ALIEN ENCOUNTERS IN WOMEN'S TRAVEL WRITING: A FEMINIST STUDY OF LESLEY KITCHEN LABABIDI'S *PADDLE YOUR OWN CANOE* AND HILDA OGBE'S *THE CRUMBS OFF THE WIFE'S TABLE*

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MAY, 2013

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES BAYERO UNIVERSITY KANO IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH (LITERATURE)

MAY, 2013

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is the product of my own research efforts, carried out under the supervision of Professor Ibrahim Bello-Kano. All sources have been duly acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION PAGE

This is to certify that this research work and the subsequent compilation of this dissertation by Iman Mannir (SPS/AIS/08/02494) were carried out under our supervision.

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To My Mother Hajia Aisha Isa Kaita and my deceased father, Alhaji Mannir Maiwada, without whose inspiration and support I would not have been what I am today.

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ABSTRACT

For centuries, travel writing had been dominated by male writers who mapped alien places and exotic people; and depicted women as inferior. Against these male travel accounts, recent female travel accounts reject the traditional mapping of women as inferior by presenting in their writings how a woman can travel, encounter, and contribute to, the society. They also paint (like the man) their own subjective alien encounters. It is against this backdrop that this dissertation examines the perspectives of two female travel writers on and about their alien encounters: Lesley Kitchen Lababidi's *Paddle Your Own Canoe: An American Woman's Passage into Nigeria* and Hilda Ogbe's *Crumbs Off the Wife's Table* Both writers present their alien encounters in a mixed marriage cutting across racial, cultural, religious and linguistic frontiers. The study employs feminist literary theory in the analysis and discussion of the two texts. Also, the similarities and differences between the two female writers in the presentation of their ideologies, identities, cultures; as well as how they perceive, respond to, or appreciate, understand and participate in the alien world are examined in this study. The study also identifies, through a comparative study of the two texts, new females that can participate and be self-actualizing, against the deeply ingrained socially constructed ideologies consistent with the often oppressive and perverse dictates of patriarchal cultures. The research study is strictly desk-work and qualitative in approach.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> We tell stories to ourselves; of our journey from birth to death, friends, families, who we are and who we want to be; public stories about history and politics, about a country, a race or a religion. At each moment of our lives, these stories place us in space and time. They console us, making our lives meaningful by placing us in something bigger than ourselves (Cobley, 2001:1).

Feminism as a western ideology has developed over the years, from one phase to another. It has made tremendous impact and influence on women all over the world. Feminism has played a significant no role in making the woman conscious of being oppressed by men. Of all disciplines promoting the cause of feminism - Sociology, Psychology, Linguistics, Theology – none has contributed as much to the promotion of the feminist cause, as the field of literary studies. Literature contributes to the advancement of feminism in the way women's writing addresses the condition of women in the world. Women's writing is thus a reaction against society's conventional beliefs or attitudes regarding women; and against the way women are portrayed in male writing.

As such, women's writing is a re-writing of their own lives and history, from their own perspectives. Just as the fictional and non-fictional world of literature is an extension of the writer's experience and outlook; this study is about how aspects of a life, in this case travel encounters, are presented in Lesley Kitchen Lababidi's *Paddle Your Own Canoe: An American Woman's Passage into Nigeria* (1997) and Hilda Ogbe's *The Crumbs Off the Wife's Table* (2001). Lababidi and Ogbe, inspired by the new vision of women which feminism has provoked, seek to project their experiences from the woman's point of view. This is with a view to offer

"explorations of strictly feminine reality" (Firestone, 1971:167), and a fresh perspective on women as "self – actualizing" and not necessarily "dependent on men" (Martins, 1996:33). This however varies, with respect to the writer's ideological inclinations, values and world-views, socio – cultural and religious backgrounds which influence their visions.

These life narratives of women's travails and alien encounters present worlds that are "alien", compared to the writers' native encounters. Lababidi and Ogbe explore the complex structures that make up the conditions of women in foreign lands (as women) compared to the conditions at home. In this way, they present what they take to be the truth, as they present the encounters and relationships with the people they meet (friends and neighbours). Through this, they present worlds filled with cultural differences, corruption, incivility, suspicion, and religious encounters. As female travel writers, they explain both the favourable and unfavourable conditions of their encounters with the "Other". Lababidi is fascinated with and with encounters different from what she is used to at home. Ogbe, on the other hand, is just like any other Jew on a diasporal travel, displaced by war, which led to her travel encounters. For Lababidi and Ogbe, Middle East and Africa particularly Nigeria, are what James Clifford (1997) called "field sites" that open onto complex histories of dwelling, travelling and cosmopolitan experiences. Before going further, a clarification of some of the key terms used in the present study is provided below.

