriarchal Society and How Does It Relate to Feminism? Thought Co. Data retrieved on February 7th, 2018, from https://www.thoughtco.com/patriarchal-societyfeminismdefinition-3528978.

Ncube, B., Moyo, T. (2011). "Portraying women as the other: Ndebele proverbs in context of Gender construction", *Africana, 5*(3), 126-142.

Ndalu, A., King'ei, K.G., (2016). *Kamusi ya Methali za Kiswahili*. Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers.

Ndungo, C.M. (1998). "Images of Women in African Oral Literature: A case study of Kikuyu and Swahili proverbs". Unpublished PhD Thesis, Kenyatta University.

Ngole, S.Y.A., Honero, J.N. (1982). *Fasihi Simulizi ya Mtanzania na Methali.* Dar-es-Salaam, Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili.

Nelson, R. L. (2001). Economic and Sociological Approaches to Gender Inequality in Pay. In M. Granovetter, & R. Svedberg (Eds.), *The Sociology of Economic Life.*

Nibafasha, S. (2013). "Societal Construction of Masculinity and Femininity as Portrayed in Kirundi Proverbs". Unpublished M.A Thesis, Makerere University.

Norrick, N. R. (1985). *How proverbs mean: Semantic studies in English proverbs.* Amsterdam, Mouton.

…….. (1995). Hunh-tags and evidentiality in conversation, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *23*(6), 687-692.

Nussbaum, C.M. (1995). Objectification. *Philisophy and Public affairs 24*(4):249-291.

Oduol, J.J. (1990). "Sexual Ideology in Dholuo, Some Linguistic Guidance", Unpublished Paper.

Oha, O. (1998). The semantics of Female Devaluation in Igbo Proverbs", *African study monographs, 19*(2), 87-102.

Okot, M.B. (1994). "Gender Representation in Acoli Oral Poetry". Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Makerere University.

Oluwole, S.B. (1997). Culture, gender, and development theories in Africa. *Africa Development, 22* (1), 95-121.

Othman, S. L. (2004). Victim Resistance: Theory and data on understanding perceptions of sexual harassment. *Sex Roles*, 50, 267-275.

Othman, A. O. (2013). "An analysis of the role of Micro and Macro Levels in Rendering some Standard Arabic proverbs into English". Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leeds.

Oyewumi, O. (2003). *African women Feminism; Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*. Trenton, African world press.

Parker, C.A. (1974). *Aspect of a Theory of Proverbs: Contexts and Messages of Proverbs in Swahili.* Washington, University of Washington.

Ramazanoglu, C. (1989). *Feminism and the Contradictions of oppression*, London, Routledge.

Riria, J.V. N. (1984). "Education for All: The Neglected Half," *in BERC Bulletin No 9.* Kenyatta University.

Rugh, A. (1997). *Within the Cycle: Parents and Children in an Arabic Village.* New York, Columbia University Press.

Russo, J. (1983). The Poetics of Ancient Greek Proverbs, *Journal of Folklore Research,20*(2), 121–130.

Rustamiy.S. (2014). Art of Word and Artistry of Arabic Proverbs, *Journal of Advanced science, 2014(8),* 36-40.

Saidi, S.A. (2010). "A Gender and Language Analysis of Omani Proverbs". Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Florida.

Sanauddin, N. (2015). "Proverbs and Patriarchy Analysis of Linguistic Sexism and Gender Relations among the Pashtuns of Pakistan". Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow.

Schipper, M. (1991). *Sources of All Evil*: *African proverbs and sayings women.* London, Allison and Busby Books.

..... (1992). *Source of All Evil: African Proverbs and Sayings on Women*, Nairobi, Phoenix Publishers.

..... (2004). *Never marry a woman with Big Feet: Women in Proverbs from around the world*, New Haven, Yale University press.

Seitel, P.I. (1976). "Proverbs and the Structure of Metaphor". Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania.

Shaw, H. (1973). *Dictionary of Literally terms.* New York, McGraw-Hill.

Singer, A, (1913). *Arabic proverbs*. Cairo, Bab-el-Hadid.

Smith, B. (1986). *"Towards a Black Feminist Criticism". The New Feminist Criticism, Essays on Women Literature and Theory*. London, Virago.

Spence, J. T, (1985). "Gender Identity and Implications for Concepts of Masculinity and Femininity." In T. B. Sonderegger, (ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation: Psychology and Gender*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press.

Spence, J. T, (1993). Gender related traits and Gender ideology: Evidence for a multifactorial theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 64*(4), 624-635.

Steady, F.C. (1981). *The Black woman cross-culturally; An over view introduction*. Cambridge, Schenkman.

Storms, M. D. (1979). Sex Role Identity and its Relationships to Sex Role Attitudes and Sex Role Stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *37*, 1779–1789.

Sultana, A, (2010). Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis. *The Arts Faculty Journal,* July 2010--June 2011.

