

# Gender Semiotics and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Feminist Utopia: Implications on National Security and Socio-cultural Development

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**Abstract**—The female gender has over the years envisioned a society where she is accorded a modicum of recognition. She has fought and continued to fight for equality between the genders. Her aspiration for a balance in power has only remained in what appears to be a utopia, rather than what is reality. And over the years, there has been a triggered-inadvertent battle between the genders, male and female. Hence, this article is intended to investigate the progress that the various feminist conjectures have undergone in an attempt to create a perfect world for the female genus. We consider the battle of the sexes the basis for global insecurity and socio-cultural underdevelopment as we launch an exploration through the history of women and women agitations from its earliest periods to the present, and thereafter conclude that in the future the ruling/heading gender will become ‘the subjugated’ (not in physical strength) but both in the domestic and the public spheres. We have investigated the various waves of feminism, starting from the first wave, to the second and then the third. It has been discovered that the female has moved from the domestic space to the public space, a transformation that is so drastic even in recent times. Thus, we conclude that, someday the story of “who’s in charge now” will be changed to “who’s subjugated then”. In this article, therefore, we lay bare those semiotic proclivities that reveal the anticipated victory of the female gender in the battle of the sexes. The Feminist Standpoint Theory in addition to Semiotics is the framework used in presenting this ambition.

**Index Terms**—wave change, relevance, public space, domesticity, social order

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language is either verbal or nonverbal. Much of the gendered language in our societies comes in form of the nonverbal. Usually we perform gendered acts unconsciously and do not regard them as gender semiotics. Semiotics, as an aspect of language study, deals with a signaling system which could be an index, an icon and/or a symbol (Essien-Eyo and Ottoh, 2011, pp.79-80).

For Chandler (2002), semiotics “involves the study not only of what we refer to as ‘signs’ in everyday speech, but of anything which stands for something else” (p.1). He adds that, in semiotics, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. Eco (1976) defines semiotics as being “concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign”(p. 7).

In our contemporary society, semiotics is not studied in isolation because it is the study of how meanings are made and how reality is represented. Therefore, semiotics entails meaning-making constructs and representations in any form, texts and/or media which could be found in every interactive piece (Chandler, 2002, pp. 1-2).

Gender, on the other hand, is viewed by scholars as one aspects of identity that people learn through interaction with others. Research has shown that in most societies, gender is an all important subject that is linked with the social order as it were. Gender therefore is communicated by parents first at home, then the society at large. So, children become aware of their gender at a tender age, and they are repeatedly reminded of the roles they ought to play in a society that they form.

Most often, we are confronted with situations where little girls tell other children of their age or older people, “Sit like a woman”. This is a gender sign signaling roles that the girl child should play as a female. In fact, an incident occurred where a little girl of about four years told a grown man who visited them in their house to sit like a woman. In such a case, what do we make out of it? For this little girl, anybody is a ‘woman’, a misdirection of gender meanings. She couldn’t distinguish between the male and the female genders. Consider a little girl telling an adult man, “Uncle, sit like a woman”, and the man just laughs and never knows what the girl’s parents and indeed society had created in the mind of the girl. The constancy of her being told to sit like a woman has made her conscious of that social behaviour and so anyone is vulnerable to her as she tries to replicate the values Mummy or Daddy has instilled in her.

However, in some cultures, the Western in particular, there is no such norm, although royalty have their way of sitting but this is not predicated upon gender as it were, but class. For the white bourgeoisie, sitting style distinguishes

them from others; therefore sitting style is classist, not gender based. Hence, it is said that different cultures communicate different gender signs and roles as what may be obtainable in one culture might not be in the another (Wood, 1999), although the kitchen is generally viewed as connected with the girl child who subsequently becomes a woman, and thus, most times we hear semiotic labels such as, “You should be in the kitchen; you are a girl”.