1.1 Definition of Terms

This section offers brief descriptions of terms such as “alien encounters”, “non-fiction”, “the other”, “travel writing” and “narrative” as they are used in the study. The term “Alien encounters” has been defined in a variety of ways. It is viewed as something different from what a person is used to in all aspects of life. For Frederick Jackson Turner, in Igbe (2009), it is “an encountered environmental and social challenge that is different from those known by the travellers, and the juncture between the civilization left and the new one met”. Alien is then a different encounter from the one the person is used to. The dynamic nature of these oppositional conditions, new versus old encounters, makes it impossible to be felt completely without the traveller/writer being in a new environment.

In this vein, Espey holds that travel is “often a means of education and a process of discovery by way of exploring the world outside of home and expanding one’s experience and knowledge” (2005, 2). As such, travel literature is derived from the realities of experiences and journeys over the surface of the earth and represents encounters with “alien” but real places and people. Thus, in travel writing, one finds a strong concern for the factual. Even though travel writing calls forth the factual, it provides materials for factual and non-factual stories. As a factual experience, travel writing is, for Espey:

> nothing but a form of creative non-fiction which roams the borders between the realms of desire and actuality, the imaginative and the factual. It is the fictional journeys (dream) which inspire real ones, while real journey in turn becomes the material for fiction and non-fiction (Espey, 2005: xi).

However, due to the short span of human memory, no man can adequately present what he exactly encounters; in addition to the fact that one’s interpretation of events may differ

depending on age (time lapse), knowledge and wisdom. To capture and recollect past events, therefore, writers tend to represent their encounters through imagination of what they wish to be recalled. This way, a selection process comes into play, with life-writers choosing what to present, or suppress arguably through the use of fictional tropes.

"Non-fiction" is a literary construct that expresses a truth and that presents a factual statement and encounters with real people, events and surroundings. For Lee Gutkind, creative non-fiction (also known as literary or narrative non-fiction) is a genre of writing that uses literary styles and techniques to create factually accurate narrative (2007:xi). Gutkind argues further that the ultimate goal of any creative non-fiction writer is to communicate information, just like a reporter, to shape it in a way that reads like fiction. Mary Campbell also argues that non-fictional works are generally considered as true, and that they contain unaltered reality (Campbell 2002). Non-fictional works then present the fact of a writer's or subject's life (as the writer claims). This presentation (of life) involves a lot of narrative techniques, such as selection and deselection, dialogue, character delineation, and the like. That is why writers tend to make a selection of the life encounters and events to represent in their works. No wonder then that truth in life narratives is meant to be upheld and told in a literary fashion (through the use of fictional tropes). Non-fictional works therefore include autobiography, biography, memoir, travelogue (travel writing), essays, letters, diaries and shiplogs.

Travel, according to Clifford (1997:66), "is an inclusive term embracing a range of more or less voluntary practices of leaving *home* to go to some other place". Lababidi and Ogbe are examples of female travel writers who travel to other places far from home for the taste of something different and away from the constraint of the family. Generally, for centuries travelling takes place often for the purpose of gaining material, spiritual, scientific benefits, or a

taste of something different and serves as a means of escape (for women) from the conditions they are accustomed to in their cultures. It involves obtaining knowledge or having "encounters" that are exciting, edifying, pleasurable, estranging and broadening. Thus, according to Mary Louise Pratt (1997), Western travellers, male or female (consciously or unconsciously) write in order to depict an assumed superiority, whether in culture or values, between them and what they encounter during their journeys. For that, both male and female travellers come face to face with worldly encounters different from home.

Travelogue or travel accounts are processes of locating oneself in space and time, over a series of encounters and interpretations that deliver differentiated experiences and cultural differences between the self and other (Clifford, 1997). The idea of the "other" is seen as a human creation and has been a recurrent feature in fiction and non-fiction. For Deinmotei Erefaghe Igbe (2009), the other is anyone who is separate from one's self. Therefore, the "other" is a person other than oneself, and could be superior or inferior based on the point of view of the self. The term is essential to the understanding of identity, as people construct it in order to differentiate themselves from others in a society. In the present study, "self" represents the writers (Lababidi and Ogbe as euro- Americans), while the "other" represents the natives. Alien encounters and the idea of the other are crucial in the discussion of Lababidi and Ogbe's travel narratives, as the writers represent how similar they are and what similarities they share with the natives they meet.

For centuries many women have written narratives about their alien encounters in places different from home. Notably, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Kingsley are examples of

two women travel writers (Kamp and Singh: 2001). These women travel to places far from the confines of home. As is the case in earlier women travel writings, Montagu wrote of her experiences with the women (in the harem- Turkish bath) in Turkey through letters and journals, these letters serving "as source materials for a non-fictional prose work that uses epistolary conventions as organizational or thematic devices" (Kamp and Singh, 2001:97).