Taiwo, O, (1984). *Female Novelists of Modern Africa.* London, Macmillan Publishers.

Tannen, D. (1987). *That's not what I meant*. London, Dent.

Taylor, A, (1985). *The Proverb and an Index to The Proverb.* Berlin, Peter Lang Publishers.

Thompson, E. H, Pleck, J. H. (1986). The structure of male role norms. *American Behavioral Scientist, 29*(5), 531–543.

Thorburn, S.S, (1978). *Bannu*; *our Afghan Frontier*. Lahore, Sang-E-meel publications.

Van staden, P.T, (1980). "Beelspaak in die geskereween ongeskrewe Literatuur van Tswana". Unpublished M.A, University of Potchefstroom.

Van Dijk, T. A, (1993). Principles of Critical Discourse analysis, *Discourse and Society Sage publications, 5*(2), 249-283.

Walby, S, (1990). *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers.

Wamitila, K.W, (2015. *Kamusi ya Methali.* Nairobi, Longhorn Publishers Ltd.

Wamutiso, K, (2005). "Sexism in Forbidden Language: The case of Kiswahili and English", Conference Proceedings 17th -18th March pp. 77-99.

Webster, S.K, (1986). Women and Folklore; performance, characters, Scholarship. *Women's Study int' Forum,* 219-226.

..... (1982). Women, sex, and marriage in Moroccan proverbs. *International Journal of Middle East studies, 14*, 173-184.

Whiteley, W.I, (1969). *Swahili: The Rise of a National Language,* London, Methuen K. Co Ltd.

Whiting, B. J, (1994). The Nature of the Proverb, In Harris, Joseph & Mieder, Wolfgang (eds.) *When Evensong and Morrowsong Accord: Three Essays on the Proverb* (pp.87113), Cambridge, MA, Department of English and American Literature and Language, Harvard University.

Wilson, A. (2004). Good Proverbs Make Good Students: Using Proverbs to Teach German, *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship, 21,* 345-70.

Yankah, K., (2001). Nana Ampadu, the sung-tale metaphor, and protest discourse in contemporary Ghana. *African words, African voices: Critical practices in oral history*, 227-245.

Zimmerman, D, West, C., (1975). *Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation Language and sex: Difference and dominance*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: One hundred Swahili proverbs which talk about women

No	Swahili Proverb	English meaning
1	*Aliyemwoa mama yako ndiye baba yako.*	He who has married your mother is your father.
2	*Anayeonja asali huchonga mzinga.*	He who tastes honey builds a hive.
3	*Eda ni ada yenye faida.*	Abstinence and self-seclusion is a beneficial culture.
4	*Kazi ya ukwe haina malipo.*	The assistance advanced to the in-laws accrues no benefit.
5	*Kosa moja haliachi mke.*	One mistake does not lead to a divorce.
6	*Kuku mwenye watoto halengwi jiwe.*	A hen with chicks is not hit with a stone.
7	*Mke ni nguzo ya nyumba.*	A wife is the pillar of the house.
8	*Mwenye dada hakosi shemeji.*	He who has a sister cannot miss to have an in-law.
9	*Nyumba ni mwanamke.*	The house is a woman.
10	*Jogoo hawezi kulea wana.*	A cock cannot raise chicks.
11	*Kipele cha mwana uchungu wa mama.*	A child's pimple is a pain to the mother.
12	*Kuzaa si kazi kazi kubwa kulea.*	Giving birth is not work the main work is to raise the child.
13	*Mikono ileayo mtoto ndiyo itawalayo dunia.*	The hands which raise the child are the ones that rule the world.
14	*Teke la kuku halimwumizi mwanawe.*	The kick of a hen doesn't hurt its chick.

15	*Akataaye kula humwongezea mke mwenziwe.*	A wife who refuses to eat increases the co-wife's share.
16	*Fimbo impigayo mke mwenzio ukiiona itupe mbali.*	The stick which beats your co-wife if you see it throw it far away.
17	*Kaburi la mke mwenza li kombo.*	The grave of the co-wife is crooked.
18	*Mke mwenza!! Ha! Mezea!*	A co-wife! No! Forget it!
19	*Ukipata chungu kipya usitupe cha zamani.*	Do not throw away an old pot once you acquire a new one.
20	*Asiyesafiri husifu upishi wa mama yake tu.*	He who has not travelled always praises the mother's cookery.
21	*Mke ni dada mdogo.*	A wife is a younger sister.
22	*Mume si babe kwa mkewe.*	A husband is not a champion to his wife.
23	*Chelewa chelewa utamkuta mwana si wako.*	If you delay you will find that the child is not yours.
24	*Dirishani upendo huruka umaskini uvukapo kizingitini.*	Love leaves through the window when poverty enters by the door.
25	*Azaaye kinyago, hukinyonyesha.*	The one who gives birth to a statute suckles it.
26	*Mama wa kambo si mama, mama ni aliyekuzaa.*	A step mother is not a real mother, a real mother is the one who gave birth to you..
27	*Mficha uchi hazai.*	The one who hides the nakedness does not give birth.
28	*Mwanamke haambiwi siri.*	A woman is never told a secret.
29	*Mzazi haachi ujusi.*	A mother doesn't stop smelling.
30	*Nyumba inategemea miti kama nchi kwa mabinti.*	A house depends on trees just like a country depends on girls.
31	*Piga kite mama ujifungue.*	Press hard mother to give birth.
32	*Ukistahi mke ndugu huzai naye.*	If you shy away from your cousin wife you can't give birth from her.
33	*Mke sawa na mtoto hatosheki na kupewa.*	A woman is like a child, she is never satisfied with what she is given.

