



**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION**

**DISSERTATION TOPIC**

“The woman is subject to man on account of the weakness of her nature . . . Man is the beginning of woman...”, St Thomas of Aquinas (1225-1274). An analysis of biblical related literary works as perpetrators of women discrimination and subjugation by man: a case of John Milton ‘Paradise Lost’ (1661), ‘Samson Agonists’ (1667) and Wim Boswinkel (2003) *Erina*.

**By**

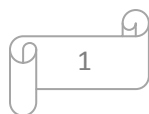
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**A dissertation submitted to the Department of English and Communication, Midlands State University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts English and Communication Honours Degree.**

**May 2013**

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## ABSTRACT

This research looks at the stereotypical presentation of women in biblical related texts by John Milton and Wim Boswinkel as well as giving an account of the causes of women debasement in society, the reasons why women are accorded all sorts of negative virtues in these male-authored texts. It is noted how women are given a low profile by men and how they are at the peripheries of religious and cultural sectors. The authors of *Erina*, 'Paradise Lost', and 'Samson Agonists' manipulate the Bible to acquire a greater status for the man thereby relegating women to the peripheries. The way women and men are represented in biblical related texts is explored and it has been proven that there is a tendency of creating lesser privileges for the 'Other' who is the female counterpart. The women are noted suffering silently as they tend to believe the patriarchal misinterpretations of the Bible that are paneled to suit the needs of the men leading to female passivity, docility as well subjugation by the male.

## DEDICATION

I am dedicating this work to my beloved parents Mr. and Mrs. K Mudzingwa, as well as my late uncle Mr. Earnest Mudzingwa. My most sincere gratitude goes to J.F Dube your support towards my academic excellence is highly commendable. Much thanks to my best friends Sihle Nkiwane and Caroline T Mutambasere for the resilient and unwavering support, you gave me throughout the course of my project. Above all things I thank God Almighty for taking me this far.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The prosperous compilation of this scholarship was completed through the efforts and undivided courage bestowed by the following person: My supervisor Miss .I. Mariko.Your constant supervision, encouragement, and leadership were of great help to me.Your persistence on quality work and presentation of information endowed me with critical skills that helped me in writing this piece of work.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background to the study

The *Bible* is depicted as the human manual that is to say, it is the one that provides the guidance on how people should live and behave on earth. It provides the ideal human being that must be emulated by the entire human race. The *Bible* also plays an important role to the Christian community as it provides the ideal woman that the rest of the ordinary women should mimic. The *Bible* as a work of art that is patriarchal in nature has brought about caste in society. Historically, women have been constructed as lesser human beings and the *Bible* has been used to justify and rationalize the oppression of women. The major intentions of this study is to show how scholars have manipulated the ideas of the *Bible* to create their own works of art in some form of intertextuality thereby perpetuating male dominance in society. The *Bible* maybe viewed as patriarchal since most of the writers of the books of the *Bible* are males. It is these ideas and more that are going to be explored further in this research. The texts *Erina*, 'ParadiseLost', and 'Samson Agonists' will be used as literary works whose ideas contest as well as affirm biblical narratives. It shall be noted that misinterpretation of the *Bible* is a major contributor to female discrimination and subjugation by patriarchal societies. Most religious based or biblical based literary texts show the women as having some inherent power of destruction or evil and are represented as the weaker sex hence this research is going to show and find ways to curb such stereotypes.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Biblical literary texts have been used somehow to escalate the oppression of women, the way they portray them determines their position on the hierarchical order that is socially constructed by detects from historical and religious doctrines determining female and male behavior thereby creating stereotypes especially on the woman.

## 1.2 Purpose of Study

The topic and area of study was chosen for a number of reasons. This study seeks to show how the *Bible* has been usurped for the empowerment of man at the expense of the female counterpart. It should be noted however that there is nothing wrong with the *Bible* but the interpretation of it by different scholars and the way people use it to fulfill their varied religious beliefs. This research seeks to help the women to see oppression that is hidden under the guise of religion, and enlighten women against the oppressive tool of religion. The importance of this research is to encourage women to rise up to roles that are reserved for males only in religious fields and the world at large. This research deals with very topical, newsworthy, as well as contemporary issues namely gender and sexuality. Religion has proved to be a very important aspect to be looked into especially with the rise of numerous churches and denominations that interpret the *Bible* in different ways as well as follow religious norms that are stipulated by the leaders of those denominations. The interpretation of the *Bible* in texts has not been really looked into at length hence the desire to carry out this research. Women oppression is an issue to be studied since the world over women are trying in all their capacity to arise from their peripheral roles that have been given to them from birth.

## **1.3 Aims and Objectives of the study**

### **1.3.1 Aim**

The research seeks to

- Show how biblical related texts encourage male dominance in society and marginalize the woman due to misinterpretations of the *Bible*.

### **1.3.2 Objectives**

The central objectives of the research are to:

- Identify ways in which biblical related literary texts perpetrate the marginalization of women.
- Show the ways in which the biblical ideologies are manipulated in the creation and formation of male aesthetics and female decadence in literary texts.
- Find ways to curb or reduce the oppression of women that is brought about by biblical misconceptions that are found in biblical related literary texts.

## **1.4 Questions guiding the study**

- How are biblical related texts manipulated to perpetrate the marginalization of women?
- How are biblical ideologies employed in the creation of male aesthetics and female decadence in literary texts?
- How can the oppression of women that is caused by biblical misconceptions be curbed?

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

The research is based on desktop research or text analysis. The researcher will make a literary survey of the selected texts that explore issues of sexuality and gender through intertextuality.

The texts will be subjected to a critical textual analysis that draws theoretical perspectives that

are mostly located in the feminist theory. So much of desk research will be used in data gathering especially upon assessment of the selected texts. The web search engines will be used as well in this research.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

Beauvoir (1949) as cited by Bartkowsy and Kolmar (2005:23) states that, ‘one is not born, but rather becomes a woman’. This philosophy by Beauvoir proves that identities are socially constructed. There are prescribed roles given to different sexes hence it seems difficult to change such identities. These so-called prescribed roles are oppressive especially to the woman under patriarchal dominance. Most feminist writers such as Dale Spender (1980) and Virginia Woolf approach literary texts with the intention to empower women, rejecting the sexist views that dominate most literary works. The fact that the bible is written by mostly men perpetrates the idea that it is literature that is male centered. Heinamaa (2003: xiv) states that, “...the fathers of existentialism suggested that woman – as we know her – is a creation of men. She is the fantasy or projection that relieves man’s anxiety of his own carnality and finitude.”

From the quotation given above one notes that women hold a major role to play in society and in particular to the lives of men hence the female’s role and position in society must be reviewed . The idea of referring to women as “a creation of men,” goes back to the myth creation that is found in the bible and it seems to make women to be noted only with reference to men. It is such views and more that are going to be explored in the research.

Beauvoir (2002) states that; ‘with the exception of German tradition, Christianity and its clergy serve to subordinate women, quoting Paul the Apostle, Ambrose, and John

Chrysostom (who wrote, "Of all the wild animals), cited as having said, none can be found as harmful as women.'

This is in line with the research topic that tries to change the ordeal that has been laid upon the women who under patriarchy are continually given the same position as animals. Furthermore women have been relegated to the position of being non-human whose human nature comes only after being attached to the masculine figure as appendages to man. Beauvoir (2002) makes reference to Paul the Apostle a spiritual figure in the *Bible* shows that even biblical personnel also casts a blind eye to misrepresentation of women. The King James Version *Bible* will be used throughout this research. It shows some scriptures in the *Bible* that are gendered for instance in the book of Titus 2:1-5;

...but as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

The scripture given above is used by male dominated societies to spell out the gender roles of both men and women. However, the women are only given roles that are domesticated. They are only noted in the presence of men and children only. It also seems like the best position that a woman can ever obtain is that of being a wife, mother as well as being married to a certain man. Authors such as Wim Boswinkel and John Milton will be studied in this research. They use

biblical ideas and more in creating literature that is read by many people thereby creating oppressive ideologies that are difficult to erase about women as discussed later on in this study. This study however, tries to bring out perceptions from the *Bible* that is misinterpreted to idealize the man and demonize the woman. Heywood (2003:258) purports that; ‘It is because of patriarchal values and beliefs that pervade culture, philosophy, morality, and religion of society that women are conditioned to passive sexual role, which has repressed their true sexuality as well as more active and adventurous side of their personalities.’ Heywood’s view raises the idea that man are the ones that spearhead the oppression of women in varied ways as they are dominant in those areas, this research tries to show that male dominance is encouraged by misinterpretations of the bible that are found in literary texts. As such, patriarchal societies use such ideas to create societies that marginalize woman and uplift man basing on misinterpretation of scripture. The fact that the bible is patriarchal in nature as noted in “God the Father, the Son ...,” shows the great need for women to rise up in defining themselves in the field of literature.

Showalter’s (1997) text with the title: *A literature of Their Own, British Women’s Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* can be used to support the idea that women must rise up to roles that are beyond those of domesticity as stipulated by those who misinterpret the bible and begin to fight for their already tarnished identities. Women have to rise up in the creation of literature especially that which involves biblical idea so that they can represent other women positively. To support this Showalter (1977) talk of the word Gynocentricism, she coined this word in an essay entitled “*Toward a Feminist Poetics.*” She states that it refers to “The development of uniquely female aesthetics an alternative, women’s literary tradition.” The philosophy that tries to beautify

the objectified woman is not given leeway in biblical related texts that have continually institutionalized a social order that places women in the inferior status under male authority. Achebe (2000:123) posits that ‘patriarchy subordinates women’s interests to men’s...,’ this is very true with reference to biblical related literary texts that have shown that they are created with a motive to magnify the role and position of the man. Groothuis (2005:3) in her journal article entitled *The Bible and Gender Equality* is of the view that;

Because woman’s subordination is deemed intrinsic to God’s original creation design, and is necessary, permanent, and grounded in woman’s unalterable ontology, it cannot be merely a “role” that has no bearing on “being.” On the contrary, if female subordination is, in fact, divinely mandated and justified for all women for all time, then it logically entails women’s fundamental inferiority in *being* and not merely in function. Yet we know from Scripture that man and woman are created equal in being. Thus, woman’s subordination is contradicted by woman’s equality.

It is not logically possible for woman to be essentially equal to man, yet

universally subordinate to man on the basis of an essential attribute (that is femaleness)...

Groothuis therefore castigates female subordination and subjugation by the male under the guise of ‘woman’s unalterable ontology.’ She shows that men and women were created to be on the same footing this is seen through the way God raised both female and male prophets. The female prophets include the likes of Deborah and Huldah who arose as great prophetesses in ancient Israel. This research therefore goes on to show that there is nothing wrong with scripture as noted by Groothuis but the interpretation of it is what should be greatly looked into before being practiced by any religious sect as there is a tendency to tyrannize the woman.

This research seeks to fight creational principle of female subordination to male authority by demystifying the belief that though Adam could have been created first it does not necessarily mean that he is superior to Eve. The research also shows that the *Bible* fights the concept of inequality as seen in the following scripture Genesis 1:26 – 27, which says, ‘So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moved upon the earth.