On the other hand, in *Travel in West Africa,* Mary Kingsley was fascinated and astonished with the scenes at sight and the social and religious customs of the Africans which seem different from those back home (Blonton 2002). Lababidi, Ogbe, Montagu and Kingsley are not, however, free of "feminist feeling", "eurocentrism" and "racism" in their presentations of alien encounters. They all believe in difference in race and superiority, with theirs as superior and all other cultures and civilisations as inferior. Thus, this study intends to show how Lababidi and Ogbe depict the woman in their travel encounters in a new environment (as women) against the backdrop of the cultural and religious differences back home. This they were able to present through their gendered ideology and the mapping of the self and the other.

1.2 Travel Writing and Gender

The complex interplay between self and the world and between the empirical and the sentimental, signals the beginning of the richest period of women travel writing, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the past, the list of established writers was dominated by male writers. By nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, there arose interest in women's travel accounts creating opportunity for women travel writers. Whereas male travellers are mostly interested in the presentation of adventures and the mapping of colonisation, imperialism

and masculinity in travels, women travel writers were interested in those experiences and encounters that affect them as individuals, and not as colonisers or imperialists. This way, what women map in their travel accounts differ in many ways with that of the men.

Samuel Hynes, in Blonton (2002), argues that travel writing by women emphasises on the theme of self-discovery, thereby producing what is called a "dual plane work with a strong realistic surface…" (2002: 21): although the point should be made that travel writers, both male and female undertake the journey in search of fresh experience, self-understanding and identity.

Both men and women provide the assumed *realistic* encounters between their culture and identity with that of their host country in the struggle for existence and participation, although women were prevented from travelling without any form of escort for many centuries, as it involved risk, both physical and moral (Espey, 2005). For that reason, travelling was meant for men, who most often travelled as a means of discovery, while women travelled with a patron, or an authoritative figure, even as they could "afford to be more discursive, more impressionable, and more ordinal" (Young and Hulme, 2002: 226). Lababidi and Ogbe were not left out of that tradition, for they were on the move with their husbands. Travelling and travel writing mostly began as a dream which turned into a love affair with a culture, a language, a people, and which was later transformed to writing (Espey, 2005). For travel writers, the only way to really have encounters is to live in a place, and to live for at least a long time. This has been the business of both men and women travellers, and has continued to the present day.

Travel and writing rightly co-exist, for what a writer encounters externally must be processed internally, and what is felt inside is to be tested on the outside world (Espey, 2005). Unlike the case with travel writing, most female travel writing began as letters, journals and diaries, written not with the sole purpose of publishing, but that end up being published mostly as

travelogues. Morris, on this, states that she did not go away intending to write about it, but a time came when she knew she would (Espey, 2005). It may be observed therefore that Lababidi and Ogbe went in search of adventure, never with the intention of writing, but end up writing.

Despite the constraint on female travel and writing, Young and Hulme (2002) observe that female travel writers, unlike the male, were more orthodox, socially conformist, and that they attempt to seek escape from the constraint institutionally imposed upon them, such as the family. This is why Feminists in the early 1970s, as part of their intellectual agenda, consciously revised what was perceived as male-authorise history (the time when female travel writers were non-existent, although there were a few such as Isabella Bird, Mary Montagu and Mary Kingsley, who were not however as popular as the men). Hence, women mostly placed emphasis on the personal and on relationships in general, in documenting the everyday life of their encounters in a place different from home. No wonder Lababidi and Ogbe document their encounters of motives, journeying and escape through the everyday life of alien neighbours, culture, and day to day vicissitudes of living.

Furthermore, Espey (2005:67) maintains that women, unlike men, usually travel in search of something different from home – "self realization and fulfilment that has to do with certain reasons such as family breakdown, spiritual emptiness in their lives, and a thirst for the unusual". On this view, Shirley Foster argues that women travel writers were inspired perhaps by the sense of escape; that is escape from the norms of their societies. These instil in their texts a subconscious gendered voice, focusing mainly on the family and on women in search of their identity (Blonton, 2002). Despite British gender roles and conventions that place restrictions on women in the past, these female travel writers "cultivated their writings between their emotional necessity and the reality of the external world" (Espey, 2005: 68). These women writers

understand themselves in relation to their culture and gender; and like the male, transform and reinvent themselves and the space around them.

In their accounts, these women tend to concentrate more on the conditions of women (which is the same worldwide) and on whatever they deem to be interesting to them and their readers back home. They negotiate the roles of male and female in their travel narratives, and by so doing concentrate and focus "more on the relationship between the individual and the societies through which she travels" (Young and Hulme, 2002: 237). These writers inevitably compare their home countries to those they visit in order to differentiate and understand the new encounters and individuals in the light of those at home. Travel writing, whether by a female or male are filled with comparisons between the home and away (alien). In documenting their new homes, travel writers include their gaze, ideology and chunks of historical data to show the effects of their presence in a foreign land, and by this, they expose "the arbitrariness of truth and the absence of norms" in their new environment (Blonton, 2002: 27).