34	*Furaha ya mama ni mtoto.*	The happiness of a mother is a child.
35	*Kuku akiatamia hana matembezi.*	A hatching hen doesn't promenade.
36	*Kweli mwana ni mamaye na mlezi akalea.*	Indeed the child is to the mother and the baby sitter takes care.
37	*Maji na tumbawe, mama na mwanawe.*	Water with the coral and the mother with her child.
38	*Uchungu wa mwana ajuaye mzazi.*	A child's pain is best known by the parent of the child.
39	*Ajuza hawa kijana ingawa ataka sana.*	An old woman cannot be young even though she yearns for it.
40	*Mama kwa mwanawe, mtoto kwa mamaye.*	A mother to her child, but a child to her mother.
41	*Mtoto kwa mama hakui.*	A child to the mother never grows.
42	*Akosae la mama hata la mbwa huamwa.*	In the absence of a mother's breast, the dog's breast will do.
43	*Titi la mama litamu jingine haliishi hamu.*	The mother's breast is sweet, like no other.
44	*Bila nyuki hupati asali.*	Without bees you cannot get honey.
45	*Chakula bora ni ukipendacho.*	The best food is the one you like.
46	*Fuata nyuki ule asali.*	Follow the bees to eat honey.
47	*Tunda jema halikawii mtini.*	A good fruit doesn't stay for long on a tree.
48	*Ukila nanasi tunda jingine basi.*	If you eat a pineapple, no other fruit can match it.
49	*Ukila zabibu, utaleta majibu.*	If you eat grapes, you will give feedback.
50	*Baa la kuku halimwui mwanawe.*	A chicken's feather does not kill its chick.
51	*Dua la kuku halimpati mwewe.*	The curse of the chicken does not bother the falcon.
52	*Kuku havunji yaile.*	A hen does not break her own egg.
53	*Kuku mgeni zawadi ya kunguru.*	A new chicken is a gift to the crow.
54	*Kufuga punda madhila hukujambia mashuzi.*	To rear a donkey is annoying, it only farts.
55	*Heri kufuga punda kama nisiwani.*	It is easier to domesticate donkeys than women.
56	*Mafahali wawili hawakai zizi moja.*	Two bulls do not live in the same shade.

57	*Atakaye lulu hana budi kupiga mbizi.*	Whoever wants pearls must be ready to sea dive.
58	*Mkeka mpya haulaliwi vema.*	A new sleeping mat is not pleasant to sleep on.
59	*Debe tupu haliachi kutika.*	An empty tin makes the loudest noise.
60	*Mke kipofu huwa mwaminifu.*	A blind wife is a faithful wife.
61	*Mlinzi hulinda ndege, mke mzuri halindwi.*	A guard guards a bird, but a good woman is not guarded.
62	*Mwanamke ana jicho la nje.*	A woman has a roving eye.
63	*Ndege hulindwa, mke halindwi.*	A bird is guarded, but a woman is not guarded.
64	*Uzuri wa mwanamke ni tabia si sura.*	A woman's beauty is in her character and not her looks.
65	*Uzuri wa mwanamke si wa kila mpita njia.*	The beauty of a woman is not for every passer-by.
66	*Fadhila mpe mama na Mola atakubariki.*	Give respect to your mother and God will bless you.
67	*Gombea heshima, gombea mama.*	Fight for respect, fight for a woman.
68	*Mama ni mama ajapo kuwa ni rikwama.*	A mother is a mother even if she is like a hand cart (mkokoteni).
69	*Mwana mtukana nina kuzimu enda kiona.*	A child who abuses the mother brings destruction to himself/herself.
70	*Ushaufu si heshima ya mwanamke*	Flirting is not honourable to a woman.
71	*Asemaye mengi, hajui kuwa amemtukana mama mkwe.*	He who speaks a lot doesn't know when he insults the mother- in-law.
72	*Kitu usichonacho usimwahidi mama mkwe.*	Do not promise the mother –in –law what you don't possess.
73	*Anayekaa karibu na waridi hunukia.*	He who stays near a flower smells nice.