As such, both man and women are given the prerogative to dominate the world without an overseer between them. The notion of the bible being used as a reference to support the male dominated societies does not hold much water at all but it is a stereotype that is brought about by biblical related texts that try to reinforce the patriarchal ideologies. Proverbs 31:10-31 (KJV) which concurs that:

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price [is] far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands, she planteth a vineyard...

The scripture above shows the woman as a being that is capable to do any kind of work not altered by the weaknesses of her nature as proclaimed by misinterpreted biblical related literary



texts that have an affiliation towards males. Groothuis (2005:4) is of the view that ‘Genesis 1 and 2 represent Edenic harmony between woman and man, with no evidence of a hierarchy of authority between them...’ This point also repudiates the idea that men were created with greater authority than women were.

The clearly defined gender roles that are based on the myth of creation should be dealt away with especially by beginning gender socialization of children that does not enhance gender stereotypes. Smith (2004) in his article entitled *Paradise Lost by John Milton: A Critical Reading of Adam’s fall* states that ‘Adam’s fall in *Paradise Lost* is only made possible by the fact that Eve succumbs to temptation. Without her transgression, it is unlikely that Adam would have even wanted to taste the fruit from the tree of knowledge’. This somehow portrays men as not responsible for their own actions hence the question of their dominance is rather questionable. Dale Spender (1980) wrote a book entitled *Man Made Language* because she had noticed that language is greatly patriarchal in nature. It seems man played a major role in the creation and formation of language hence the language has a bias towards them. This is one of the factors that cause women to be subjugated by men. Stuton cited in Bryson (2003:37) states that:

All forms of organized religion were hostile to women; the Hindu widow on the funeral pyre, the Turkish woman in the harem, the American mother refusing chloroform in childbirth because she must suffer for Eve’s original sin- all were victims of male dominated religion. Patriarchy makes it seem like female subordination is divinely ordained.

It is noted that the woman from varied religious sectors have accepted their oppressive roles that are harmful to them all done so that they fulfill the punishment that was put upon Eve. These oppressive religious beliefs that are later on used in the creation of literary texts are the reason why women subjugation by the men has continued without being contested as it is all taken to be a fulfillment of scripture .whereas it is seen that it is all misinterpretation of scripture.

Showalter (1977) in her book *A Literature of Their Own* advocates for women to rise up in the creation of language. Any reference made to the woman is linked to the man as seen in the following words; female (Fe – male), woman (WO - man), “woman” is believed to mean ‘man with a womb’. It is believed to have originated from the idea that the female Eve was created from Adam’s rib and she is a male; her only difference is that she has a womb that a man does not have. Most feminists however have advocated for gender-neutral language or non- sexist language. Eve was created due to the fact that God noted that Adam on his own could not survive to the fullest.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

This research is hinged on feminism, it focuses on the way both man, and women co-exist in a society. Furthermore, feminism seeks to improve the social condition of women through advocating for equality between men and women politically, economically and socially. Additionally feminism states that opportunities should be awarded equally regardless of gender. This study looksat the analysis of texts according to liberal feminism. Liberal feminism can also be termed individualist or libertarian feminism. Tong (1989) states that:

Liberal feminists argue that our society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men, it tends to discriminate against

women in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace. Liberal feminists believe that female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that blocks women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world and they work hard to emphasize the equality of men and women through political and legal reform.

From the quotation given above a woman has the capacity to do just as men in all aspects of life hence she has no biological, historical, religious or even cultural defects that can determine her position in the world. According to Tapper (1986:1), "Liberal conception of the individual ought to be extended to include women, and that women ought to be accepted on equal terms with men in the public realm". Upon creation the women was given the role of child bearing upon which she was to have pain during conception and Adam was to till the land to earn a living (Genesis 3:16-20 KJV). This is a direct division of gender roles that is still practised even up to now. Liberal feminism therefore comes in as a theory that seeks to liberate the women from being housekeepers and baby bearing machines.

Tapper goes on to say; "Liberal feminist reject the traditional liberal correlation between the women and the private sphere and between men and the public sphere". This calls for revision of the gender roles that are biblically stipulated to suit the plight of the women. Liberal feminists complain about the woman being confined to the job of mother as well as wife. It fights the gender system and seeks to purge the society from the belief that gender roles are a biological construct when in particular it's a social construct. Liberal feminism also is against media that encourages boys to be 'masculine' and girls to be 'feminine'. It is observed that the males to create gender roles that are biased towards man usurp the *Bible*. The theory also states that, the

social division of work as man's job or woman's job is wrong and has to be avoided. It is a source of gender inequality hence there must not be any limitation on reproductive choice.

This theory tries so much to curb the oppression of the woman who is continually relegated to the periphery by male dominance that is further enhanced by biblical related texts that seem to advocate for the cause of the males leaving the woman vulnerable to bigotry. Liberal feminism accepts and works with the gender system, with the goal of purging it of its discriminatory effects on women. Liberal feminism therefore shows that women are as much capable to do equally or even better than men are.

### **1.8 Definition of Terms**

Feminism	: advocacy of women's rights and sexual equality
Androcentrism	: is the practice, conscious or otherwise, of placing male human beings or the masculine point of view at the center of one's view of the world, culture, and history.
Gynocentricism	: practice of placing the feminine point of view at the center.
Oppression	: govern or treat cruelly thereby weighing down the inferior other
Emancipation	: free from inhibitions of moral, social conventions or political restraints.
Exploitation	: take advantage of especially in favor of oneself at the expense of the other.
Empowerment	: give authority to
Religion	: belief in a superhuman controlling power especially in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship.
Patriarchy	: male dominated social system, with descent through the male line.

Phallogocentric : an analysis of how women are represented in male-authored texts.

Sexism : prejudice or discrimination of (especially of women), on grounds of sex.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that part of the oppression of women is hidden in religion especially detects of misinterpretations of the bible that are rationalized to suit the needs of men.

# CHAPTER TWO

## ‘PARADISE LOST’

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on an analysis of ‘Paradise Lost’ an epic poem by John Milton. The poem shall be exposed to feminist criticism. However, the theory that shall be given much prevalence is the liberal feminist theory. The discussion will put particular focus on the thematic concerns that the book subscribes to. Furthermore, it shall outline how these themes show biblical misrepresentation in literary texts.

### 2.2 Author Biography

John Milton was born on December 9, 1608 in London, England. He grew up to become a historian, journalist, pamphleteer, and a poet. He learnt at Christ’s College Cambridge. It is at this very college that he started writing. The following is a list of his works and the years in which the works were published:

- *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* (1629)
- *On Shakespeare* (1632)
- *Lycidas* (1638)
- *Epitaphium Damonis* (1639)

Milton also wrote pamphlets on political and religious matters namely;

- *Of Reformation, Animadversions* (1641)
- *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* (1641)

- *The Reason for Church Government* (1642)

Milton also wrote what he terms ‘Divorce Tracts’, soon after divorcing his wife and had become an object of scorn in society. The names of the texts are namely:

- *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643)
- *The Judgment of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce* (1644)

He seems to write about the situations that prevails in his life and time that he lived as seen in

- *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649)

When he lost his eyesight, he published the book:

- *When I Consider How My Light is Spent* (1652)
- *Paradise Lost* (1667)
- *History of Britain* (1670)
- *Paradise Regain'd* (1671)
- *Samson Agonists* (1671)

After writing, all the aforementioned works Milton eventually died of gout and was buried at a church of St Giles, Cripplegate in November 1674. He has to this day a monument at Westminster Abbey a place where poets are buried.

## 2.3 Brief Poem Synopsis

*Paradise Lost* (1667) is an epic poem by John Milton it attempts to give a history about the origins of humanity as well as giving an account of how sin ,evil and death just to mention a few vices, entered the world and seem to prevail. It is a story that describes the myth of creation. This is a narration of the first few chapters of the greatest book of literature, the bible (Gen 2:7 – 25 to 3:1-24). It is of vital importance to note that John Milton did not take the biblical story as it is but

he added some more characters and he also gives an account of what transpired that is more detailed than the information that is in the *Bible*. One is made to wonder the motive that influenced him to add that information. It begins with the devil after being chased from Heaven due to his unquenchable desire to be on the same position with God, cause him to be thrown out of Heaven. He ends up in Hell and the place is called Pandemonium.

The devil that is also known as Lucifer decides to go into the newly created world to cause trouble. He meets Sin and Death his offspring and they open the gate for him to go and deceive the world. God the Father who is in company with of the Son foresees the imminent evil that is to fall upon the new world. The devil is so deceitful that he tricks the angel Uriel (the angel that guards the Garden of Eden) to show him the way to Earth. When Satan arrives on the universe, he overhears Adam and Eve conversing saying what God had commanded them that they should not eat the forbidden fruit. Uriel notices the presence of the Devil and notifies Gabriel of Satan's presence. The angel Raphael is later on sent to warn Adam and Eve about Satan. Raphael gives an account of how Satan as the most favored Angel became Jealous of the Son also known as the Messiah and waged war against him. Satan and his followers lost the battle and they were chased away from Heaven. Raphael gave an account that also led to him explaining how humans were created, this entire he told Adam.

When Raphael returned to Heaven, Satan returned and enters a serpent. He then finds Eve alone and he tries some foul play on her. He induces her to eat the forbidden tree. When Adam notices that Eve had fallen into sin, due to his love for her he joins in to eat the forbidden fruit. After eating, they notice that they are naked and they begin to lust for one another. The Messiah then



descends onto Earth to judge the sinners but he delays the death sentence. Sin and Death built a highway from Hell to Earth since sin was now dominating rather than purity.

When Satan returns to Hell, he and his fallen angels are permanently turned into serpents as punishment. Michael is assigned to expel Adam and Eve out of Paradise, and he prophesies about the future generations that are to come explaining all this to Adam. Adam is saddened about the outcome of their actions, as it had cost them so much. However, a ray of hope is raised when he is told about the coming of the Son to deliver the world. They are driven out of Paradise sad but hopeful that things will be well for them when the Son, Messiah comes to redeem the world.

## **2.4 Review of the Poem ‘Paradise Lost’**

The epic poem aims to give reasons as to how humans came into being, give an account of the origins of sin as well as to show how the universe and all that is in it was formulated. John Milton draws certain ideas from the *Bible* into the creation of ‘Paradise Lost’ in some form of intertextuality. His link to Christ’s College Cambridge made him to be greatly affiliated to the bible and hence the creation of *Paradise Lost* was inspired by that. When the most favored angel Lucifer sinned against God, God sought for an alternative to replace Satan and other angels that had decided to rebel against God. Satan says in line 261- 264;

Here we may reign secure, and in my choice  
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:  
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.  
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends...

The Devil sought to reign in Hell than to be under God's rule as such he rebelled against God because of his pride. John Milton makes use of 3<sup>rd</sup> person narration he makes the reader to have a feel of what was happening in the minds of the characters in contrast to the bible that has nothing close to that. Humans are referred to as "mortal man," who were made little inferior to the angels and so this angered Satan and his companion because he knew very well that he was destined for doom and eternal punishment in Hell. God loved mortal man such that he prepared the Garden of Eden for man to dwell there in.