In this article moreover, by going through all the epochs, from the time when women were not allowed to function in the public to the present where they are already functioning and gradually taking over, we suppose that the female species has undergone transformations by leaving domesticity and ‘invading’ and consequently occupying the public sphere which was averred to be for the males. This has made us envisage a future that would be the other way round, which is woman-controlled- a society where the male begs for relevance in both the private (domestic) and the public spaces. We hereby submit our supposition as premised on the female past, present and the future as we take a tour through the eras.

## II. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

According to Wood (1999), the standpoint theory focuses on how gender, class, and race influence or manipulate the circumstances of individuals’ lives, especially their positions in the society and the kind of experiences those positions foster. Wood believes that, the standpoint theory views the common social world as consisting of very different positions within social hierarchies, which invariably portends that, the standpoint an individual occupies in a society guides his or her knowledge, feelings and/or social life (p.58).

In addition, this theory became the basis for the feminist movement theory known as the feminist standpoint theory which is our theoretical consideration in this paper. Feminist standpoint theory makes a contribution to epistemology, methodological debates in the social and natural sciences, philosophy of science, and political activism. The theory emerged in the 1970s, in the first instance, from Marxist feminist and feminist critical theoretical approaches within a range of social scientific disciplines. It has been one of the most influential and debated theories to emerge from second-wave feminist thinking.

The feminist standpoint theory, from its emergence, draws the attention of women to the powerlessness of the female gender. The theory focuses on the re-enactment of the female gender as well as debunking her besmirched place in the society. On the one hand, the feminist standpoint theory sees language as a way of fighting back at the hegemonic tendencies and on the other as positioning the female on the peak of the social order. To clarify this, therefore, the history of the waves in feminists’ agitation is summarized in the following section.

## III. WAVE CHANGE IN FEMINIST STANDPOINTS

Like every other theory or ideology, feminism has undergone different point of views since its emergence. We consider this according to the various waves and the changes that ensued. Firstly, we attempt the first wave and all the agitations it brought.

### A. First Wave Feminists’ Perspective

The African, American and indeed most European societies have experienced inequality epochs between the genders, especially before 1925, and in 1960 feminists’ agitation (second wave) began again after a 25year hiatus. Feminist ideology had started long before this period. In fact, Wood (1999) claims that the first wave of women’s movements started in the 1800s, actually in 1845 with the liberal activists such as Lucretia Coffin Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, Mary Anne McClintock, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. These women wrote a keynote address collaboratively entitled, ‘Declaration of Sentiments’, which is modeled after the ‘Declaration of Independence’ speech to fight for women’s right to vote and be represented in the public space. Women of this wave anticipated leaving domesticity to occupying the liberty their male counterparts enjoy out there.

More so, the feminist movement became an academic theory in 1919 with the publication of the British scholar, teacher and early feminist, Virginia Woolf’s work, *A room of one’s own*, which laid the foundation for the feminist conjecture and in it she declares that “Men have treated women, and continued to treat them as inferior”. It is the male, Woolf continues, that defines what it means to be female and who controls the political, economic, social, and literary structures (Bressler, 1994, p.104).

In addition, with the publication of the French writer, Simone de Beauvoir’s *The second sex* in 1949, interest in feminist concerns began to increase. Beauvoir declares that the French and Western societies are patriarchal. And like Woolf before her, Beauvoir believes that the male defines what it means to be human. Since the female is not male Beauvoir asserts, she becomes the ‘Other’, an object whose existence is defined by the male— the dominant being in the society. Beauvoir therefore urges, the woman to break the bonds of patriarchal society and define herself if she wishes to become a significant human being in her own right and to defy male classification as the ‘Other’ (Bressler, 1994).

Subsequent upon this, the feminists of this era gradually moved from being hushed and inconsequential females, to being assuming and significant women in the society controlled by males. However, this period did not mark the total

transformation of the female; it only signaled the beginning of her change, which also brings about a wave change- the second wave feminism in the 1960.