74	*Mwanamke ni malkia wa moyo.*	A woman is the queen of the heart.
75	*Mwanamke ni kama maji ya dafu, hayapendezi ila dafuni mwake.*	A woman is like the water of a young coconut which is not pleasant except in its shell.
76	*Mwanamke ni ua.*	A woman is a flower.
77	*Buibui ni mke mume wajifanyaje?*	Hijab is a woman's dress and has nothing to do with men.
78	*Chanda chema huvikwa pete.*	A ring is put on the good finger.
79	*Mke ni nguo, mgomba kupalilia.*	A wife is to clothing as a banana plant is to weeding.
80	*Mume ni kazi, mke ni nguo.*	The husband works, the wife dresses.
81	*Bibi mzuri hakosi kilema.*	There is no beautiful wife without a blemish.
82	*Mke mwema pambo la nyumba.*	A good wife is a home's adornment.
83	*Mwanamke mzuri hakosi kasoro.*	Regardless of her beauty no woman is faultless.
84	*Eda ya mke, hakuna eda ya mume..*	Abstinence and self-seclusion is for the wife, there is no abstinence and self-seclusion for the husband.
85	*Kuku jike hawiki penye jogoo.*	A hen does not crow where there is a cock.
86	*Mke wa kwanza ni kama mama.*	The first wife is like a mother.
87	*Mke hukaa katika kivuli cha mumewe.*	A wife stays in the shadow of her husband.
88	*Mke kumtii mume ndio sheria.*	A wife obeying the husband is the law.
89	*Mla halasa hamziki mamaye.*	He who eats all his savings cannot bury his mother.
90	*Kazi ya mekoni, kazi ya nisiwani.*	Kitchen work is work for women.
91	*Adamu mwenziwe Hawa, mwanamume na mke.*	Adam's companion is Eve, a wife belongs to a husband.
92	*Mtu mamaye ni mungu wake wa pili.*	A person's mother is like his second god.
93	*Mwanamke abeden harizi/haridhi.*	A woman is never satisfied.
94	*Hila hii si ya mwari, aliyetenda ni kungwi.*	This evil is not for the maiden, it is the handwork of the woman coach.

95	*Kuku hawekwi shahidi wala hajui sheria.*	A chicken does not know the law, nor can she be a witness.
96	*Mtoto wa nyoka ni nyoka.*	A child of a snake is a snake.
97	*Uzoefu ndio mama wa maarifa.*	Experience is the mother of knowledge.
98	*Asiyefunzwa na mamaye, hufunzwa na ulimwengu.*	He/she who is not taught by the mother, is taught by the world.
99	*Mjukuu hawezi kumfunza bibiye kunyonya.*	A grandson cannot teach his grandmother how to suckle.
100	*Mtoto akibebwa hutazama kisogo cha mamake.*	When a child is carried, he looks at the mother's back head.

APPENDIX II: One hundred Arabic proverbs which talk about women

English meaning	**Arabic Proverbs**	
If my husband consents why should the Kadhi's interference be necessary.	ار يـ جوز ذ اك ِيضِ اقلا لوضف شيأ ض اذإ *Idhaa Kaana Zauji raadhi aishi fudhulu alqaadhi.*	1
He said: "my mother in-law's a plague" someone replied: "Divorce her daughter".	حماتـ ي مـ ناق رة ،طـ لق بـ ذ تها. *Hamaati munaaqiratun, qaala twaliqi bintahaa.*	2
Keep a fast animal and marry an obedient woman, as they are the enjoyment of your life.	أ سعى الـ دابـ ة الـ سريـ عة وآخدالـ مرة الـ مطـ يعة*Asa'a al-daaba al-sareea wa akhud,* *twaliq almara al-mutwiya kulaha tumtiya.*	3
Girls' marriage is a light in the house and their staying in their parents' house is oppression to the house.	سعد الـ بـ نات ذ ور الـ بـ يت وق عادن حـ قرة لـ لـ بـ يت *Saviad al-banaati noor al- bait wa qaadan saa'ad lilbait.*	4
Let your daughters get married and help their husbands.	ادوهن أعـ ينوا عـ لـ يهن *Aduhinu wa'ainu alaihina.*	5
Marriage is protection.	الـ زواج سـ ترة. *Al- zawaj sutra.*	6
Marriage is half of religion.	الـ زواج ذ صف الـ دي ن *Al-zawaj nisifu al-deeni.*	7
Leave him alone with his grief-he has taken one as old as his mother.	همأ ردق ةدحاو ذخا همّ هب هوُلخ *Khaluhu hamihi akhadha waahidatuni qadra umihi.*	8
Our oil is (mixed) with our (own) flour.	زيـ تنا فـ ي دقـ يـ قنا *Zaitunaa fii daqiiqinaa.*	9
The jealousy of a wife is the key to divorce.	غـ يرة الـ مرة مـ فـ تاح طـ لاقـ ها *Ghairatu al-mara mifutaahu twalaaqaha*	10