Such a formulation implies that both Lababidi and Ogbe position themselves as informed outsiders, reporting their encounters to readers and maintaining an air of difference by offering excessively direct or idiosyncratic translations. Both writers present their encounters about women and the less privilege in the rituals of everyday life – marriage, rituals of consumption of food, lack of water and electrical shortages and outages, amongst others. Literature has been generally a product of a particular time and culture. This way, the accounts of women travellers of the eighteenth century are different from those of the twentieth century which mirror the struggle of modern women trying to find a way of adapting and realizing themselves in a changing world (from being inferior to participant). The construction of the narratives of Lababidi and Ogbe is necessarily a product of a particular time, place and culture of Nigeria in

the 50's – 90's. They did not construct their writings by the monuments and landmarks that guidebooks mark, as with other female writers of the past, thus exposing the uniqueness of the writers, the region and its religious and traditional beliefs. Rather, they describe the everyday life of Nigerians and how they adapt in order to fit in with it as an alien way of life.

Lababidi and Ogbe depict many aspects of the Nigerian way of life, ranging from culture and food, to the character of the Nigerians and the others they met in the places they visited. The effects of gestures and their fledgeling command of the language they learn reinforces their importance of being there – being part of the communities, not just as observers. There is no doubt that life-writers generally write on the bits and pieces of their encounters, thus presenting them as a new reality to the reader. On this view, this study negotiates the similarities in women conditions and the differences between the self and the other, between the society at home and the new one encountered. It will also examine the differentiated perspective and the portrayal of female travel-writers' alien encounters in a place different from home.

1.3 About the Authors

Born in Denver, Colorado in the early nineteen fifties, Lesley Kitchen Lababidi has lived over twenty five years in Africa with her husband, Maan and their children Omar, Saadiah and Zane. Lababidi a writer, photographer, philanthropist, wife and mother, lover of Africa has stay flexible and open to distant roads whether trail or paved road. She has written five books and numerous articles about Nigeria, Egypt and Syria about a variety of subjects including culture, travel and traditional crafts. She is also a marathon cyclist and desert explorer. *Paddle Your Own Canoe: An American Woman's Passage into Nigeria (1997)* is her first book. Others include *Cairo Streets Stories: Exploring the City's Status, Squares, Bridges, Gardens and Sidewalk*

Cafes (2008), *Cairo the Family Guide (2006)*, *Cairo Practical Guide (17th Ed, 2011)* and *Silent No More: Special Needs People in Egypt (2002)*. She loves quilting, reading poetry, studying Egypt and Nigeria while stuttering through Arabic and Hausa.

Born in Germany in the year 1921, Hilda Garson, later known as Hilda Ogbe grew up in Germany and later left for England in 1939 during the Second World War where she met Tommy. She came to Nigeria with her Nigerian lawyer husband in 1956. In Nigeria she introduced and led a silver jewellery industry in 1963 in Enugu and later established her company, "Ogbecraft" limited in Benin City. Ogbe also studies character analysis through Astrology and for the past thirty years, she has been treating sickle-cell patients with local herbs which produce astounding results. Ogbe calls herself an "Honours Graduate from the University of Life". She embraced her new country (Nigeria) in 1967 with love. *The Crumbs Off the Wife's Table (2001)* is her first book, to Ogbe Nigeria is "home".

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Travel writers have for many centuries been male, who mapped alien places and exotic people; and who, more or less, have mapped women as inferior and often similar to savages. Female travel writing, a relatively new phenomenon compared to the male travel writing, rejects masculinist tendencies often associated with the male travel accounts. As against male travelogues, major female travel accounts from the Victorian period onwards have rejected the mapping of women to domesticity and the home; by showing that the woman can also travel, experience, contribute to society, and return home to narrate her own story. Thus, the problem tackled by the present study is how gender influences what is selected for presentation; and how

this influences the representation of women in such accounts; and, finally, how this makes the travel accounts of women different from men's.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to explore the following:

- The mapping of women in alien societies and cultures, as exemplified in the accounts of Lababidi and Ogbe.
- How two women's (Ogbe and Lababidi) travel narratives have framed the 'alien' and the 'other' in a specific context and within the field of 'writing' and 'feminist representations'
- The presentation (in the texts) highlight and assess the conflict between Ogbe's and Lababidi's religious and cultural beliefs and inclinations with those of their husbands' and the new societies they find themselves living in.

1.6 Scope and Delimitation

This study will be limited to the discussion of alien encounters in two women's travel texts, namely *Paddle your own Canoe: An American Woman's Passage into Nigeria* by Lesley Kitchen Lababidi (1997) and *The Crumbs off the Wife's Table* by Hilda Ogbe (2001). The analysis will capture how they have framed the woman and the 'other' in their narratives, thus, revealing their ideologies and understanding of other cultures and religious beliefs and the issue of encounter in alien and exotic societies and cultures. The literature of travel writing is very broad covering many centuries, societies and writers, hence, this study will be limited to texts of the 20th century – which is the historical period of the travels and encounters in the primary texts under study. References will however be made (from time to time) to other writers and periods to illustrate the writers' position, narrative style and point of view about women, exotic cultures and

alien places. This will go a long way in revealing the relationship that virtually all travel accounts share, especially when the traveller-subject is a white European coming across the "other" he considers as inferior and savage. This shall be on how Ogbe and Lababidi have presented their own personal travel accounts vis-à-vis the above perspective.