### B. *Second Wave Feminists' Standpoint on Gender Inequality*

The second wave of the feminist movement started as we mentioned earlier with feminist shakeups between the 1960 and the 1990s. In its emergence, feminist perspective took a different turn as women radically presented and redefined themselves, their roles and rights in the society. This period was characteristic of self reconstruction and assertion. Women got involved in the public sphere and brought traditions into feminism. Although, the first wave accommodated the coexistence between the various sects- liberal and cultural - which are in the wave, the second wave was resistant to accommodation, where it sometimes exists there is tension. The strategies for these feminists were quite different. There was the radical sect which grew out of a social movement called New Left politics. Their perspective, as members in confronting female degradation, was primarily to protest against the Vietnam War, racial discrimination and governmental abuses (Wood, 1999, p. 70).

On and on emerged many sects such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1964 and the Students for a Democratic Society which materialized in 1965. The radical feminism attained heights and achieved remarkably. There was also the Separatist sect, who, according to Wood (1999), removed themselves from the mainstream culture but foreclosed opportunities to alter dominant social values. These types of feminists do not assume public voice; in fact, that for them was an invasion of the males' space.

The structural feminists, who have almost the same ideologies as the Separatist, sprang up, only that they are less extreme. Lesbian feminists also came up, and their definition was woman-identified. Revalorists emerged later focusing on how to reconstruct, recover, and reenact the female story from *history* to *herstory*. For instance, Karlyn Campbell's book entitled *Man cannot speak for her* (1989a & b) is revalorist because in it the female species is reevaluated and reconstructed.

Also, the womanist faction emerged as an escapist route for most African feminists in order to ameliorate the tensions other sects had created. Many African American feminists have themselves assumed this womanist position in a bid to accommodate their racial and gender identities.

As it is, there is a Power feminism which started in the 90s, this wing of feminism negates or antagonizes the feminist conjecture. In their perspective, women are the ones victimizing themselves, that while the emphasis has been on women victimization and oppression, the woman is not exonerated in her oppression. A well-known scholar of this particular type is Naomi Wolf.

Many other male feminists' movements were in operation, in particular, Profeminists movements, and on the part of the females, we had the female Bra Burning rumour, Ecofeminism, the Backlash etc. Now the question Wood asks is, "Is there a third wave yet?" The next section explores to ascertain whether there is a third wave or not.

### C. *Third Wave Feminists: Is There a Third Wave Yet?*

The question above stems from Julia Wood's (1999) feminist document, *Gendered lives: communication, gender and culture*. For Wood, there wasn't a third wave of the feminist movement as at when she wrote her book in 1999. And although, many gender scholars have written to answer her question on whether there is a third wave, we still feel it is appropriate to do a review of to the agenda of the proposed third wave feminism which we suppose had existed before Wood's book. Subsequent to that, we rather ask, "Is there a fourth wave yet? But to proffer an answer to Wood, we can say that there has been a third wave feminism in practice before the 1999.

The third wave of the feminists' movement which actually started in the 1990s is more radical in their ideologies and it seeks to broaden the parameters of feminism. Rebecca Walker and Amy Richards are two well known third wave feminists whose activism has attracted a lot of attention. The movement has reinforced and reengineered the inclusion of some groups of women who have previously been excluded as a result of race, class, and sexual orientation and prejudice, etc.

In Krista Jacob's commentary on analyzing the third wave feminism, published on "The feminist eZine", "the third wave feminism provides a forum for illuminating the multifaceted experiences of young women - a group that is consistently misrepresented by older generations, the mainstream media, and other avenues". This wave, unlike the first and second, wants the woman to occupy the leading positions as Presidents of countries, Executive Directors of companies, Principal Officers at government and private establishments, Governors of states, Mayors, Senators, Law makers and so on. The quest of this wave is to institute the woman as a force to reckon with, and as a human made by God to have 'dominion' on the earth. The woman in this school sees nothing as impossible and the society today mostly terms the power such women possess as 'bottom power'.