He was not a match for his mother-inlaw, he then rose against his wife.	ما قدر ع لي حماتـ ه قـ ام لا مراتـ ه *Maa qadara ala-hamaa tihi qaama li'imraatihi.* *Tihi*	11
He who marries in the bird market, his divorce will be (as quick as one can say) "goodnight".	ريخلاب اوسّ مت هقلاط ناك ريطلا قوس يف جوّ زت ـذ م*Mani tazawaja fii suuqu al-twairi kaana twalaaqahu tamusuu bil-khairi.*	12
Retain in honor, or release in kindness.	تـ سريـ ح بـ إحـ ساند امـ سك بـ معروف أو*Imsiki bima'a' roofi au tasirihi bi' ihsan.*	13
From the mother's efforts in labour, we expect the birth of a male child.	ملاغ يجي قلّطلا يد بلع انيهتشا. *Ishitini naa ala dii adalaqa yajii ghulamun.*	14
The beetle is a beauty in the eyes of its mother.	ةحيلم اهمّ ا نيع يف ةسفنحلا *Alhanifasatu fii aini umiha malihatuni.*	15
A barren woman is a guest in the house.	الـ مرة الـ عاقـ رة ضـ يـ فة فـ ي الـ بـ يت.*Al-mara al-aaqir dhifa fi al-bait.*	16
The afflicted mother who has lost her children is not like the woman who weeps for hire.	مالـ حزيـ نة الـ ثكـ لي كـ الـ نايـ حة بـ كراها*Maa al-hazinatu al-thikali ka al-naye hatu bakarahaa.*	17
Between Hana and Banaa our beards were lost.	بـ ين بـ انـ ا و ضاعت الـ حانـ ا*Baina Hanaa wa Banaa dha'ati al- hanaa.*	18
The husband of two parrots (is like) a neck between two sticks (that strike it).	لا جوز نيترِ نيب اغق نيترّ ضَّ *Zauju al- dharataini qaqhaabaini dirataini.*	19
If the midwife happens to have more affection than the mother, that is corrupt feeling.	حـ ذ ية فـ ا سدة.إن جاءت الـ دادة احن من الـ ولادة دي *Ini Jaataun adaa datum ihina mina alwalidatu dii hamiyatuni faasidatun.*	20
In his mother's eye, the monkey is (as beautiful as) a gazelle.	الـ قرد فـ ي ع ين أمه غزال. *Al-qirdu fii aini umihi ghazaluni.*	21
Come (my dear) without any (more) quarrelling sit down upon this pelisse.	تـ عالـ ي بـ لا دعوة اقـ عدي عـ لى دي الـ غروة *Taalii bila da'awati iqia'adi ala dii al- gharwatu.*	22

They wooed her and she refused; they left her and she fell in love.	تعّلطت اهوكرت تعّنمت اهوبطخ *Khatwabuuhaa tamani'ati tarakuuhaa tatwala'ati.*	23
They embraced her, she remained silent; they reproached her, then she assumed airs.	تجّنغت اهوبتاع تتكس اهوكان *Naakuhaa sakatati aatabuhaa taghanajati.*	24
The mother of a coward does not grief (for him).	نزحت ام نأبج مأ. *Umu jabaani maa tahizani.*	*25*
Whoever a man is, he is the woman's guardian (caretaker).	الـ راجل كـ له ولـ ي الـ مرة *Al-raajul kuluhu wali al-mara.*	*26*
The pregnant woman longed for it, but the nurse ate it.	الـ حـ بـ لة الـ شـ تهـ تهـ والـ مر ضعة أكـ لـ تهAl-habulatu shatahatuhu wal-murdhi'at akalatuhu.	*27*
The mother of male babies has peace of mind.	أم الـ ضـ كور أ صانها بـ اردة *Umm adhukur adhaniha baardah.*	*28*
A snake will not give birth except to a snake.	لا تـ لد الـ حـ ية إلا حـ ية .1 *La talid al-hayat ila hayat.*	*29*
She is pregnant with a child and nurses a child and has four children before her.	حـ بـ لة ومر ضعه وقـ دامها اربـ عة *Habulatuni wa murudhiatuni wa qadaamihaa aruba'atuni.*	*30*
He who is bashful (shy) with his cousin, gets no boy by her.	من ا سـ تحي من بـ نت عمه ما خاب مـ نها غلام *Mani isitahayi mini binti amihi maa khaba minihaa ghulamuni.*	*31*
The training ability in her mouth, the girl looks to her mother.	تـ ضرب الـ قدرة عـ لى فـ مها تـ صـ لح الـ بـ نت لأمها.Tadhiribu al-qadiritu alaa famiha, taswuliualbinti liumihaa.	*32*
Do not depend on women, their support is thrilling and their weapon is crying.	ما تـ تحزم بـ الـ نسوان فـ زعهن زغاريـ د و سلاحهن بـ كاء.Maa tatahazam bil-niswaan faza'ahuna zaghareed wa silahahuna bukaa.	*33*