1.7 Research Design

This study examines Lababidi's and Ogbe's treatment of women's experiences in their respective travel accounts. The context of the production of these works will be taken into account in the attempt to present a balanced interpretation of the writers' presentation of events, cultures, religions and people encountered. The work will equally capture the authors' experiences and psyche, and illustrate how they have come to shape the content of their works. The study shall rely on library research of books and journals. In order to supplement library-print materials, information will also be sought from the electronic media.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The two primary texts, *Paddle Your Own Canoe: An American Woman's Passage into Nigeria* and *Crumbs Off the Wife's Table* by Hilda Ogbe, have not received much critical attention since their publication especially in the area of feminist literary studies. The present study is a feminist literary analysis of the primary texts, thereby filling a gap that has not been adequately filled by past analyses of the texts. The primary texts provide a gendered representation of the historical perspective of women in England, Beirut and Nigeria (from 50's to 90's) from non-natives' point of view. This way, they remain seminal in the discourse of non-fictional travel encounters by women. Even though a lot has been written on both male and

female writers, *Paddle* and *Crumbs* needs more critical attention at undergraduate and postgraduate level. This is not to say, however, that nothing has been written on these works. This research is, therefore, particularly seminal because of its attempt to study Lababidi's and Ogbe's travel accounts, first as female works, and second, as mediums through which they present their alien encounters in foreign lands in opposition to theirs at home.

Thus, this study is conceived to contribute modestly to literary studies by its attempt at not only presenting the problematic associated with the condition of women, travel writing and the presentation of alien encounters, especially by whites women in strange and exotic places such as Africa; but also at presenting the discourse of non-fiction and how the genre has come to be associated with presentations that are sometimes non-factual and often ideological and selective. The works under study, it should be noted, have perhaps to a certain degree has not enjoyed a rigorous feminist perspective and analysis. Thus, this study is potentially capable of remedying the gap because it seeks to employ the feminist method of analysis in the interpretation of the texts. This method is important because the texts (being products of feminine minds) are subjectified objects of analysis that require the understanding of the writers' psyche, experiences and presentation of events, other lands and cultures, and especially the 'other'. Most significantly, this study is significant because it ventures at studying the presentation of encounters by women in an alien society in relation to the gender of the writers. This is why the deployment of a feminist theory in the analysis is paramount as it will reveal what female writers consider worthy of inclusion, or otherwise suppressed.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The choice of feminist literary theory for this study is informed by the belief that female works are necessarily presentations in feminine nature; and by that is meant that texts written by women are basically 'subjectified objects' – embodying the heart and mind of a female writer. This way, female writers, whether of fictional or non-fictional works, pass across their encounters as women in a largely patriarchal society – one where their roles and expectations are determined by the state institution, which itself is man's fraudulent construction. Feminism (in general) is a theory that is obsessed with the politics of gender equity; with the need to fight for women's rights in the society. Unlike other radical theories, such as Marxism, Postcolonialism and Gay theories, it is a more modern phenomenon, one broader and more informing than what early female activists like Wollstonecraft and Wolf present. Like them, however, it has a history of the female political struggle, emancipation and equality.

There are today, however, many shades of feminist theory, as many scholars and theorists look at the theory from different point of view. Even with that, its central emphasis on the female remains its core tenet. Any reading of a female work, therefore, must involve recognition of the subjectified narrator – one whose thoughts and experiences are seminal in any interpretation. It is for this reason that Lababidi and Ogbe as female travel writers must be understood as women trying to express their encounters in societies that are male dominated. Considering that it is through them that the experiences in the texts under study are seen.

The presence and importance of the writer is felt more in life narratives, as it is through them that writers communicate their assumed "real experiences". Unlike in fictional works, where the reader is tasked with the duty of creating a link between the characters presented and the life of the author, in travelogues, for example, it is the writer that is the subject of narration

(subject-writer). What is then left is the analysis of how the writer's psyche and character inform the account of events and characters presented. Life narrators, it should be noted, are often conscious of their presence in their stories, and only have to call upon the reader to recognise what they present/narrate as their own personal experiences.

Feminist literary theory's obsession with politics and gender equity accounts for its link with equal rights, social and radical movements and other literary theories like Marxism, psychoanalysis and deconstruction. Feminism is an ideology that is gender based; and although different scholars view it from different ideological planes, the emphasis on the feminine gender is predominant. It is a theory that advocates for political, economic and social equality between sexes, even as it is not single and unified due to variations in class, geographical and social bearing. Toril Moi (1986) attempts to offer the distinction between the cognate terms which are central to feminist literary theory, thus stating that "*feminism* is a political position, *femaleness* a matter of biology, and *feminity* is a set of culturally defined characteristics" (1986: 204).