Bottom power is a Nigerian coinage used to describe a woman's ability to control the man and/or situations by satisfying man's sexual urge. With this, there is a belief that man can be fooled and controlled. Thus, most times, when a woman wields authority or is in power and even politics, she seemed to be using the so called bottom power to sustain it; this allegation most often than not scares and wards off women's participation in politics and power control. It definitely makes women who want to maintain their dignity, shy away from occupying the public space, talk less of invading it. Moreover, 'bottom power' is a situation where the man (society) believes the woman gives what she has (her body) to achieve her goals.

As it is, the woman is gradually moving upward unperturbed by those ascriptions and hegemonic stereotypes. This is where we conclude that while the man is busy accusing the woman of sexual impropriety, the man is not innocent and therefore cannot claim ignorance as the game of sex is two-sided. However, society is experiencing a turnaround between the sexes and we ask this time, is there a fourth wave already? What might be the agenda of this wave? Will the feminists in this school see the female as the lord of the male? What really will be on their "To do" list this time? While pondering on this question, the concepts of gender and sexuality should also be considered.

#### IV. GENDER IDENTITY VS. SEXUAL IDENTITY

According to Ehrlich (2004), debates over the nature of gender identity and its social construction in recent years informed research in sociolinguistics generally and feminist linguistics more specifically (p.323). Gender identity, being quite different from biological sex, refers to how a particular culture differentiates between masculine and feminine social roles, whereas sexual identity is what makes a person either male or female at birth. Sexual identity is complex because of the way different cultures view it. For Ting-Toomey, gender identity refers to "the meanings and interpretations we hold concerning our self-image and expected other-images of 'femaleness' and 'maleness'" (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, 2007).

The controversy over equality has created tension among the sexes. Gender roles as defined by the society are of no help at all so more often than not, people, especially the females, contemplate whether they fit the designation of their culture as 'inferior' and the male 'as superior'. Different sexual orientations make people think differently. This is why a five year old boy sees himself as superior to a seven year old girl – an orientation that is very predominant in Africa. This is not to say that other parts of the world do not experiment sexuality. The society we find ourselves constructs inequality by assigning certain roles and values to males and to the females.

#### V. THE WOMAN IN THE PUBLIC SPACE: PAST, PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

The term *public* has been used differently to mean different things. There are diverse connotations to it. It meant different things according to the context in which it appeared. For the males, it was constructive but for the females it was a destructive term. Moreover, any woman found occupying any public position was doing so to attract men to sleep with her and she was called a "public woman". As a result, in the recent past, husbands forbade their wives from participating in the public space. This went on for a long period of time before the emergence of the first wave of the feminist movement in the 1840s (Matthew, 1992; Wood, 1999).

Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr., in 1920, was one of the earliest historians that questioned the exclusion of women from history texts. By this time, any woman who was seen operating in the affairs of the society was doing so to her own detriment. And she was described as the 'public woman' (as we pointed out earlier) with a derogatory connotation of prostitution, that is, a woman who has sold out her reputation, one who shares her private with the public – men, thus the term 'public woman'. Conversely, a public man did not have the same connotation; rather, it carried positive associations - an important personality in the society who has contributed productively to the affairs of the state.

Gradually, that view is grinding down. Women all over the world are now nation builders. They are involved in decision-making and taking, adjudication of justice, administration of government policies etc. They even rule as presidents of countries- the example of Julia Gillard, the 27th Prime Minister of Australia and the leader of the Australian Labour Party since 2010. She is the first woman to hold either office. Another example is Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, who is the 24<sup>th</sup> and present president of Liberia. Sirleaf had served as a Minister of Finance, from 1979-80, under William Tolbert. Also, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a globally renowned economist who is well known for her twin-tenure as the Nigeria's Finance Minister and economic coordinator, and one of the World Bank directors for several years, and many other females who made their stories out of 'his-story'.