The first to be created is Adam a masculine figure; a scholar namely Adams (2005:18) concurs that "Adam can stand for humanity in general, for people of low degree, or for the male of the human species." A deep analysis of the statement given above can be interpreted to mean that men are the ideal humans as seen through God awarding men first preference upon creation. Liberal feminists therefore castigate such ideas that create inequalities between the woman and the man. The fact that Adam was created first before Eve has a lot of bearing upon feminist critiques. The story of creation seems to be patriarchal and this according to liberalist should be dealt away with as it brings gender imbalances.

The bible according to Genesis 1: 26 – 27 states that;

And God said; Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

The scripture above totally discards the superiority of Adam to Eve as stated by Milton who uses Eve to declare her own inferiority that uplifts Adam as the 'head' in Book IX line 1155-1156 she states that 'Being as I am, why didst not thou, the head, / Command me absolutely not to go.' Milton gives Eve words that make her docile as well as passive the Bible does not accord her such kind of speech. The Bible shows that both man and woman are equal and were given the same kind of domination over all things that are upon the face of the Earth.

Furthermore, Adams (2005:19) goes on to say; "Nearly always, Adam appears to mean the whole human race, both male and female," It is from this very idea that humanity is regarded as "man." Milton goes on to show Eve confessing with her own mouth that Adam is her superior when she says that Adam is supposed to 'Command' her in Book IX line 1155 - 1156. This is the idea that the patriarchal society uses to enforce the idea that man is greater than women are. Women are therefore finding it difficult to castigate this idea, as it will be considered heresy.

Milton had a patriarchal stance when he wrote his poem. It is noted that the angel Raphael converses with Adam about the future generations that were to come after him while Eve is busy preparing food as instructed by Adam for the unexpected visitor Raphael. Book V line 313 - 316

... But go with speed,  
And, what thy stores contain, bring forth, and pour  
Abundance, fit to honor and receive  
Our heavenly stranger:

The Bible does not show Adam sending Eve to go and search for food for the unexpected visitor. This is done intentionally by Milton to encourage women to comply with domestic chores. God spoke to both Adam and Eve when giving them their punishments after eating the forbidden

fruit. As an extension to this, Milton adds another patriarchal stance by showing Raphael and Adam discussing the future of humanity with the exclusion of Eve. While Eve is taken to be doing household chores in the private sphere, Adam is given a principal role that is to meet with the angel. Milton shows Adam's greatness in the public realm in the following words of Book V line 350 - 351, "Meanwhile our primitive great sire, to meet /His God-like guest walks forth, without more train." Primitive here means early stages of civilization according to the Oxford Dictionary (1994). Milton is of the idea that Adam was more civilized than Eve. Milton has created gender roles for both man and woman the latter being in the public sphere and the former relegated to domesticity or the private sphere. It should be observed that the bible never gave voices to its characters as done by Milton. Additionally there is no one instance in the bible where Eve is given duties to do by Adam. One can therefore say that John Milton's Adam is of a higher rank as compared to Eve since he is the only one who has the opportunity to talk to an angel Raphael an event that is not mentioned in the bible. This goes on to relegate women to peripheral roles of domesticity rather than the public sphere.

Eve is seen only in the scheming of the evil deeds when conversing with the serpent. This proves that Milton is of the idea that women represent the evil force in society. Milton also seems to imply that women are only good in issues that are deconstructive, denigrate, as well as wicked. This is against the scripture in Genesis 1:31 which says 'And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, [it was]very good...' it must be noted that everything that God created was moral as such though Eve sinned the evil is not to be labeled entirely on her. The devil is to be regarded as the evil one since he is the one who schemed evil against humanity.

Milton also believes that a man possesses a greater mind than that of a woman, he further goes on to show that the woman was created to serve God as well as man. All this is illustrated in Book 4 line 295-300 which says:

Whence true autoritie in men; though both  
Not equal, as their sex not equal seemd;  
For contemplation hee and valour formd,  
For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace,  
Hee for God only, she for God in him:  
His fair large Front and Eye sublime declar'd  
Absolute rule; ...

Milton displays a renowned aspect in the patriarchal world that is to hail the beauty of the women rather than acknowledging other more positive aspects like their intellectual capacity. Unlike the man who is praised because of his valour. The statement 'Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;' is a misrepresentation of the bible. The bible does not proclaim inequality of the female and the male. From the extract above, women are represented with a dual role that is to serve two masters that is Adam and God. This is a misinterpretation of the bible. The bible according to Genesis 2:24 'therefore, shall man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.' The fact that the bible shows God saying man and woman shall be 'one flesh', can be argued to mean that there was an emphasis on the equality of both man and woman. As such, both individuals have a dual role to play that is to worship God as well as cleaving to the wife or to the husband.

In addition to that, the female is considered as apparent due to her ability to convince Adam to partake of the forbidden tree. If this is put under scrutiny, it should be noted that it is not Eve who is the root cause of the fall of humanity but Satan must be held accountable since he is the one who schemed the idea of causing humanity to sin to have more people together with him in Hell. The Pennsylvania State University (1998:55) published a series of John Milton's Paradise Lost and according to their analysis of Book V they state that 'The garden described; Satan's first sight of Adam and Eve; his wonder at their excellent form and happy state, but with resolution to work their fall;...'. This is another form of evidence as to Satan being the cause of the fall of Eve. Milton is seen casting all blame on Eve in the following word;

O Heav'n! in evil strait this day I stand  
Before my judge, either to undergoe  
Myself the total Crime, or to accuse  
My other self, the partner of my life;  
Whose failing, while her Faith to me remains,  
I should conceal, and not expose to blame  
By my complaint; but strict necessittie  
Subdues me, and calamitous constraint...

The statement by Adam is not genuinely taking all the blame but somehow Adam is in a diplomatic way casting all the blame on Eve, The *Bible* is very silent about casting the blame on anybody concerning the fall of humanity.

The title of the book is striking 'Paradise Lost' the title somehow is discouraging as it is negative in nature. It prepares one for the imminent loss that is inevitable, it makes the reader want to read and understand how Paradise was lost and who was responsible for the loss. This goes on to put the blame on Eve. All fingers point towards her and she is seen as the sole cause of the fall of humanity. In Book X line, 874 – 877 shows the way Eve is blamed for the fall of humanity, which says;

With men, as angels, without feminine;  
Or find some other way to generate  
Mankind? This mischief had not been befallen  
And more that shall befall; innumerable  
Disturbance on through female snares.

Eve is seen as the sole being that caused the fall of humanity. These stereotypical ideas are a John Milton creation that is not in the Bible. It is created by Milton to uplift patriarchal domination. This book was written during the medieval period. During this period the woman was greatly oppressed by the dictates of the church. Religious doctrines that were stipulated emphasized on the oppression of the women. This is seen in the books that were written during the time for instance *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* by Geoffrey Chaucer, which also raises ideas on how women were treated during those times because of religious precepts. John Milton and Chaucer are all writers of the medieval period hence they portray the kind of life that was prevalent during the time that was perpetrated by biblical misinterpretation of the bible.

## 2.5 Women vs. Men

Milton is of a patriarchal stance. He idealizes the man and demonizing the woman. Man throughout the book are given dominant roles for instance being Angels, God as well as the Son as compared to the only woman who is not given virtues but is docked with all sort of negative vices. Milton's portrayal of the woman with negative vices is seen in Book III line 681-688 when God is speaking with the angel as follows;

So spake the false dissemble unperceived;  
For nether man nor angel can discern  
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks  
Invisible, except to God alone,  
By his permissive will, through  
Heaven and Earth:  
And oft, though wisdom wake, suspicion sleeps  
At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity  
Resigns her charge, while goodness  
thinks no ill....

Hypocrisy and simplicity is referred to as 'her'. It shows that Milton thought that women were hypocrites as well as people of low standards. He uses the character of God to represent his regard on women as people low standards. In the bible, there is no scripture that presents God relegating women to the peripheries. Furthermore in Book III line 732 Milton presents a statement as follows "And in her pale dominion checks the night" the domination that is led by this feminine character is referred to as light by the word 'pale', hence Milton shows that the



woman is not capable to dominate in any area in a significant way. Women domination according to Milton is not productive. Liberal feminism politically is known to advocate for equality of both woman and man in all spheres of life and it fights against gender discrimination seeking both man and woman to be at par at the workplace, culturally as well as in many dominant fields that have been termed man dominated. Milton does not show equality of the sexes he fetishizes the man through the character Adam and demonizes the woman as seen through the portrayal of Eve. This male esteem is seen in Book IX line 232, which states that; ‘Upraised: for nothing lovelier can be found/ In woman, than to study household good,/And good works in her husband to promote.’

The woman just has to be subservient to a man. Milton portrays Eve as disobedient to God as well as Adam even though he later ate from the tree and is justified as having performed the act because of the love that he had for Eve. She is seen as the root cause of evil, her failure to follow God’s command proves that she is power hungry and desires to be on the same position with God. Even though Adam knew about the command not to eat from the Forbidden tree he went on to sin and we even see him blaming God saying ‘the wife that you gave me Lord.’ This is seen when Eve says the following words in the poem (Book X line 914- 917)

..., that all  
The sentence from thy head removed may light  
On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe  
Me, me only just object of his ire.

Eve is seen taking all the blame to herself, the bible shows God entering the Garden of Eden immediately after the fruit had been eaten he calls Adam in Genesis 3:9 saying ‘ And the LORD

God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where [art] thou?’ Milton shows a different scenario in Book X line 158 he shows God asking Eve saying ‘Say ,Woman ,what is this which thou hast done?’ .Milton has already condemned Eve by asking her what she had done which is not factual according to the bible.

Milton shows that the women’s desire to be on the same footing together with man might never be attainable as seen through Eve who ate the forbidden fruit to be a ‘god’ herself. According to an unpublished Journal by Chikako Tanimoto entitled *Milton’s Eve in Paradise lost*, is of the idea that ‘ Eve is a subject to Adam’, furthermore he states that ‘Eve is a patriarchal ideal of womanhood denied of autonomous identity and trained to be obedient to men by male power.’