Feminist theory is concerned with the nature and mechanisms of male oppression, as well as that of female encounters in the society. It is a radical theory which seeks change and is geared toward the urgency of a revolution. It also challenges male domination in many aspects of life such as politics, the economy, education and the arts. Consequently, feminism has different waves (periods). The first wave stresses the fact that a woman is a complete, and not half human, and by that deserves better education. Second wave feminism from the 1960s and 70s onwards rejects patriarchy in its entirety, levelling heavy criticism against Marxism, which they consider in league with patriarchy.

Elaine Showalter in "Towards a Feminist Poetics" (2000) introduced the term "gynocritics" to describe the kind of criticism feminists should be doing. Thus, "gynotext", for

her, should be the focus of a feminist's attention – that is, narratives which deal particularly with women's experience in a patriarchal society. Her intention is to reverse the literary trend such that women are brought in from the margins of discourse where patriarchy historically tended to banish them. These feminists went all out campaigning for the revision of cultural history; the result of which led to their reclaiming women's forgotten past.

In a bid to study texts written by women, the reader for Schweickart, in Lodge (2000), encounters not simply a work but a "subjectified object", the heart and mind of a female. In the reading, for Poulet, the importance of the author must be placed above that of the reader because the author normally uses her texts to pass across her own views. Thus, it is not difficult to see why feminism is in the heart of every woman, as what they write cannot help but be feminine. Such a formulation of the nature of female writing supports Wolf's stand in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) of a woman's writing always being feminine. For her, it cannot help (even at its best) but be feminine.

The presence of many female writers in the later eighteenth century witnessed the rise in the advocacy for woman's rights. Elaine Showalter succeeds in tracing the shift of the focus of attention from 'woman as reader' to 'woman as writer'. The success of this effort brought about the discovery of past generations of British women novelists; these she classifies into three stages: the feminine, feminist and female phases (Blamires, 1991). She notes that some feminist historians trace the movement from women's sphere, to women's culture, and to women's activism as the consecutive stages of an evolutionary political process (Showalter, 1985).

Showalter, in support of Bloom and Sa'id, argues that a woman's writing thinks back through both paternal and maternal lines of inheritance (Showalter, 2000). Meyer Sparks in *The Female Imagination* (1975) identifies that this marked-shift, from that of seeing the female writer

as simply thinking back through her mother, as popularised by Wolf, transformed the movement from androcentric to gynocentric feminist criticism. Female writing, though mostly personal, has the same kind of political preoccupation and quest for rights and equity with Marxism and postcolonialism. It is, as Evans (2001) puts, an advocacy of the rights of women, which emerged in the 1890s to contextualise the movement of women, but is now used to describe pro-woman ideas and actions (experiences including travels) from ancient times to the present.

Female works, whether novels or travelogues such as Lababidi's *Paddle your Own Canoe* and Ogbe's *Crumbs off the Wife's Table,* are courageous and sincere, as they closely identify the plights of women anywhere they find themselves. Thus, female writers are no longer primarily concerned with the domestic and moral; but are intellectual as well as political. By and large, there appears a movement from, what Wolf calls, the "personal centre" which preoccupied female works in the past, to the "impersonal". Such kind of female works are more critical of society, and less analytical of domestic, emotional and individual lives. Instead, they present how characters, as opposed to the male-female relations, cohere and clash in groups and classes.

Feminists struggle for liberation against all forms of oppression meted out on women in patriarchal societies. The oppression, according to Goring et al (2001), takes different forms: from the economic, ideological, to generally the social. The struggle, as they observe, take varied forms and has differing objectives. When compared with Marxism, feminism also fights against all sorts of gender discrimination and differentiation. Feminists advocate for the need for women to determine their own lives and futures. This way, the theory rejects many of the cultural stereotypes of women in the society and literature. Radical feminists have gone as far as to campaign for *separatism*, thereby condemning the notion that marriage is a woman's ultimate goal.

Feminism declares that women are no longer senseless and powerless beings who accept and rely on whatever a patriarchal society offers them. They are now active and are walking towards liberating themselves. These women, for Bressler (2002), have broken the bounds of culture; and like the men, they also feel that they can determine and shape their lives and dreams. This female struggle, as Bressler (2002) observes, attempts to stress the belief that women are now si*gnificant*. This liberationist struggle has roots, and one of which is, that men, through the institution, have oppressed women, allowing them little or no voice in the political, social, or economic issues of their society. This has consequently allowed men to suppress them, thereby defining *feminine* as one without a voice and value.