Increasingly, femininity is facing out as that term is connected with frailty, unassertiveness, and unintelligence. Today, women in leadership are patriotic and assuming. They have completely defaced gender role ascription and have dared to do anything in the public space. This we can also see in the literatures of female writers generally.

According to Martin and Nakayama (2005), "feminist scholars have long insisted that the history of the women has been obliterated, marginalized, or erased"(pp.66-67). Thus, there should be histories of the female past, as gender histories emphasize the importance of gender in understanding the past, particularly the role of women in the society. Traditionally, many women were made to focus mostly on the home and domestic concerns. But today they feel tremendous pressure to do the bulk of the housework, reflecting the influence of the past on the present. Therefore, women are constantly reminding themselves of the need to emancipate and participate in the state affairs. To achieve this, they have left home-building in the hands of maids which brings about a new generation of youths with no good home training. In sum, this explains vividly why gender roles assignment has impeded global security and socio-cultural development.

#### VI. GENDER INEQUALITY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL INSECURITY

For many years, the social formation in which most societies operate has been a male-dominated one, a patriarchal society where the powerful dominates the powerless, even in the use of language. Language, characteristically,

enunciates gender and this shows that gender is not just a natural and inevitable consequence of one's sex; that it is, rather, a part of the routine, ongoing work of everyday life, mundane and social interaction that is the product of social practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 5 cited in Paltridge, 2006, p. 32).

It is believed that society has set standards for the sexes; it also has a set of different gender roles from which it wants both the females and the males to operate. The implication is that, when one gender functions as the other, there is a stigma or a tag for that behaviour. Stigmas or stereotypes like *woman wrapper*, a term that also describes a man that is unmanly, that behaves womanly, an effeminate, and on the other hand, a woman or girl who could perform roles averred to men is given a name such as tomboy, hoyden, or romp and even the Nigerian ascription, *man-woman* and so on. Gender roles have defined the identities of individuals over the years. In fact, there are usually Biblical allusions and cultural values/mores to the notion that every sex has its role defined.

Hence, most gender scholars, the male chauvinist, in particular, would want to draw our attention to the Biblical reference that *the man is the head of the home*. We are not unaware of this principle and therefore are not here to debunk the fact; we can only add that as the head, the man's responsibility is that of a lead servant, so that there are no activities, whether domestic or public, that the male should not perform. In addition, a male child should be as responsible to the kitchen as any female and a female, of any age, should be as responsible to any duty as the male.

According to Wood (1999), gender is a social, symbolic creation. It is learned and socially endorsed (p. 22). From childhood, infants have been encouraged to conform to gender roles. In many instances, we hear a parent tell a child 'Sit like a woman', or things like 'Why are you talking like a woman?', or 'Why are climbing a tree?' 'Are you a boy?' etc. depending on the sex of the child. Many instances of these *do not's* are overburdening.

Gender for many may refer to how an individual sees himself or herself in respect to masculinity and/or femininity. In fact, as far as Wood (1999), is concerned, the practice of gender may have been first identified by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1772 as a social character when she declared that most differences between the sexes are socially created, not natural.

Gender, in broad terms, refers to the sex-role identity used by people to emphasize the distinctions between males and females. Although the words "gender" and "sex" are often used interchangeably, sex relates specifically to the biological and physical characteristics which make a person male or female at birth, whereas gender refers to the behaviours associated with members of that sex.

Gender, in recent years, has become a synonym for women rather than a form of shorthand for gender difference and gender conflict. It refers to the meanings that are attached to those differences within culture. In other words, sex is a physical phenomenon, and gender, a cultural and social one.

For many years, scholars have misconstrued sex and gender as synonymous terms, and some scholars maintain that gender reveals how language functions as a symbolic resource to create, and manage personal, social and cultural meanings as well as identities. They also opine that, while sex is the biological, physical, and a functional individual difference between the man and the woman, gender, is a social and cultural construct.