During Milton’s time, the misogyny that was prevalent was that of the assertion that women are extremely mediocre to men, principally evil, and mostly to be avoided. This is seen in book X 145- 153;

Was shee thy God, that her thou didst obey  
Before his voice, orwasse made thy guide,  
Superior, orbut equal, that toher  
Thou did’st resigne thyManhood, and thePlace  
Wherein Godset thee abovehermadeof thee,  
And forthee, whoseperfection farr excell’d  
Hers in all real dignitie: Adorn’d  
She wasindeed, and lovely to attract  
ThyLove, not thy Subjection, and her Gifts

Line 150 is a misinterpretation it is done intentionally by Milton to glorify and exalt the cause of the man the bible does not make mention to this. This also shows all the so-called good virtues of the man as opposed to those of the woman. Men are viewed as perfect, with real dignity, the ones to rule, meant to be above as ordained by God as well as govern the woman. The opposite should be considered true for the woman that is she is inferior, under subjection and Adam's government. Patriarchal society believes women were created different from man because as they are portrayed as fair, beautiful and gentle as compared to the man. The males to create docility of the women then use these character traits. However, Adam seems to castigate such an idea in Book IV line 490-491 he says 'How beauty is excell'd by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair.' Here Milton uses Adam to glorify the already dominant man so as to discard the only positive aspect that is found on the woman. It is seen that these biblical characters are given voice to denigrate the woman. It is such ideas that are fought by liberal feminists as well as the researcher. Biblical misinterpretations have been exposed as it is seen in authors who misrepresent woman through hiding under the smokescreen of biblical ideologies as seen in how Milton portrays Eve in his poem as opposed to the ideal portrayal in the *Bible*.

Inequality is seen in the statement made by the devil in Book IV line 295-299

... though both  
Not equal, as their sex not equal seemd;  
For contemplation hee and valour formd,  
For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace,  
Hee for God only, shee for God in him

Eve has a dual role to play she has to be in subjection to both God and the man but Adam has God as the only one above him. This also proves how males can manipulate the biblical ideologies to advocate for the subjugation of women. Eve does hero worship on Adam she says in Book IV line 635 she says ‘My Author and Disposer what thou bidst/ Unargu’d I obey...’. Eve proves to be modest and subordinated hence most married man find it difficult to handle a wife who is aggressive they always regard such a woman as not fit to be a wife . A wife’s obedience is always measured by her being subservient to the husband. Galatians 3:26 -29 states that ‘... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond, nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.’ The bible considers all humanity as equals.

It is such ideas and more that feminists seek to re - address that cause women to be oppressed. Liberal feminism does not agree with the concept that women should remain as wives and mothers as done by patriarchy it desires women to voice when they are oppressed but Eve actually declares that she will “unargu’d obey’. Such biblical misinterpretations that somehow prove that the woman should not refuse any word that the man says even if it is wrong should be noted and curbed upon study of literary texts to avoid the continuity of gender stereotypes especially the subjugation of the woman.

### **2.6.0 Female Subjugation in Milton’s Language**

Milton makes use of mild words in reference to women. A comparison of language use with reference to femininity (Eve) and masculinity (Adam) is strikingly different and oppressive to the female countepact. The following table shall be used to demarcate Adam and Eve according to John Milton’s language. It should be noted that the bible does differentiate Adam and Eve in only one instance; it is only noted when Adam refers to Eve as ‘Woman’. This is found in

Genesis 2:24 it says ‘And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh’: she shall be called Woman....’ To Adam he took it that they were one with Eve .The word ‘Woman’ was meant to show that the link between was a bond not as highlighted by Milton as showing some form of inferiority of the woman.

### 2.6.1 Comparison of Eve and Adam’s Character Traits According to Milton

**TABLE 1.1**

<b><u>ADAM</u></b>	<b><u>MEANING</u></b>	<b><u>EVE</u></b>	<b><u>MEANING</u></b>
Sublime	Noble, kind and pure	Veil	Counterfeit/disguise
Fair	Archaic beautiful	Sweet attractive grace	Extreme beauty and charm.
Absolute rule	Complete domination	Subjection	Living under a rule or governance.
Valour	Courage	Wanton	Sexually promiscuous

The comparison made between Adam and Eve is highly stereotypical .It promotes or rather encourages one to favour Adam at the expense of Eve. The bible is very silent when it comes to portrayal of these two different characters. The differentiation of these two characters is controversial as it seems to be a creation of John Milton’s worldview that is socially constructed hence it can be subjected to change. Liberal feminists spearhead the idea of the upliftment of the woman and castigate female oddity. It must become a societal norm therefore that women can also be equally good as men are. This must be enforced especially in biblical related texts. Oppressive and distortive language must be avoided and gender-neutral language should be used

in the creation of literary texts. The words given above were taken from the following extracts; the first one denotes Eve's character traits that will be underlined and the second one Adam's traits. Book IV line 302 – 306

She, as a veil down to the slander waist  
Disheveled but in wanton ringlets waved  
As the vine curls her tendrils which implied  
Subjection ...

Adam is given positive character traits in the following extract that also has Eve's character trait that will be italicised. It is taken from Book IV line 293 – 299;

Whence true autoritie in men; though both  
Not equal, as their sex not equal seemd;  
For contemplation hee and valour formd,  
For *softness* shee and *sweet attractive Grace*,  
Hee for God only, shee for God in him:  
His fair large Front and Eye sublime declar'd  
Absolute rule; ...

It is high time the emancipation of the women in all sectors of life must arise and discarding all ways that are manipulated to bring about the oppression of the woman by patriarchal society or in any other means possible. Hence, there should be equality in literary texts that are biblically related without discrimination even according to sexual orientation.

## 2.7 The Role of Women in the Myth of Creation

Women seem to be of no value in the myth of creation. Eve the Mother of humanity is the only significant role that she obtains. Her significance comes in bearing children. However, it must be noted that Milton writes with male aesthetics in mind he has a tendency to empower the man as the expense of the women. Man and female were given authority over the earth upon creation in Genesis 1:26 -28 as such there is no peculiar individual who is superior to the other. It must be noted that the bible, with particular view to the book of Genesis that talks about the myth of creation does not create differences between the male figure and the female. Book IV line 465-473 shows God in conversation with Eve. Eve is alone and she looks at her reflection in the water. This one of the extensions from the biblical myth of creation of the *Bible*. God says this to Eve according to Milton's account 'Inseparably thine, to him shalt bear/ Multitudes like thyself, and thence be called/Mother of all human race...'

There is no synonym between a woman and childcare. The statement above by Milton could be taken as defining women's duty or role. The voice that is given to God is not there in the bible there is nowhere where he is seen saying these words. This is just fallacy that is created by Milton to idealize the man. Men hide behind the smoke screen of biblical interpretation thereby hiding their oppression on the females figure. It is noted that the woman is the one who is first lured into sin by the devil as such fingers are pointed toward her as the root cause of the fall of humanity.

## 2.8 Plight of the Woman

The fact that women were created second and the male was made to be superior to her is a cause for concern. It is to be noted that women are not complete if men are not there. Man was lonely

without the women so they needed each other. God said ‘let us create a helper, it is not good for a man to stay alone.’ A helper is not a subservient being but there to advise. It is of great importance for women to be eased off the burden of being appendages of men. The ideas that were enforced to the women by the early church must be reviewed to bring equality of both man and women. Eve fell into sin the moment he asked to be separated from Adam so that she could work on her own. This has a negative impact upon the women. It reduces her to a person without ability to do anything on her own. A close analysis of the text shows that while Eve was alone she became vulnerable to Satan’s schemes hence she got deceived. one can interpret this and say that it means that women on their own can never do anything significant but are prone to harm themselves and the community at large. Women in the text are not awarded the opportunity to make their choices and decisions on their own. There is need for the creation of literature that fights for equal opportunities enhanced upon all parties. Inequalities must be dealt away with to create a society that is liberal to do anything as long as it does not bring harm to the other company especially of the opposite sex. Sexism must be fought to the core. All forms of prejudice must be evaded that is the allocation of gender roles that is not fair. This can be linked to the relegation of women to nobodies that are incapable of achieving good. The idea that by nature women are the secondary sex should be destroyed to curb the oppression of women.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

It has been noted that ‘Paradise Lost’ adds information to the bible myth of creation and such additions are the ones that perpetrate the subjugation of women by man. Additions that are placed on the myth of creation must avoid the use of oppressive language especially on the woman. The voices that Milton gives to the characters are biased towards the man. There is



great need for scholars to take note of the oppressive language to avoid the application of these oppressive stances in real life as they will be considered biblically correct yet they will be ideas of ordinary man that they will have added to the biblical stories.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SAMSON AGONISTS

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The poem that is to be studied in this chapter is 'Samson Agonists' by John Milton. John Milton makes use of intertextuality; it focuses on a biblical story of Samson and Dalila. The story is taken from the book of Judges 13 - Judges 16. It re - tells the story of Samson from birth to his death. The book was published in 1967 as part of a volume with John Milton's four epic poems and it comes under the following title 'Paradise Regain'd' under the title page written '*Paradise Regain'd*'. A Poem in IV books, to which is added 'Samson Agonists'. The poem is a tragic poem. This chapter gives a critique of Samson Agonists by John Milton also exposing the thematic concerns that perpetuate the oppression of the woman especially by man who are influenced by wrong interpretations of biblical narratives.

#### **3.1 Background of the Poem**

Samson Agonists is a tragic poem and according to Aristotle (1922: XIV), a tragedy is defined as: 'The imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in appropriate and pleasurable language...in a dramatic rather than narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of these emotions.' The definition means that; tragedy deals with serious issues that are of great importance. Tragedies induce fear unto the audience as is done upon the audience when Samson's eyes are plucked out and when he destroys the building and he dies together with many Philistines. A tragedy must also enhance pity upon its targeted audience. In Samson Agonists pity is noted when Samson moves towards

his destructive end. He loses his sight and at the end, he dies. These emotions are released through a catharsis that is the purging or eradication of these emotions that will have built up upon the audience. In the tragic poem 'Samson Agonists', this is achieved when Samson commits suicide destroying a building together with everybody else in it in some form of poetic justice.

The poem focuses on the warrior Samson who has a gift from birth. He is endowed with so much strength. His strength causes him to fight with a lion and he manages to kill it. His strength brings the climax of the story. When the Philistines notice that he had so much strength they became as inquisitive as to the source of his power. It is at that moment that Delila, Samson's wife is asked by the Philistines to inquire about the source of his strength. Three times, he lied to Delila who seemed to betray him all the times and called the Philistines to come and collect him since they were not pleased by Samson's strength. Delilah is an image of all women and once again, the woman has negative attributes that seem to pull the man down. Just like Eve in 'Paradise Lost', Delila is the cause of the entrance of evil upon Samson's life. Delila was supposed to be there to support Samson through good or bad times. She comes in as a force that is destructive upon his life.

It is stereotypes such as the depiction of women as evil that are now socially acceptable since it is coming from the aesthetics that misinterpret the world's greatest book of literature the *Bible*. Milton, the fact that he uses the stories from the bible cause his readers to give more attention to him since he writes with reference to the holy book many people are liable to believe whatever he says, thereby manipulating the bible. The *Bible* relates original stories as they happened but Milton adds to these stories stereotypical information through the characters behavior that is

different from the original story. The characters are given voices whereas the *Bible* only gives a brief narration of all that took place. Milton's detailed account of the stories makes them to be biased, as there is a likelihood that he wrote to express his ideas about the worldview, which was highly patriarchal during Milton's time.