Feminists' struggle is aimed towards turning things around in the society, thereby uplifting the status of women. They aim at pointing the belief that the woman is no longer the non-significant other. The struggle is also intended to prove that any woman is valuable, and possess the same privileges and rights as any man. Feminists, in this way, argue for the need to allow women to define themselves and assert their own voices in the arenas of politics, society, education, and the arts (Bressler, 2002). Thus, one of the common ways by which they can profess their new-found value is through their works. By so doing, feminists hope to create a society that is not gender biased – one in which all sexes enjoy equal privileges and significance. Their attempt is political, for their aim is to change the world in which they live, a world, that they state, requires change "if all individuals, all cultures, all subcultures, and both sexes are to be valued as creative, rational people who can all contribute to their societies and the world" (Bressler, 2002: 153).

Feminists argue that in the criticism of any work of art there are important things to take into account. For Bressler (2002), there are some feminist ideas that should inform and direct the

critic's interpretation of a text. First, is the need to analyse the images of the female body as presented in the work. Such an anatomical study will inform how the various parts of the female body serve as significant images in works authored by women. Secondly, the feminist model outlines that emphasis should be accorded to female language. It is expected of the feminist critic, therefore, to consider how both male and female write – to have to do with grammatical constructions, recurring themes, and other linguistic elements.

For the critic to highlight the female psyche and its relationship to the writing process, he requires the application of the psychological works of Freud and Lacan. The works of Freud and Lacan will help in revealing the physical and psychological development of the female evidences and traits in the writing process. The last element to be considered, for Bressler (2002), is that of culture. The analysis of cultural forces like the place and role of women in a society will help the critic in arriving at an interpretation of how different societies shape a woman's first understanding herself, her society, and then her world (Bressler, 2002). All these feminist elements are crucial in the interpretation of literary works, whether written by women or men. This critical model will help in the reading of Lababidi's and Ogbe's works, since the texts present a movement from one culture/society to another, and with such movement comes a new understanding and place of women.

Feminist tendencies as depicted in the encounters of real female characters in Lababidi's *Paddle Your Own Canoe* and Ogbe's *Crumbs Off the Wife's Table* comes to mind owing to the status women are accorded in the writers' settings, cultures and that of the alien in the works. Female encounters in Ogbe's and Lababidi's travel accounts place emphasis on the inequalities faced by and social discrimination against women in the society. Lababidi and Ogbe write about exotic cultures and places where gender discrimination is well pronounced(just like their own

societies); places where, as depicted in the writer-narrators' experiences, the woman is more or less a half-human, a provider of domestic and emotional needs, and a subordinate. Thus, they suffer from painting the "fact" that women in world cannot rise up or be anything without the support of a man. As women who are aware of the rights their kind should enjoy in a modern society, Lababidi and Ogbe depict, through an alien eye, the troubles, pains, and insignificance of women in African and Middle-Eastern societies with theirs in mind. As newcomers in these alien societies, these female travel writers attempt to compare their status and privileges back home with what they are suddenly faced with in new societies that accord fewer opportunities and privileges to women. Any feminist criticism of these travelogues, therefore, will entail an understanding of the alien, social, and historical contexts by which the stories are narrated.

However, their authorial ideologies revealed their style of literary presentation as women. Thus, this study uses the different encounters in the two texts to reveal the views, perceptions, understanding and criticism of life and society by Lababidi and Ogbe as travel writers. The study further illustrates how feminist literary theory will be deployed in the analysis of these female texts. The theory, as shown, will aid in revealing how the world is seen through the eyes of two female travellers. Just as the texts remain the products of an alien and feminine state of mind. The theory will help clarify the differences between female and male presentation of travel encounters. It will thus assist in identifying and examining issues like gender representation, female travel and writing, and that of self and other.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The primary text under study *Paddle* (1997) and *Crumbs* (2001) respectively are non-fictional works, travelogues about an alien place and a gendered presentation by women. This chapter offers a review around the discourse and submissions by critics and reviewers on fact and fiction (since both *Paddle* and *Crumbs* are examples of non-fictional works with documentary and autobiographical feel), self and the other, travel writing, and female travel writers, and generally life writers. Considering that there is a vast amount of research on the issues mentioned above, this chapter will therefore concentrate on those literatures relevant to this study. The review, in essence, will serve a general purpose, thereby preparing the ground for the discussion and analysis of *Paddle* and *Crumbs* as female non-fictional travel accounts. Thus, the chapter will be divided into sections in order to help in the presentation of the relevant issues under review.

2.1 Fact and Fiction

The place of fictional and non-fictional constructs in literary discourse has been one particular problem in understanding there distinction or point of convergence. In view of this, traditionalist and modern literary theories have locked horns, with the former maintaining the distinction between the two and the latter arguing for points of convergence between fiction and non-fiction. Fiction and fact in modern literary discourse have come together (through the point of view of narrative, narration and the representation of life), that it becomes difficult to separate the two. The thrust of this section is the attempt to discuss issues which define fiction as

necessarily being fictional and non-fiction as inevitably factual or true. James Tar (2005:1) states that, it is a "prohibitive enterprise attempting to delineate a neat line of distinction between fiction and non-fiction as categories of narrative". It is so because, as Derrida (1976: 69) argues, there is an absence in factual narratives; thus, this "original absence of the subject of writing is also the absence of the thing or the referent". He doubles up in *Writing and Difference* (1978:411) to maintain that "the absence of a transcendental signified extends infinitely the field and play of meaning".