However, gender, understood as the social construct of sex, is the key concept for the feminist. The campaign launched by feminists is based primarily on self-celebration. Hence, gender identity issues emerged as a protest against sexism in the male-dominated societies that we live in. The battle between the two sexes portends great threats and makes a nation vulnerable to danger and socio-cultural insecurity. For the male chauvinists and their sympathizers, females are traditionally defined to occupy the domestic sphere, whereas, the third wave feminists and the supporters of their thought, are more radical as we earlier pointed out, and are advocating and agitating a public space take-on, which means injecting the woman into all public sectors to include private establishments too.

The feminists' agitation and advocacy is a possible threat to socio-cultural and even political development. Their aim is to establish gender equality, but the society which is man-controlled is saying no, as such, both sexes are threatened and have taken up defensive positions which invariably hamper safety and security in the society.

## VII. DEATH OF FEMININITY

Very importantly, women the world over and indeed in Africa are the most victimized; yet, they are the same instruments their oppressor, the man, is using to persecute the other woman. Our point in this paper is that, although gender roles are said to be socially ascribed, their ascription is not without the acquiescence of the players (the social actors), female or male. Every actor in a play is usually given a role to perform, yet the actor's ability to assimilate the character's role is pertinent. Therefore, where a role is not adequately handled by the character, in literature, there is said to be a miscast, which means that such a character is ineffective in the role assigned.

To emphasize our position, we want to state that character-role in a play is like the gender roles a society prescribes. Thus, for any character to perform it such must study the script to do as it is written. Roles are not imposed on actors, they are free to choose to play the character or otherwise. This is our focus in this paper. Our argument is that, while the female is an actor performing a script written by the society - which of course is made up of individuals, the males and the females, the role so ascribed can thereby be refuted or debunked if it is a *miscast*. We use *miscast* here to mean any flaccid or wilting role ascribed to the feminine gender which the female sees as not suitable. Everybody is free to do whatever s/he likes. There are no rules or exemptions.

Before now, women were denied most privileges such as assuming any public office as well as showing up in public occasions and/or talking in formal gatherings as these were termed acts of prostitution. In fact, women who walked the street alone were presumed prostitutes or likened to **Jezebel**, the wife of King Ahab in The Bible (Wood 1999). Instances have been where ladies are battered for taking a stroll unaccompanied by a man. And the question remains, why are women these vulnerable? A man could go out any time without any intimidation or molestation yet the woman is not as free. Wood (1999), asserts in addition that, there is usually a space invasion where the female is forced to tolerate unwelcomed sexual conducts.

Matthews (1992), tells us a story of Lizzie Schauer, a young working class woman, “who has been looking for the house of her aunt and had stopped to ask directions of two men. This behaviour as well as the fact that an unaccompanied woman was out at night was presumptive evidence that she was soliciting prostitution in the eyes of the arresting police officers and of course the judge who sent her to the work house” (p. 3). The assumption in the story and indeed other such situations is that, no respectable woman would walk the street at night unescorted by a man. And this assertion is drawn from the fact that the woman is a sex toy/object, or from the fact that the man is the “head” of the home (and the street too?).

Also Matthews (1992), argues that the Anglo-American common law tradition restricted the woman in so many ways. A married woman was legally made invincible. Her identity was usually subsumed under her husband, and she could only assume control over her property or dispose of her income when she obtains a *feme sole* status- a legal right that allows the woman to assume authority over HER OWN property or income. Otherwise, she remains under her husband who takes complete charge of her and everything she owns. A woman was not in any way permitted to serve on a jury. In addition, her ability to write a will was severely delineated or circumscribed (pp. 6-7).

Another example occurred in June 1907, when Harriet Stanton Blatch, a well known feminist, was refused service in a restaurant in New York for the reason that she was unescorted by a man. The explanation she later got from the manager was that a policy had been instituted to protect ‘respectable’ women, whatever that means. The list goes on and on.