Milton therefore in 'Samson Agonists' takes the story from the bible and re-writes it changing the characters like Manoa (Samson's father) and representing Dalila as married to Samson. Somehow the character that stands as Samson's mother is left out in this poem. The leaving out of that character shows how Milton cast a blind eye on the importance of Samson's mother. The leaving out of this female character could be taken to mean that she was of less importance therefore; it shows how Milton found the motherly role as of no particular significance to plot development. This can be taken as biblical misrepresentation a critical issue that the researcher seeks to bring out as rife in most biblical related literary texts and that is viewed as playing a dominant role in female subordination.

Milton believed that female subjection to men was established in creation. The way he portrays his female characters shows how the female is the 'Other' and the male stands as the 'Subject.' In this case, Delila is the 'Other' and Samson is the 'Subject.' The *Bible* if interpreted wrongly by patriarchal dominated societies that seem to grant men spiritual authority and other religious privileges that it denies to women. This is seen when Milton gives Samson voice and he says in line 210 – 211 "Tax not divine disposal, wisest Men/Have err'd, and by bad Women been deceiv'd..." Scripture teaches that God created man and woman equally in God's image this according to Genesis 5: 1 -2. It must be noted that at one point both Samson and Delila were guilty of betrayal, according to Milton's detailed account of the story it is only Delila who seems

to be referred to as a betrayer. It must be noted that biblically men have been given a unique spiritual prerogative to represent God, determine God's will, interpret God's Word, and stand accountable to God for the women under their authority. Samson is given positive traits. He is obedient to God since he seeks to do the will of God always; He is also very powerful he wins every battle that he is involved in even that with the ferocious lion. Delila only appears to destroy the will of God upon Samson's life. The Philistines used a woman to lure Samson into sin. It is also noted that Satan also used Eve to lure humanity into sin. Hence, ultimately the woman is viewed as responsible for the fall of humankind.

This poem was written during the **medieval period** and it should be noted that the, medieval church gave unfair treatment especially to the woman. It was highly patriarchal in nature and it emphasized much of male dominance. The medieval period is the time when man had an upper hand over woman. Chastity was greatly emphasized during that time, virginity especially of the woman was considered as the only demarcate of purity. The marriage institution was considered as sacred due to the stipulations of the medieval church. The woman was supposed to play servitude to the man as was specified by the church doctrines. Geoffrey Chaucer a scholar of the medieval period shows how the church was oppressive especially to the woman through the protagonist of the tale namely *The Wife of Bath*. She questions the scriptural origins of chastity and she asks a rhetoric question saying

When have you seen that in any time great God forbade marriage explicitly? Tell me, I pray you. Or where did he command virginity? You know as well as I, without a doubt, that the apostle, when he speaks of maidenhood, says that he had no instructions on it.

Men may counsel a woman to be single, but counseling is not commanding; he left it to

our own judgment.

Chastity is a good thing but there is nowhere in the bible where God commanded on virginity especially of the woman. The Apostle Paul referred to it but not as a command in 1 Corinthians 7:1-6. Just as stipulated by the liberal feminists who advocate for both man and woman to be equals the bible states in 1 Corinthians 7: 3- 4 'Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.' From Apostle Paul's word, it must be recognized that the *Bible* does not bring imbalances between sexes it encourages harmony through equal distribution of roles. Therefore, biblical based literary texts encourage gender imbalances through their misconceptions of the *Bible*.

Medieval writers like John Milton also incorporated the oppressive ideas of the medieval period into their writing. The medieval period was also influenced by scholars that misunderstood the bible by portraying women as the weaker sex doctored with all forms of evil and the man was represented as the ideal masculinity when in actual fact the bible talks about the equality of both parties in all areas of life. The patriarchal society hence formed a society that was largely male centered as opposed to equality that was supposed to exist between males and females as denoted by the bible when understood properly without any biases.

The researcher therefore shows that 'Samson Agonists' is a biblical related text that further encourages the oppression of the women through its depiction of the female characters. There is a great need for writers to change or revisit the way women are epitomized in the literary texts. This is seen in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tale: The wife of Bath's Prologue and Tales*. The tale tries so much to show the oppressive defects of the medieval church upon the women, it

is noted that Milton was also encouraged to write against the woman because of the time in which he lived. The tale gives an account of the Wife of Bath's life and she is rebellious to the demands of the church that are manipulative. Chaucer therefore calls for all women to mimic her to free themselves from the oppressive rule of the medieval church that was highly patriarchal in nature because of their wrong interpretation of the bible. It is a cause for concern for all women to rise up against any form of oppression as was done by The Wife of Bath.

## **3.2 Thematic Concerns**

### **3.2.1 Women's Quest for Authority**

'Samson Agonist' as a male-authored text seems to show women somehow with some wicked power to seize man wrongfully from their position of dominance. It should be noted that Milton is saying that man sin only because of the woman; she is the one who is the root cause of their downfall. Women have an inherent power to seize the male from their position of power that is right standing with God by encouraging man to sin against God as concurred by Milton. In 'Samson Agonists', Samson fails to obey God by exposing his lifelong secret to his wife Delila; this ultimately leads to his death. Milton seems to have a strong ideology that depicts the woman as the major cause of man's downfall as noted in the poem. Milton denotes man as endowed with qualities that make him to be likeable more than the woman does. Samson is there to blame for his own downfall just like Adam in 'Paradise Lost'. Patriarchy shows that females somehow seize males from their position of power wrongfully. This patriarchal ideology is meant to label woman as forces of evil and flowering the failures of man. This means that the very patriarchal societies encouraged by biblical related texts that are misinformed have taken the role of women for granted thereby manipulating the female. Patriarchy has promoted the seizing of the position

of women as equals to men and it has advocated that the female is lesser than the male on grounds of the man being created first. This study therefore raises a cry for the voiceless woman that biblically it was never true that man is endowed with greater privileges than the woman is. In the bible Delila is not labeled, the sole cause of Samson's downfall. Due to the role-played by Delila in Samson Agonists, the females are all painted with the same paint as seen in the biblical related texts that present a myopic view of women as sacrilegious entities.

### **3.2.2 Heroism**

According to the Oxford dictionary (1994), heroism means heroic conduct or qualities. In the poem Samson is seen as the hero, he achieves great things like the killing of a lion, carrying the iron gates from Gaza to Hebron as well as destroying a building in which he was in together with the Philistines. All the acts outlined above reveal Samson as a hero. The fact that as a hero he dies at the end reveals that he is a tragic hero as noted according to Aristotle's definition of tragedy. Aristotle states that 'a tragic hero is a character of noble stature and has greatness'. Samson therefore qualifies to be a tragic hero since he fits into the definition by Aristotle. It is of great importance that literary texts also show heroes who are females other than males. Milton crashes the character who is supposed to be proclaimed a heroine figure that is Samson's mother. Milton totally rejects this character in his poem as she is portrayed positively by the bible. Milton avoids the recognition of such women, who seem to have qualities that uplift women. This is the tendency by the patriarchal societies to avoid ideas that create a positive image of women.

Line 317-321 shows a speech by Manoa who clearly refers to Samson as a 'Heroic Nazarite,' and in contrast, Delila is referred to as the 'fallacious Bride' as shown below



To set his people free,  
Have Prompted this Heroic Nazarite,  
Against his vow of strictest purity,  
To seek in marriage that fallacious Bride,  
Unclean, unchaste...

Such language has a tendency to create identities, hence every reader who comes into contact with such kind of writing is made to believe that men are heroes whilst women are good in erroneous roles. This leads to different power relations between men and women. Keijzer cited in Ruxton (2004:33) states that 'men react to the proposition of gender equality in various ways, ranging from open opposition (based on religious or biological considerations)...' Keijzer therefore shows the great impact that religion has on the creation of gender stereotypes. The greater part of religion is Christianity and they have a great base on the bible as such if the bible is misrepresented in biblical texts, Christian readers of these biblical related texts will be obliged to follow such misleading views.

Religion in the text *Samson Agonists* seems to promote the docility of the woman. This is seen when Milton makes Delila to admit that she is the sole responsibility of the tragedy of Samson a statement that the bible does not have. However, the researcher seeks to bring to light major female subjugations that are brought about by the manipulative religion as well as biblical misrepresentations. No heroine is made mention of in the poem. Samson attains the position of a hero through his gallantry in killing the lion as well as the Philistines. According to Milton's view men are better labeled as heroes than women. The bible shows Manoa's wife as a humble person who is very spiritual as seen in her being visited by an angel. Always the angel appeared

first to the wife and this shows her value and importance to the angel and in the bible as well. Heroism in the poem somehow glorifies man at the disbursement of the woman. Generally, it should be noted that both male and female have equal opportunities to do good or evil. However, if Samson is seen as a hero how then one does justify his failure to keep his secret and the fact that he kills many Philistines when he destroys a building by knocking off its pillars shows somehow evil traits in him. It is not proper to be one sided and cast a blind eye on the guises of the other sex. It must be noted that upon creation, God gave both sexes the ability to choose between right and wrong hence all are pertinent to doing good or bad.

### **3.2.3 Tragedy**

Tragedy is the unhappy ending of an event and in a play; it is marked especially by the downfall of the protagonist. Tragedy in ‘Samson Agonists’ is seen when Samson gets involved with the Philistine women that is the first wife and the second namely Delila. According to Milton, the tragedy seems to have emanated from the recklessness of the female who desires money more than her marriage. It seems that Milton is saying though a man has flaws they are often caused by the woman’s involvement in the man’s life. Milton makes Delila to acknowledge that she is responsible for Samson’s fall when she says in line 773 – 775 ‘First granting, as I do, it was a weakness/in me, but incident to all our sex, Curiosity, inquisitive, importune.’ Delila is saying that it is an in born thing upon all women to err against the men. The word importune highlights that women, just like prostitutes have the power to solicit man into doing wrong. The *Bible* does not show Delila embarking in such speech that is belittling to the woman. It is done strategically by Milton to display woman as evil doers that are there to cause the fall of man from the grace of God as happened to Samson.

This can be discarded by saying that man seem to have power in decision making it is therefore a cause for concern if they fail to make informed decisions after being given advice or ideas by women. Milton shows the woman as responsible for the man's tragic flaws it seems like if the woman was to be eliminated in the man's life he will not be docked by tragedy and misfortune. This is a negative portrayal of the woman she is shown as villainous whereas the man is portrayed as full of valour.

### **3.2.4 Chastity**

Line 321 of 'Samson Agonists' says, 'Unclean, unchaste'. This statement is made with reference to the woman Delila and the man with whom she had an illicit affair with is left without any condemnation. The bible does not portray Delila as 'unclean or unchaste' Samson is seen as having a strong hatred for Philistine women after his betrayal. The first wife that Samson has is the woman of Timna. She is referred to as a 'harlot.' One wonders why women are continuously being referred to as harlots when in fact both the man and the woman are involved in the promiscuity. It is noted that Milton focused on the chastity of the woman more than that of the man. Most faults done by man are virtually labeled on the woman.