She went to sleep hungry (although) her husband is a baker.	وزوجها خ بار.بـ اتـ ت جـ يعانة *Baatati jiaanati wa zaujuhaa khabarun.*	*34*
A pap of the cookery of um Aly.	ع صـ يدة من طـ بـ يخ أم عـ لي *Aswidatuni mini twabbiikhi umu Aliyi.*	*35*
If God wants the destruction of an ant He allows it to grow wings.	بـ اتـ ت جـ يعانة وزوجها خ بار. *Idha arada rabuna halak namlatun, anbata laha ajinihatun.*	*36*
The fly knows the face of the milk seller.	نابُّلا هبو فرعي نابدلا *Adubanu ya'arifu wajihu allubanu.*	*37*
It is to you I speak, my (fair) neighbor, but truly you are an ass.	حمارة. تِ نأ لآا ةراج اي كل ملاكلا *Al-kalaam laki ya Jaaratuni alaa anti himaaratuni.*	*38*
A clever spinster spins with an ass's foot as her distaff.	رامح لجرب لزعت ةلطاشلا ةلازّ *Al-azaalatii ashaatwalatu taghizili birijili himaaruni.*علا	*39*
The ass slipped (and fell); this (proceeded) from the ass driver's desire (to see a lady).	أزحـ لق الـ حمار وكـان من شهوة الـ حمار *Azahilaqi al-himaaru wa kaana mini shahiwatu al-himaaru.*	*40*
A woman's power is in her tongue.	الـ مرة قـ وتـ ها فـ ي لـ سانـ ها. *Al-mara quwatihaa fii lisaanihaa.*	*41*
Fire and women never have a small stage.	نـ ار ومرة ما عـ ندهم صـغـ ير. *Naaru wa mara maa indahumu swighaar.*	*42*
May her envy stumble over her hair.	حـا سدتـ ها تـ عـ ترفـ ي *Haasadatihaa tu'utari fii sha'aratihaa.* شعرتـ ها	*43*
A woman is a leather bag full of blood, if you carry it, it pours out and if you leave it, it becomes pus.	تْ عَّ و نإو ترَّ خ اهتلش نإ مٍّدلا ةبرقةرملا اهتيَّلخ. *Khalitaha al-mara qirbat dam inn shiltaha kharat wa inn waa'at.*	*44*
He left her upon the black ground	ادوسلا ضرلأا بلع اهلاّ خ *Khalaahaa al-ardhi as-saudaa*	*45*

Doing a favor to men brings you a good turn and doing a favor to women is water that has missed its stream.	هارجم بطخ بملا ناوسنلل َانيزو بقلت لاجرلل َانيز *Zeenani lilrijaal talqaa wa zeenani lilniswaani almaa khatwa majiraaha.*	*46*
A woman is hair that follows the neck.	الـمرة شعر تـابـع رقـبة. *Al-mara sha'ar tabia' raqaba.*	*47*
He that dresses himself with women is a naked man.	الـمـتحزم بـالـنسوة عريـان.*Al-muthazim bil niswaan ur-yaani.*	*48*
A woman has broken wings.	الـمرة مـكسورة جـناح. *Al- mara makusuratu janaha.*	*49*
He whose mother is naked will not clothe his aunt.	الأمة عريـانة مـا بـكس خالـته *Al-umu uriyana mabiksi Khaluhu.*	*50*
The public woman who is liberal does not wish for a procuress (inducement).	الـقحـبة الـجوادة مـا تـريـد لـها قـوادة *Al- qahabatu al-jawadatu maa turidu laha quwaadatunu.*	*51*
After they had ravished her, she called out to the watchmen.	حـتِ علطـنإ ةرج يندو يف يقلْ ع ةرَّ. *Ini twala'ati huratuni uliqi fii wadini juratuni.*	*52*
If a harlot repents, she becomes a procuress (marriage material).	إن تـابـت الـقحـبة عرصت.*Ini taabati al-qahabatu uriswati.*	*53*
The father has a lover-the mother is jealous - the daughter at home is puzzled how to act.	الأب عـاشق والأم غـيرانـة وبـنـتهم فـي الـدار حـيرانـة*Al- abu ashiiqunu wal- umu ghairanatunu waabintahumu fii daari hairanatuni.*	*54*
If you prove to be a virtuous woman, hang a jar on my ear.	بـعد مـا نـاكـوها عـشرة صـات لـغـفرة*Ba'ada maa naakuhaa asharatu swatu lil'ghafarati.*	*55*