In a bid to satisfy patriarchal tendencies, domesticity was upheld by the woman. More so, to gratify the presupposition of the like of the restaurant manager discussed above, a good number of women resolved to occupy the domestic sphere rather than be seen in the public place as they could be called “public women”. Public activism as the Separatists believed was a taboo for the woman. Any woman involved in it was seen as a disorderly woman, hence, the emergence of the cult of domesticity which emphasizes that the woman’s place is the domestic sphere. This sect of women was determined to stay at home and not defy the man or struggle/ invade his space in the public. Thus, many women were not found outside the home. They were “private” humans. But today the story is different. The woman is virtually everywhere occupying public positions as well as taking charge of her home and gradually femininity is becoming a past experience for the female gender as the gender scale is balancing up. There are many females now operating in the public spaces than was obtainable in the past.

### VIII. THE SEXIST BATTLE AND THE NEAREST FUTURE

In response to patriarchal idiosyncrasies, the woman deployed writing as a weapon to fight back, hence, the sexist struggle for relevance, and the battle of the sexes. The concept of feminism emerged as a result of this struggle for recognition. And as an ideology, feminism has been appraised by many scholars to be a movement against male hegemony and particularly patriarchy. One of the many scholars who evaluate this movement is Umoren (2002), and she submits that: “feminism at its birth bordered only on the notion of equal rights and privileges for the sexes, since it has to do with [the] sensitive issue of identity based on gender. Feminism in modern times has gone beyond the promotional stance (of equal rights and privileges)”. This means that, the female recognizes her degraded position and has over the years fought for her relevance in the society (pp. 3-4).

The man, on the other hand, has isolated himself, glorified himself and evidently imposed himself on the woman, believing that he is superior to the woman, hence subjugating the woman to cruel treatment through the instrument of tradition (Ottoh and Agede, 2009). In the attempt to assert herself, the woman also has isolated herself by engaging in a fight for equality. The female has continued to assert herself and in the process resolves to lesbianism which entails that the male is irrelevant, hence, the woman to woman marriage. The man, in opposition, engages in man to man marriage as part of the payback at the woman.

The battle between the sexes had long started, and the woman now finds outlets in writing to debunk male hegemony. In fact, Mey (2001), suggests that “being aware of oppression does not make it go away, but forcing ourselves to bring the problem out into the open, wording it, is one major way to deal with it in practical perspective, through the use of language” (pp. 313-4). Therefore, for many decades now, linguists have waged a war on sexism in language use, and many literary writers, the females in particular, are making recognizable effort through their use of language to assert themselves against the other, the males.

The language of most female writers, in recent times, is hauntingly sympathetic. Gender issues remained the recurrent motifs of their literatures. This is based on the fact that, the early male writers had portrayed the woman as a witch, and this same male who had started the war is gradually losing out. The female writers assumed writing long

after the males and have progressively fought for relevance in the society through writing, and have asserted self, and more so assumed equality and now are gradually advocating for superiority which is not farfetched.

For example, femaleness which was associated with frailty, limitation and vulnerability is increasingly waning, and again femininity which was linked to domesticity is also steadily declining. In recent times, we see some women being the breadwinners in their homes. Some are even more educated than their husbands or brothers. The woman whose education was forbidden years back has nowadays become the more educated in some families and even societies. This is a corroboration of the cry-off of the female genus.

By this, we envisage a society, in the nearest future, where femaleness or femininity will disappear and all we will have is a society the other way round. A society where matriarchy would be ubiquitous, ever-present and by that time the males will see the injustices they have meted to the females over time.

#### IX. SIGNIFYING GENDER: ITS IMPLICATIONS ON GLOBAL SECURITY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The idea of the signified and its signifier is got from Ferdinand de Saussure's conceptualization of objects and their linguistic items that signify (not represent) them. Saussure posits that the signifier is the linguistic object that signifies the signified- object. Signification implies that something means something else in some respect; not something instead of another as some may interpret it (Chandler, 2002).