This somehow portrays men as not responsible for their own actions hence the question of their dominance is rather questionable. This also shows how women during Milton's time even up to today suffered oppression because of the stipulations of the biblical related texts that were wrongly interpreted that had so much bearing on the bible representing it in a way that magnified the males and demonized the females. Milton including other scholars that make use of the bible in the creation of their texts highly rationalizes the male dominance so that it remains as the prominent hegemonic group that can never be altered by the females. This means that reality is

constructed from different perspectives and it is subjective. It is noted that representation is often political and the question of who represents who, who speaks for who? is important. When men are given all positive virtues it means that, the female worldview is marginalized or excluded. This also results in women being constructed only as mothers, prostitutes, witches, gossipers and many other negative qualities. Dalila is referred as a prostitute in the text. The Bible however proves that she came from a region of people who were known for adultery not that she was one herself. This research seeks that the foundations of misrepresentation be dealt with especially by changing the way women are portrayed in literary texts.

### **3.2.5 Betrayal and spurious**

Delila is not driven by love to marry Samson but it seems she seeks for Samson's love in order to assuage her desire for wealth that she was going to be offered by the Philistines after betraying him. This is clearly seen in a statement by Samson in line 199 – 202. He states that:

My vessel trusted to me from above,  
Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a tear,  
Fool, have divulg'd the secret gift of God  
To a deceitful Woman: tell me Friends,

Women are portrayed as deceitful as highlighted by Samson. This label does not end there ...,

In line 378 – 379 Manoa also laments about Samson's divulsion of the secret and he says:

'The mystery of God given me under pledge/of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,'

Delila and Samson both are involved in the betrayal scheme. Firstly, Samson betrays his relatives as well as God by divulging the secret of his strength to Delila. Secondly, Delila in a bid to save her own relatives she pretends to love Samson to lure him into divulging his lifelong secret. It is

of much concern that even if both Samson and Delila are involved in this scheme it seems like Eve is the one who gets much blame as seen in the following statement by Samson in line 382 - 391

But warn'd by oft experience: did not she  
Of Timna, first betray me, and reveal  
The secret wrested from me in highth  
Of Nuptial love profest carrying it strait  
To them who had corrupted her, my Spies,  
And rivals? In this other was there found  
More Faith? Who also in her prime of love,  
Spousal embraces, vitiated with Gold,  
Though offer'd only, by the sent conceiv'd  
Her spurious first- born: Treason against me? (Cis)

The quotation given above, labels women as spurious henceforth one is completely convinced that woman can never be anything less than that; this has a negative bearing on the creation and formation of women identities. The character Samson in the Bible does not proclaim that Delila is a betrayer the bible does not dwell much on the cause of the fall of Samson as it also shows him responsible for his own actions. Samson knew very well that he was not supposed to tell the secret about the source of his strength in Judges 16:17 that concurs that; 'That he told her all his heart, and said unto her. There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I [have been] a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any [other] man.'

The words by Samson above show the very point when he made the greatest mistake that lead to his downfall. Milton does not show this speech in his poem. It should be noted that Milton omits a lot of encounters from the *Bible*. He only begins the story when Samson is now blind at a prison in Gaza. Many negative words that are directed to the woman are mentioned in the quote above but the bible does not seem to have such ideas about the woman. The woman according to Milton is a lover of money as seen in the statement ‘...vitiating with gold.’

### **3.3.6 Appearance vs. Reality**

The females appear as people who will help the man yet in reality, they are there to bring their destruction. Milton portrays the females, as the agent cause of male’s fall this is seen in Delila her major initiative towards being married to Samson is not out of love but such that she may get the secret behind Samson’s strength. Milton makes it justified that Samson is not wholly to blame for his fall but he is also responsible for the cause of his own loss of strength. The way Delila is given the blame by Milton show the patriarchal detects that seek to glorify and magnify the wrongs of the females thereby creating oppressive identities. Whereas on the man only little is made, mention of in terms of his wrong as such he is seen as a perfect figure in society. Such inequalities must be redressed by stating that they are misinterpretations of the bible that perpetrate the oppression of the woman by people who that seem to believe everything that is linked to the *Bible*.

### **3.2.7 Plight of the women in the novel**

Women are given peripheral roles, in the poem. They are depicted as evil doers thereby bringing harm to the males .However it is of great concern that if man are the superior sex how then do they get tricked by the secondary sex as was done by Delila and Eve on their subjects

Samson and Adam. The portrayal of women in the biblical narratives by John Milton is emphasized by the times in which he lived in. Thus he interpreted the two stories from the bible as true identities of women thus further representing them as appendages of man. If Samson and Adam were not there, no story was going to be heard about Eve and Delila. Thus, one gets to talk about them only as attachments to Adam and Samson. Weedon (1987:2) states that Patriarchal power rests on the social meanings given to biological sexual difference. In patriarchal discourse, the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm, which is male. This finds its clearest expression in the generic use of the terms 'man' and 'he' to encompass all of humankind.

It is noted that patriarchy is responsible for the creation of conditions that spearhead the exploitation, oppression, and systematic domination of man. Milton describes women through a chorus that denotes the nature of them in line 1035 – 1043

Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,  
Soft, modest, meek, demure,  
Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn  
Intestine, far within defensive arms  
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue  
Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms  
Draws him awry enslav'd  
With dotage, and his sense deprav'd  
To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends

The chorus paints a bad image of the woman it shows Milton's idea of woman's subjection to man. Guillory (1986:106) states and then asks, "We scarcely need to observe that *Samson Agonists* assumes the subjection of women, a practice to which Milton gives his unequivocal endorsement; but is there any sense in which that practice of subjection is modified by the contemporaneous form of the sexual divisions of labor?" This shows that the man is a domineering being above the woman according to Milton.

### **3.2.8 Subaltern Position of the Women**

According to Spivak (1988:278), Subaltern is a word that was coined by a Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). It stands for the oppressed. Furthermore, it can be taken to mean the marginalized group of people in society. This group of people is speechless, just like the woman who looks up to the man to have access to anything that they can ever desire. This position of the colonized can be likened to that of the woman. The man is represented as hegemony, and the woman is the subjugated 'other'. The colonialist are said to have used the *Bible* to achieve their colonial prospects the society was already patriarchal and this further caused the marginalization of the woman in society as the colonial master were mostly man they also sought for the uplifting of males even amongst the colonized groups. In 'Samson Agonists,' it is noted that after the death of Samson Manoa is given the power to proclaim what happened after Samson's death an extension of the detail given in the *Bible*. He states in line 1738 - 1743

Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,  
And from his memory inflame thir breasts  
To matchless valour, and adventures high:  
The Virgins also shall on feastful days



Visit his Tomb with flowers, only bewailing

His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,

The women were supposed to visit Samson's grave with flowers also lamenting the misfortune that he got from his marriage. This is a relegation of the woman to the periphery. The *Bible* does not talk about the aftermath of the death of Samson. This shows that the *Bible* as a work of literature is a domineering text in terms of readership in almost many people of different nationalities. If it is interpreted properly a great deal of change will be evident between different sexualities as there will be imitations of what the *Bible* says not just doing the scriptures haphazardly. The *Bible* emphasizes equal opportunities for both man and woman but the authors of biblical related texts who are males as seen in this research seem to interpret the bible wrongly by showing women flaws as much as possible unlike the errors of the man thereby creating a female that is discriminated.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The research has shown that woman are not to be blamed entirely for the fall of man. Even through Delila made an error by acting as a spy so as to get the secret behind Samson's strength, Samson is also to blame for having exposed the lifetime secret to Delila. The poem shows Delila being given many negative qualities because of the deed that she did Samson does not receive so much blame upon him. The bible never stated that Delila was wrong it only show the flaws of both parties a thing that Milton does not do he puts all the blame on Delila. It is such interpretations that the research has brought to the lame light to show the ways in which biblical related literary texts oppress and subjugate the woman.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## *Erina*

### **4.0 Introduction**

Women are subject to being misrepresented in biblical related texts; this chapter shall look at the presentation of the female characters throughout the entire novel and try to show how they are myopically viewed as marginal and peripheral beings especially with reference to the men characters.

### **4.1 Author Biography**

Willem Jan Boswinkel is a Zimbabwean author. He was born on October 6, 1947 in a town namely Hlengelo in Netherlands. He studied agriculture at an Agricultural college and ever since 1970; he was employed in numerous companies in a number of countries in Africa as well as Latin America. In 1988, he travelled to Zimbabwe after leaving his native Holland with his family and he stayed in Bulawayo at his motel. He has written a number of articles to Dutch Papers and magazines. His short stories are included in several books that are published by Ama Books Publishers. *Erina* is his first novel that he wrote in 1996.

### **4.2 Book Summary**

The book tells about the second coming of the Messiah. This messiah comes in a contradictory manner from the bible. The Messiah as presented by Wim Boswinkel comes as a female Messiah; under feminism, this would be considered an upliftment of the woman. The book begins in the deep rural area of Malawi where a certain area is shown to be suffering under the disastrous effects of colonialism. The colonial setup had only seen slight changes after

independence with the coming in of black leaders like Kamuzu Banda. Banda only sought to misappropriate government funds together with other renowned state leaders. These white and the black leaders were always away on foreign visits embezzling state funds by taking them into their own private coffers and neglecting the state needs.

The ordinary citizen suffers .He earns meager wages, labors under harsh conditions as well as strict supervision and efforts to try to curb this through strikes are fruitless as they are always put down by the Ngwazi's police. The book presents the second coming of the Messiah a female from Africa namely Erina. She is born of a sterile mother who after having four children decides to have the no plant put on her to stop her from conceiving. This fails as she finds herself with a child at a time when she is sterile. Tembi, Erina's mother is a prostitute as noted in the first chapter of the book that says 'whether it was her neighbor, the foundry foreman, or just a customer, a condom would have to be employed.' From the beginning of the book, the woman is already stereotyped through her being labeled a prostitute. The story depicts the second coming of the Messiah, and this time around, the Messiah is a female. There are striking differences between the first Messiah and the second Messiah in which Boswinkel shows that the Messiah is the same person who came in the person of Jesus and the one who had come through Erina.

Before the birth of Erina, strange events occur symbolizing her birth. Firstly the Old witch or the sorceress prophecies certain things to Kamuzu Banda who was the Prime Minister of Malawi in a dream. Three shamans are seen entering Kamuzu Banda's office and they proclaim the strange events that were occurring. Firstly, a hailstorm rains in the middle of the dry season at a close range to where Erina was to be born near Mhoenga. Secondly, snow had appeared on top of Mulanje Mountain. According to the Shamans, the rain in the dry season meant new life in the

midst of a miserable time. It was the pronouncement of the birth of a child who was to save humanity from perishing under the wrath of God. The child grows up into a beautiful young woman and eventually, she finishes school. Her mother felt she had grown, better still the fact that she knew how to read and write a letter. Tembi introduces Erina who seems to be eloquently beautiful and is so irresistible to Johan. Johan is one of the whites who are managing the plantation he is the one that narrates the story. From that time, Erina stayed at the plantation together with Johan. They co- habited. Erina's redemption is some form of purgatory. She was on a pilgrimage, and she had to spread HIV/AIDS to all the people who seem to be Christians, unmotivated church follower as well as those filled with flattery.