She sold the lamp and bought a curtain (to hide her doings in) bed chamber. "That", said-one, "is a scandal under a fine appearance".	باعت المنارة واشترت ستارة قال دي هتيكة بتحسن عبادة *Baa'ti al-manaaratu wash'tarati sitaaratu qaala dii hatiikatu bitahisinu ibaaratu.*	*56*
A harlot repented one night when she said; "is there no police officer to take upon lay hold of harlots?"	تابت القحبة ليلة قالت ولا والي يمسك. *Taabati al- qahabatu lailatu qaalati walaa waali yamusiku al-qahabatu.*	*57*
He who kisses his lover tears out his teeth	تبوس الحريف تقلع اسنانه *Tabuusu al-harifu taqilau asinaanihi*	*58*
The tears of the adulteress are ever ready.	دموع الفواجر حواضر *Dumuu'u al-fawaajiru hawaadhiru.*	*59*
A person embraces his wife; a female neighbor affects to look as if she herself were in the wife's place.	تجّنغتا هتراجو هتارما واحد ينيك *Waahidu yaniiku imraatahu wa jaaratahu itaghanajati.*	*60*
The woman that they call a real woman is behind her door step.	المرة بيقول مرأة العتبة قلوراء *Al-mara-al biquuloo mara minn al-ataba wa liwaraa.*	*61*
Choose a good wife from a good family and having children is a matter of luck.	طيب الحديدة والضرب نصيب. *Twaibu al- hadeedah wa al- dharibu naseebu.*	*62*
She has an offensive breath, yet presses forward to get a kiss.	بخراوتزاهم على البوسى *Bakharaa wa tazaahama ala al-buusi.*	*63*
A virtuous woman had patience (with her husband) her house flourished.	ترمع اهتيب تربص قرّح *Huratu swabarati baituhaa umarati.*	*64*
God bless his mother; she was more profligate (nice) than his father.	لا جوز نيتردِ نيب اغق نيترّ ضنَّ *Rahma ala umuhu kaanati aqiwadu mini abuhu.*	*65*

Unmarried, quarrelsome and retaining no friend.	اكب قرّ حلا قريغو انز قبحقلا قريغ *Ghairatu al-qahabatu zinaa wa ghairatu alhuratu bukaa.*	*66*
A nagging woman cuts wealth and cuts provision.	وقاطعة رزق.المرة الـ ذ قذ قة قاطعة مال*Al-mara al-naqnaqa qaatwia maal wa 1qaatwia riziqi.*	*67*
The brave man is with his men and the generous one is with his wife.	بحاص هل يّلخي ام براضيو بزاع *Aazibun wa yudhwaribu maa bakhala laha swahibu.*	*68*
A decent public woman (harlot), rather than an indecent honest woman.	قجرهبم قرّ ح لاو قروتسم قبحق *Qahabatuni masuturatuni wala huratuni mubaharajatuni.*	*69*
He gets his passage for nothing (free ride), and winks to the wife of the captain (of the ship).	شيرّ لا قارمازماغي شلاب بكرس *Yarikabu bilaashi wa yughaamizi imraatu al-raisi.*	*70*
The brave man is with his men and the generous one is with his wife.	الـ راجل بـ رجالـه والـ كريـ م بـ أم عـ يالـه *Al-raajul birijaalihi wa al-karimu bi amayaalihi.*	*71*
A hair dresser, and she combs (or dresses the hair of) her daughter.	ما شطة وتـ مـ شطـ بـ ذ تها *Maa shatwatuni wa tumushitwa bintahaa.*	*72*
How great is the number of my wooers; but how small the quantity of my furniture.	يشارف لّ قأ امو يباًطخ رثكأ ام *Maa akitharu khatwabii wa maa aqalu firaashii.*	*73*
Dressing up a stick turns it into a bride.	لـ بس الـ بو صة تـ بـ قى عرو سة.*Lubusu al- buswatu tabuqa urusatuni.*	*74*
It is your face, o woman in grief, when ornamented and attired.	هو وجهك يـ ا حزيـ نة فـ ي الـ حـ لي والـ زيـ نة*Huwa wajuhuka yaa haziinatu fii al-halii wa alziinatu.*	*75*
The bald woman boasts of her niece's hair.	الـ قرعة بـ تـ تـ باهى بـ شعر بـ نت اخـ تها.	*76*