Meaning can be conventional and anything that is generally accepted by a particular group of people to mean anything remains as that so that whenever that object is mentioned using its linguistic item, it registers in the mind of the hearer as such. But there has been a heated argument among scholars on the fact that the relationship between signifiers and signified is arbitrary; which means that there is no clear cut relation between what is said and what is thought of; therefore, we can conclude that the meaning of a referent is unrelated to the reference used for it.

Following this argument, it is also important to make reference to the logical relation between smoke and fire, which in itself is not arbitrary; unlike the word and the object, smoke and fire do have a correlation, which is why we would prefer to draw our analogy of gender semiotics in this sense. Very importantly, dwelling on gender implies the tendency for one gender to imagine supremacy and superiority. Therefore, the proclivity for insecurity emanates from male hegemony, patriarchal idiosyncrasies and the subsequent fight for equality by the feminist movements as we pointed out earlier. Insecurity is the sign and the battle for in[equality] is the fire that brought the smoke. This goes well with the popular saying that there is no smoke without fire.

The male chauvinist is of the opinion that the feminist had asked for too much, by fighting for gender equality or balance of power. The fear of patriarchy, and its sympathizers, is that sooner than later the item on the feminists' agenda, sequel to gender equality will be the female fighting for superiority over the male. However, since the battle is still on, and patriarchy has not conceded equality to the feminists, there is a tendency that the female gender will not only succeed in the equality fight but it may result in a situation where the woman should actually take a "superior" position in the social strata where she takes charge of the environment and the social order. If, in the bid to fight for relevance, the female has engaged in lesbianism, which sees the man as unimportant, then, there is a possibility that the woman will want superiority as patriarchy has envisioned.

In recent times, there has been a global upheaval as a result of which countries and nations of the world are kept on their toes. There have been disruptions in global economy with economic downturns and meltdowns, insecurity issues, such as genocides and terrorist attacks and wars within/between nations all of which affect global development. An assessment of these phenomena could make one argue that they could result in underdevelopment and may also hamper peaceful co-existence among citizens. Before now, however, females had suspected the males as those fighting against their social mobility and the male, with their patriarchal idiosyncrasies, had also made various attempts to keep the female at home, as home builders and not public contributors. This state of affairs is what we see as being contributory to global disturbances.

Consequently, global gender struggle for relevance has been a distraction and thereby serves as a helping measure to terrorists' activities. The contemporary society has shown that male hegemony has diverted peoples' attention from pertinent issues to flimsy concerns such as feminist advocacy for gender equality. Mothers, on the other hand, have left the domestic sphere to their housemaids who can only do little of what they can do for their children. Female-mothers are on the struggle for recognition and so the home is run by their unknown maids. Morals and values have lost their significance. Children find succour in home videos and computer games that contribute to the mayhem we find in the society today. Youths want to practice what they have learnt from movies, computer games and other thrillers which we see as signals to global insecurity and socio-cultural underdevelopment in recent times.

#### X. CONCLUSION

The female species is endangered; the patriarchal society, within which they operate, over the years, has seen to it that femininity is gradually dying. Today, there is an aberration of what the society termed femaleness. Now a days, women are so assertive that there is barely anything they do not assume or attempt and some of these they do even better than their male counterparts. That is the reason we foresee a future where the woman controls the means of living.

Steadily, the female gender has left domesticity where she first operated and has assumed a public significance which has progressively empowered her to lead and act in different capacities. Instances are where women were assaulted for walking the street or being unattended to in restaurants because they are unescorted by men. This is gradually facing out; the woman has occupied a befitting place in the public space and so far she is doing fine. We conclude by stating that sooner than expected there will be a wave change where the 'female' is the celebrated and the 'male' the subjugated one who begs for relevance in a society that the woman dominates.

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