By the time of her death, she had slept with every man who had the urge to have sexual intercourse with her in Africa as well as abroad she came back to her native land to die. She does not really save the world but rather infects all the people that she slept with.

### **4.3 Analysis of the Female Characters in the Novel**

The female characters in the novel are presented as whores and prostitutes. The book reveals that AIDS came into the world through the 'Female Savior' .Jesus is manifesting himself through a female character Erina. This is a direct marginalization of the woman since she is presented as capable of saving the world but through prostitution. This is not found anywhere in the bible it is created by Boswinkel to give an oblique portrayal of the woman. All the women in the novel are presented as sex objects that are used especially by men to assuage their sexual desires. Though a woman is given the role of the Messiah, it is given so that the inequalities of the woman (Erina) and the man (Jesus) can be observed. Jesus is seen as holy and sacrosanct whilst Erina is directly opposite to Jesus's saintly nature.

She is promiscuous and the way she saves the world is decadent and immoral. Boswinkel shows that had Jesus been a woman he was going to save humanity in an ironical way that is through spreading the pandemic disease that is HIV/AIDS. An analysis of the female characters will therefore prove that biblical related texts have a tendency to give women negative depictions. Women are seen as deceptive, gossipers, lazy, mean, as well as passive. Such images that are given to the woman deprive them of their agency. This denies the woman the potential to be at par with man as stipulated in the bible .The author molds a female Messiah.

She seems to be sent to save the world but her deliverance is questionable since she spread the pandemic disease to the innocent this is seen in her speech when she says;

God doesn't like the kneel and hallelujah people any more. Flattery is no longer required; time is up for the hypocrites. He is impressed by a drunk who gives his whore something extra because her child is ill and he has more respect for a person who gives up his religion for rational reasons than for an unmotivated church follower.(p.68)

Erina's remarks shows that she lacks purity and innocence attributes that are given to people of heavenly personalities like Jesus. The author had to choose a female Messiah so that he shows the disparity that exists between males and females. The male Messiah was successful in his pilgrimage unlike the female Messiah. The contrasting images that are given Between Jesus and Erina is a proof that authors who have patriarchal affiliations create literary texts that marginalize the woman so as to elevate male dominance. According to Matthew 5:27 – 32 it shows the character of the Messiah Jesus Christ as opposed to the female Messiah in the following remarks;

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast [it] from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell. And thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

These words from the *Bible* show that Jesus is an idyllic character of the Messiah as opposed to the obscured creation of the female Messiah by Boswinkel.

#### **4.3.1 Tembi**

She is the mother to Erina. She becomes sexually active at an early age of sixteen .She would sleep with almost every man in her reach as noted in the first chapter of the book that says ‘whether it was her neighbor ,the foundry foreman ,or just a customer ,a condom would have to be employed...’ Boswinkel presents women as people of loose morals. Shamans had to ask Tembi’s brother so that they get her to sleep with them. Her cousins also lent her out to supervisors and clerks, even her cousins would use her sexually. She had been raped by boys a

few years her senior. She had an enormous sex web that makes her to be a renowned sex worker since the money that she earned through prostitution she used to fend for her family. According to biblical detects a mother to the Savior or the Messiah must be saintly ,pure, sacrosanct and righteous .Tembi is a direct opposite to this she is morally loose and is not fit to acquire the role and position of the Messiah. Matthew 1:23 shows the prophecy about Jesus as follows “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Boswinkel shows this mother of a saint as unjust; his portrayal of the woman is questionable.

Boswinkel deliberately present woman as people who are incapacitated in terms of developmental issues. The saving of the world can be presented as a developmental issue that is handled with extremely well by a male in the *Bible* and full of flaws when done by a woman in Erina .The author tries to show that the male Messiah seen through the character Jesus was fairer than the idea of having a female Messiah. Erina as a biblical related text is also perpetrating patriarchal dominance as it gives women insignificant roles though they are biblically based they have a tendency to show the woman as the inferior other.

Mary is a virtuous woman she is a virgin is filled with purity as opposed with Tembi who is a harlot but a miracle happens to her she gives birth whilst she is sterile. Boswinkel moves away from what the bible does and he objectifies the woman as opposed to the bible. Mary is highly glorified as a woman by the *Bible* and this novel as a biblical based text castigates this by marginalizing the woman through male chauvinism. The men in the book move along well with the plot development the women in comparison with their similar characters in the *Bible* portrays

a contrasting image that flaunts an inherent feebleness within the woman that causes the woman to be deprived opportunity to authority and doing noble mechanisms as was done by Erina.

In the *Bible*, women are uplifted. Mary gives birth to Jesus without having sexual intercourse with Joseph. Feminists see sex as oppressive and encouraging male dominance. As a result, Mary is not oppressed neither is she dominated by patriarchy but she is given the prerogative to bring a superior being upon earth without the aid of a man. Erina is born of a sterile mother who is a whore she earns a living through prostitution. Jesus is born of a Virgin Mary and Erina is born of a prostitute, a sterile whore who sleeps around to get money to fend for her family. Prostitution ascribes to women dependency roles that promote male dominance, thereby undermining women's capacity to be involved in developmental issues.

Boswinkel strategically creates the differences between the two characters that have the same role to give birth to the saviors. He is of a patriarchal stance. He tries to show women as non-perfect entities that need men to be fully accepted. Boswinkel takes the form of a sexist tradition that tends to create females that are stereotyped in all spheres of life. Tembi can be taken to represent Mary in the bible. Tembi has got an annoying character trait because of her passion to have numerous sexual relations with the opposite sex. The differences that Boswinkel shows makes it difficult for women to be accepted in the social circles of life as they will be seen as prostitutes at all times. Mary is misrepresented in the character Tembi therefore all this is done to marginalize the woman and they are put at a state of perpetual inferiority because of the negative character traits. Such misrepresentations should be fought against in order to create a society that is gender sensitive.



It is therefore not proper to form dysfunctional images in biblical related texts as they tend to have quite a huge readership which means that misinterpreted assertions of women will continue to be taken as real over and over again thereby denying the woman the privilege to be at par with the male or better still formulating gender neutral roles.

### **4.3.2 Erina**

Boswinkel shows that Jesus manifests himself through this female character Erina. Boswinkel uses Erina in a position of power, influence, and authority he later on objectifies her as she goes against expectation into harlotry a quality that disrupts her Messianic role. She is a savior but has all the negative qualities as opposed to the character Jesus in the bible who is a male filled with purity and innocence. Erina follows her mother's footsteps. Although she is the Messiah, she is into prostitution. Boswinkel makes her to be involved in prostitution to save the world. This ideology is not fit for a savior. The author has succeeded in creating females as lesser human beings that do things in an awkward manner in the name of redemption. Boswinkel has created a female identity that is of relegating them to prostitutes, whores, evil and responsible for the fall of humanity. She is the image of Christ's figure but her actions are a direct contrast to this. Boswinkel shows that woman can never be real and authentic just like Jesus (male) was. Johan the plantation manager as well as the narrator of the story asks Erina a question and says, "Are you Jesus? Was it you who died two thousand years ago for our sins?" (p73). Erina clearly proves that she was the one by saying, "I was in him, and he is in me." Wim Boswinkel shows Jesus and Erina as equals, at par and living as one.

Just like what happened before Jesus's birth the Christ's birth was prophesied by prophets like Isaiah in his book Isaiah 7:14 that says, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign;

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.’ Even Erina’s birth was prophesied by the sorcerers they foretell that a child was to be born who was to redeem the world from sin. Erina is a replica of Jesus that is created by Boswinkel. They perform the same role that is to save humanity and redeem the world from its sin. The way that they redeem is extremely different .Jesus had to offer his life for humanity and Erina is there to spread a disease that is aimed at destroying all that were living against the word.

The disease is some form of purgatory of humanity of its sinful ways. One wonders what kind of redemption this is, fulfilled through promiscuity that can be referred as another act of sin. The author of the novel draws a huge contrast between Jesus and Erina; he shows them as contrasts that are however performing the same duty. Boswinkel deliberately does all this to further support the patriarchal notion that believes that woman can never perform better than man does. The redemption by the woman is not so genuine it leaves one with so many questions as to the genuineness of the Messiahship. One can discard Erina as a messiah and say she is a false image of the Savior. Women are seen as failures when it comes to issues that deal with the corporate world.

Courville (1994:35) asserts that, “women occupied the private domain and men the public domain and because power and authority was vested in the public domain, women had de facto lower status than men.” Boswinkel gives Erina the power to stand in the public domain and he makes her to fail when the redemption of the world is not visibly noted at the end of the text when Erina dies. Boswinkel is therefore showing that women are not capable leaders.

It should be noted that the role that Erina has as the Messiah is one that takes her away from the private sphere and causes her to have the power to dominate. However, Boswinkel shows that

when woman are put into positions of power they will not be good leaders but they will continue to exploit humanity by their evil nature. Boswinkel shows that female domination is disastrous as seen in the pandemic disease that Erina spreads the world over that causes the death of many and even her. Unlike Jesus Christ, Erina died for good and it is noted that Jesus rose from the death to live eternally. When men have been idealized, it means that the woman is the cause of the man's decadence. This is seen in the character Winter who refuses to be in any relationship with females due to fear of being cheated as was previously done on him by Mary.

Jesus mimicked by Boswinkel and replicated in Erina with differences in sexuality. Jesus as a male character in the bible is highly glorified. He lives a pure life, is righteous and filled with wisdom. Erina is a prostitute that seems as she claims to be fulfilling God's will by spreading the pandemic disease to the world. Jesus saved the world by shedding his blood for humanity. There is no one instance in the bible were Jesus is seen having a sexual relation with a woman. Boswinkel shows the Messianic figure that is a woman denigrating her body through prostitution a virtue that is not in line with saintly qualities. Erina is seen being raped by a Lord of the demons Rubimo seven times the demon says "I want to have access to your daughter , through her I shall spread a terrible disease among men; and if she also mentally submits to me ,then I will have won." (pg.75). The feminine selection by the author in the scheming of evil is done to misrepresent the woman and castrate the role and position of the woman.

#### **4.3.4 Naya**

Is a prostitute that had a one nightstand with the narrator Johan, she does not mind seeing Johan having a relationship with Erina. She seems blinkered just like Johan who seems not to mind the extra relationships that Erina has. The trio has threesome sex or better still a triangular

relationship and none seems to be offended by this Erina being the leader who initiates this idea. Naya had done an abortion this shows or rather presents woman as killers. Erina as the messiah is involved in illicit actions that tarnish her image as the Messiah. Johan finds Erina at one time with a certain man that she intended to sleep with and she says the following words to Johan “Johan, let me go quickly with him for a moment since he has already paid and then we will be off.” (p70) Jesus is an angelic figure but Erina is here shown as a lecherous she is voice to expose the negative aspect about the rest of the other women. Men in this case are seen as better identified with the nature of God than women are. Hafkin and Hanson (1976:59-60) reiterate that:

Women were treated with unparalleled respect because they were seen to be closer to the creator than men ever had the potential of being. This is because women themselves had the ability to create because they were able to give birth.