	Al-qur'atu bitatibaaha bisha'ari binti ukhutahaa.	
Beware of "khadhara al- diman". They said and what is khadhara al-dimani? He said. "A pretty woman of evil origin".	وخ ضراء الـ دمن قـالـ وا وما خ ضراء الـ دمن ؟الـمرة الـ حـ سـ نى مـ نابِ اكم *Iyakum wa khadhara al- diman, qaaloo wa maa khadharaa al- diman? Qaala al-hasna fii manibati al-suu.*	*77*
Aggrieved because she had no eyes, she purchased a looking glass (mirror) for two dirhams.	مالـها عـ يـ ذ ين ا شـ ترت مرايـ ة بـ درهـ ين.حزيـ نة *Haziinatuni maa laha ainaini ishitarati maraayatu bidirihamaini.*	*78*
Even the beautiful (woman) experiences the misfortunes of divorce.	قـ د تـ بـ لي الـ مـ لـ يحة بـ الـ طلاق *Qadi tubula al-malihatu bitwalaaqa.*	*79*
A thousand lovers rather than one husband for hire.	*Alifu* لـ حِ تسم لاو قيشع فلاً *ashiiqunu walaa musitahiluni.*	*80*
The man is the eye of the house and the girl is the support of the house.	الـ راجل عـ ين الـ بـ نت والـمرة سـ ند الـ بـ يت. *Ar-raajul ainu al-bait wal-bintu sanad al- bait.*	*81*
Women's opinion is like a leather bag full of water that has been punctured in the desert.	رأي الـمرة قـ ربـ ة إذ قدت فـ ي الـ خلاء. *Rai al- mara qirbat iniqatatu fi al-khilaa.*	*82*
A consignment will not be given to a woman.	الـمرة ما بـ وادعها. *Al-mara maa bawada wuhaa.*	*83*
Do not take your stick away from three things: a woman, a drum and a female donkey.	ثـ لاثـ ة ما تـ رفـ ع مـ نهم عـ صا الـمرةوالـ ذ قارة والـ حمارة *Thalatha maa tarfau minhum aswaa:* *Al-mara wa al-naqaara wa al- himara.*	*84*
Punishing a female is like rubbing butter over the body.	ضربـ ة الإذ تـ لـ ية زي مـ سحة الـ دهنايـ ة.	*85*

	Dharabatu al- intaya zai mash' at al- dinnaya.	
Old shoes with holes are better than a woman who has a son.	ذ عال أم ق ديد ولا مرة أم ولـ يد *Na'alu um geideedi wa la mara um Waleed.*	*86*
Avoid a mother of a child even if it is dead.	أم الـ درف ون ولـ و مدف ون. *Umm al- darufunu wa lau madufunu.*	*87*
The death of the wife is the renewal of the wedding.	موت الـ مراة تـ جديـ د الـ عرس *Mauti al-maratu tajidiidi al- urusi.*	*88*
A woman is a burden whether she is married or stays at her parents' home.	الـ مرة كـان أخت راجل هم وكـان قـ عدت فـ ي بـ يـ تك هم *Al-mara kaana ukhutu raajul hamuni wa kaana qa'dati fi biyataki hamuni.*	*89*
Men are with their tribes and women are with their good deeds.	الـ رجال قـ بائـ ل والـ ذ ساء تـ فائـ ل. *Al-rijaalu qabaayilu wal-al-niswaan nifaayilu.*	*90*
If a woman shows disrespect, punish her with another woman.	الـ مرة كـان قـ لت أدبـ ها دقـ ها بـ أخـ تها. *Al- mara kaana qalati aatabuhaa duqahaa ukhutahaa.*	*91*
Worries about girls last to death.	تاممل تانبلا مُ ه *Hamm al-banat lilmamaat.*	*92*
Even if a woman were an axe, she would not break the head.	الـ مرة إن بـ قت فـ اس ما بـ تكس الـ رأس. *Al-mara inn baqati fassi maa batakasi ar-rasu.*	*93*
Women are ropes of Satan.	الـ ذ ساء حـ بائـ ل الـ شـ يطان. *Al-nisaai habaaili al-shaitwaani.*	*94*
Let your son choose his own wife, but choose a husband for your daughter.	ولـ دك خـ ير بـ تك اخـ تارلـ يها *Waladaka khairi wa bitaka ikhtar liyha.*	*95*
A woman will not be given a leash.	الـ مرة ما بـ دوها رسن *Al-mara maa baduha rasani.*	*96*

Repetition teaches (even) a donkey.	رامحلا مّلعي راركتلا *Atikiraaru yualimu al-himaaru*	*97*
He who is wise marries for his children.	الـ عاق ل يـ تزوج لأولاده *Al-aaqilu yatazawaju lil awuladihi.*	*98*
The brain of the wisest women is like durra seed in its size (durra is millet) a very small seed.	عاق لة الـ ذ سوان ق لـ بها مـ ثل حـ بة الـ دخن*Aaqilatu al-niswaan qalibuhaa mitulu habatu aldukhani.*	*99*
Who among your children do you love most? He said: "The most cared for by my wife from the children".	همأ نسك بلع يدي نم لاق كدلاوأ هّبحت نم Mani tuhibuhu mini aulaadika qaala alaa kasi umihi.	*100*