Boswinkel castigates the idea that women have the capacity to reign as gods. Erina’s Messiahship is questionable it creates the impression that woman can never be as sacrosanct as man. Further it denotes that man are a better and superior sex than women are.

#### **4.3.5 Camilla**

She is the host of the government of Malawi. She is in a marriage with a man that is thirty years her senior. The woman is seen to be lecherous. The fact that Camilla does not mind being in a relationship with a man thirty years her senior shows that she was after his money. Boswinkel has therefore labeled women as lovers of money and the *Bible* does not create such an impression about the woman. It should be noted that the bible raises women of higher and better callable like Esther who were on the same position with Camilla. Esther in the *Bible* is God

fearing and she does everything with a willing heart to please God not for her own interests. Boswinkel presents women as people who are self-centered only to tarnish their images as stipulated by the patriarchal society. The *Bible* does not entirely declare the bad aspects of women as does Boswinkel it praises the females. Though the book seems to be biblically based it presents negative ideas about the woman that sideline the woman and consigns her to the margin.

#### **4.3.6 Old Witch /Sorceress**

The ‘Old Witch’ appeared always to Kamuzu Banda trying to tell him about the future events that were going to happen. Though the woman was there to enlighten the President about the future events, she is only referred to as a witch. Nothing good that woman do is praised by the author. It is surprising that the women prophets are referred to as old witches by the author yet the men are said to be Shamans or sorcerers. Women are seen as witches who foretell the future. When Jesus was born, his birth was foretold by prophets there is nowhere in the bible that a woman prophet is termed a witch. It should be noted that all the female prophets were given the same reference, as men were. Referring to women as witches is only an act to create a negative identity of women under male dominance. Joel 2:28 asserts that;

And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

This shows that women as well as men have equal opportunities to be prophets as well as hold influential positions in society a thing that Boswinkel denies the woman in the text.

### 4.3.7 Jannie K

She is a woman who acts, as Johan's sex object. Johan is the plantation manager. Whenever there was no one to assuage Johan's sexual desires, he would take Jannie K just to fulfill his sexual desires. Boswinkel labels woman as sex objects and he gives no offense to the male counterpact. When Erina was punishing the world for its sins she does not punish Johan as well he lives to even see the death of Erina the Messiah. The author to tarnish the position of the woman uses such characters. Jannie K's character is a contradictory of the *Bible* detects that seeks for purity and no sex outside wedlock at all. According to Lowe-Moma (2001:3), "Women invariably feature as sex objects or as victims of violence in literature..." Erina as a literary text shows women debasement a violation of the depiction of the women in the *Bible*. Women such as Mary the Mother of Jesus, Sarah, Elizabeth, as well as Esther just to mention a few were virtuous women that were pure and righteous before God.

### 4.3.8 Mary

Mary cheated on Winter and escaped together with her children after Winter had failed to forgive and accept her. Continuously women are seen as not faithful. In this instance, the woman is responsible for the problems in marriage. Women are seen as harassed by infidelity. They fail to secure marriages that are successful. Women are seen as people who are responsible for their own downfall. The bible shows the unity of the female and the male in Genesis 2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Boswinkel shows Mary moving away from this command as such the woman is seen to be in contradiction with the word of God. Such a novelistic effort is not likely to be helpful in the fight against women marginalization and objectification. According to Armstrong (2004:139),

“Generally speaking, the portrayal of males as sources and subjects in contemporary literature has continued to be more than twice of females.” Most texts have the power to create the role of the woman that is non-complimentary to that of the man. The bible shows that both sexes complement one another there is none that is superior to the other. To support this statement the scripture that shall be used from the bible is Galatians 3:26-28

So, in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. As a result, the bible does not consider supremacy of one sex at the expense of the other.

## **CONTRAST BETWEEN THE BIBLE AND ERINA**

### **4.5 Kamuzu Banda and Herod**

Boswinkel idealizes the position of the man as opposed to the bible that reveals the real nature of the man through the character Herod who massacres all the infants below the age of two so that he could kill Jesus as well. The character that represents King Herod is Kamuzu Banda he does totally the opposite of Herod. Kamuzu Banda is not sure of the infant savior's whereabouts but his Shamans tell him that the baby had been born. During that time there was a disease that was threatening the life of the babies as such he had to make sure that all the babies were immunized at the proper time to secure the life of the baby. Boswinkel does away with what the male character does in the bible. He makes Kamuzu Banda a representation of Herod to do directly the opposite of Herod's acts this he does so that he can discard the evil that is inherently upon the man. If Boswinkel had happened to expose the flaws of the men, it meant that he had failed to uplift the male in role and position of great sexual orientation above the woman.

## 4.6 Conclusion

Objectification of the woman in literary texts especially those that are biblical based can be disastrous as the young readers are mostly to be invited and shepherded into a dangerous and restrictive conception and existential trajectory where the male reader thinks it is normal to have a male dominated society. Such views must have to be corrected as has been done throughout this chapter by identifying areas of concern that cause the oppression of woman and creation of identities that emancipate one sex at the expense of the other. Matriachy must be advocated for in society. Turok (1996) asserts that ‘matriarchy is the female power in their roles as mothers and senior women to conjugate -to knit and regenerate socio-economic and political ties by placing women at the center.’ Women must be given an opportunity to have dominant roles. Boswinkel shows the failure of the woman to dominate in a positive way, which is not true but a misrepresentation of the *Bible*. The *Bible* has uplifted women in numerous field such women are Deborah, Mary, Esther, Elizabeth, Sarah, the Queen of Sheba and many more. All these women have dominant roles in the history of humanity as such the dormant roles that the woman is given by patriarchy on grounds of following biblical stipulations is only a misinterpretation of the *Bible*.



# CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSION,SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

The research has fulfilled its major aim, which is to show that biblical related literary texts are highly inflated with issues that cause the women to be subjugated and dominated by men. The literary texts ‘Paradise lost’;‘Samson Agonists’ and *Erina* show a negative portrayal of the woman she is depicted as a lesser being in comparison to the man. All the texts have a biblical basis or foundation.Theyget their ideas from the bible but it is perceived that some of the ideas that they write are biased towards the man, an ideology that the bible does not clearly define. These authors in their quest to represent man as the epitome sexuality manipulate the *Bible* and the woman as the periphery of humanity .This is so because these authors are males namely Milton and Boswinkel who seek to further spearhead their dominance in the patriarchal hierarchical order.

### 5.1 Textual Analysis Summary.

#### 5.1.1 ‘PARADISE LOST’

Milton mimicked the bible but added some oppressive views concerning the woman, such as being marginalized expected to be docile, passive, as well as subservient to the man. The role of the man is romanticized, seen as flawless, and if ever he caught on the wrong side all the blame is laid upon the woman .Adam is the epitome of all humanity endowed with all graces that submerge the debauched qualities of the woman Eve. Eve is a representative of all the females as such the way that she is treated strongly lays women to the marginalized group in the text. Eve is

taken to be the root cause of the fall of humanity Milton describes her as a weakling that was incapable because of her inherent weak nature to resist the temptation. Milton also emphasizes that had it not been for the weakness of the woman the man could not have fallen prey to committing the formidable sin.

Milton gives his characters the ability to speak more than what the *Bible* does. The woman's speech is a misrepresentation of the ideal Eve in the *Bible*. Milton's Eve is given docile attributes meant to cause her to be subservient to the man. The poet manages to demarcate feminine and masculine roles to the characters more than the biblical roles given to the two sexes. The only time that gendered roles are seen in the story of creation of the bible is after Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree of knowledge. These roles take the woman and place her at a place of domesticity and the man is to rule the public sphere that is more ideal than the woman does. Eve's domesticity in the poem is seen when she is ordered by Adam to prepare food for Raphael who had unexpectedly arrived whilst Adam converses with the angel. Milton creates biased identities that eventually deny the woman the liberty to also play a dominant role as is done by the man in the text.

The additions that the poet extends beyond the account of the *Bible* are to emphasize the woman subjugation by the man. Eve in the bible is not seen doing any household chores but is given authority over everything just like Adam. Misinterpretation of the *Bible* by Milton fights for masculine power, influence, and dominance. Milton shows that God created the woman to be passive as well as docile under male governance. He makes it to appear as if it was God ordained for women to be dominated by man. Falsely women appear biologically inferior sex. Milton is

patriarchal and fights to suppress the position of the woman in society as well as in texts by sticking to ideologies that elevate the man and debase the woman to the periphery.

### 5.1.2 'SAMSON AGONISTS'

There is a recurring motif in Milton's texts that is of presenting women with denigrate roles, that belittle them as well as giving them peripheral roles. This is an idea that has to come to an end. There is no such thing as ideal sexuality in a gender-neutral state. Milton takes the patriarchal ideas and places them into writing to encourage male supremacy. He makes use of the bible to give a strong foundation to his ideas. The way that he presents the woman in comparison with the bible is misinterpretation of the Bible.

The bible shows both man and woman as people who are capable of doing both right and wrong as such; it is not valid to say that one sex is responsible for the wrong that the other sex does. Both sexes are presented as equals in the Bible, it is only misinterpreted biblical concepts that are used to validate the ideology that states that man is higher than the woman is. Delila and Samson all made mistakes but when the text is looked at closely it is noted that Delila takes much of the blame because she is a woman and automatically all evil deeds are labeled upon her. Women are perceived as born with a heart that is wicked as such no matter how good they are they are not noticed as was done by Milton who failed to see the relevance of Samson's mother and he did not include her in the epic poem.

### 5.1.3 *ERINA*

Erina depicts the woman as a lesser human who even if was delegated to do saintly duties will again employ her so-called wicked nature to fulfill a sacrosanct duty. Erina claims to redeem the world through using the pandemic disease HIV/AIDS. Boswinkel deliberates on this so that he

could show that the woman does not have the nature to do well within her. This means that the woman is reckoned as a channel of all evil forebodings. Erina is raped by a demon Rubimo seven times. This labels women as prone to sin more than the man. Why does it have to be the woman who spreads the pandemic disease to the world? Boswinkel labels all women as embodiments of all evil forces. When women are presented negatively it automatically means that all men are with no blemish. These male authors seem to concur that nothing good can come out of a female as seen in the distortion of the female characters in the texts.

## 5.2 Recommendations

- i) Authors either male or female when creating literary texts should be gender sensitive through the curbing of oppressive ideas against any sex consequently they should promote gender equity and equality in all forms of literature.
- ii) Gender oppressive literary texts that make use of biblical aesthetics that are misinformed should be highly guarded against upon publication especially in the curriculum and even the world at large as they perpetrate the gender stereotypes.
- iii) Literary text especially those created by male authors need to change their portrayal of the woman by giving her a dominant role rather than being an insignificant 'place holder' in plays, poetry and novels.
- iv) It is also of great importance that the women rise up to define themselves in literary texts, exposing the identity of the woman as outlined in the *Bible*. This can be enhanced if women begin to be active in the public sphere through writing literature that gives a detailed, undistorted account of who they are.

v) Further research related to this topic may consider finding out how female authors of biblical related texts present women.

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