This is why Blonton (2002) argues that the question of authenticity, meaning and authority have always been up front in travel writing as they rarely are in fiction; as these narratives render in words the truth (as they claim) about the alien (strange), the exotic, the dangerous and inexplicable. In this way, they convey information about geography as well as human nature and places different from home. Susan Bassnett, in Young and Hulme (2000: 235), argue that many travel writers, men and women, have reinvented themselves in similar ways, always claiming to be writing in a spirit of 'authenticity', yet fictionalising their experiences by writing themselves as characters into the account of their travels. It becomes obvious or difficult to draw a mark of distinction between fiction and fact, as well as between the fictional and the non-fictional works.

Such a formulation implies that both narrative forms are threaded together, just as Tar (2005:1-2) observes that "no narrative work is absolutely fictional or non-fictional". He states that "there is always at least an infinitesimal presence of one in the other". The fact is, therefore, invariably resident in fiction. This explains why Fredrick Nietzsche (1986:13), in Tar (2005:2), argues that "there are no absolute truths or eternal facts". In a way, this contradicts the claim that non-fictional constructs embody absolute truth, reality or fact in their presentation. Even though

they claim so to the reader(s), non-fictional constructs are, like all narratives, nothing more than cold prints, signs and marks on paper.

Narratives in modern literary studies are cold prints and indeterminate structures that are open and unstable. Bello-Kano (2009) quotes Derrida (1978) who maintains that writing "leads to more writing and more, and still more, without ever being exhausted by the transcendental signified". It is on this view that Rockwell (1974), in Tar (2005:2), maintains that there is the presence of fact in fiction and fiction in fact, in that even history, the law, religion, statements of politicians and journalists are presented in various forms of fictional narratives. Tar (2005) further argues that in one sense everything is fiction, and in another sense fiction is reality. Sara Mills (1997, 18), in Tar (2005:3), concurs by stating that "truth is something which societies have to work to produce, rather than something which appears in a transcendental way". It can therefore be posited that "fiction" is not exactly "fictional" and "fact" is not completely "factual".

It cannot, however, be concluded that fiction and non-fiction are the same; for even as the two forms differ in many ways, it is still difficult to determine the truths that non-fictional constructs claim. Texts, according to Warner Berthoff (1981) are "never wholly autonomous and never speak for the totality" of a culture. This implies that even travelogues and other forms of non-fictional constructs are not entirely factual or representative of the culture and encounters they project. Non-fictional constructs involve elements of conscious selection, motivation and individual celebration, distortion, embellishment and creativity. This is why at the level of textual analysis both fictional and non-fictional narratives can be analysed using the same critical procedure. Every literary piece is, therefore, a process of careful and conscious selection put

together by the writer who chooses what to include from the slices of his/her encounters/experiences.

Thus, the non-fiction writer becomes in a way his self-censor and critic, through self-ideologue and when he writes, he writes, as propounded by Johnson "more than (or less than, or other than) one thinks" (1995:46). Looking at Lababidi's *Paddle Your Own Canoe* (1997), or even Ogbe's *Crumbs off the Wife's Table* (2001) from the point of view of narrative, narration, story and storytelling, we do not only find a conscious selection, but also the distinction between fact and fiction collapsing. This is partly because the works involve the deployment of both fictional and non-fictional tropes, and a selection and deselection process. Geralt Genet in *Narrative and Discourse* (1980) is of the opinion that there is no 'pure fiction' as narration bridges the divide between actuality and creativity. Wellek and Warren, in Oriaku (1998: 2) maintain that 'every work of art imposes an order, an organization, and a unity on its material'. No wonder travel writing, like other non-fictional constructs, present its report chronologically, thereby following the itinerary of the trip.

Thus, life narratives like Lababidi's *Paddle* (1997) and Ogbe's *Crumbs* (2001) are at best what Roy (1973), in Oriaku (1998), calls "pseudo history" since there is the conscious attempt to elucidate a spiritual image. He further argues that for the non-fictional writer to succeed, he will have to omit some issues of the past in the light of what he has become. Non-fictional writers select a particular range of life as well as relevant incidents and encounters with a view to project a particular image of themselves or a unified view of their life or that span of it being highlighted in their works. Apart from selecting events and incidents, life-narrators also censor other characters' feelings, actions, words and ideas in their narration. Most see themselves as models

of how to succeed in different endeavours of life. They are often subjects of celebration, emulation, and rise from either poverty to riches or from obscurity to fame.

The non-fictional writer does not only select events to include in his narrative, but also picks and censors those encounters that will help him in the process of what Oriaku (1998) calls his "personality formation". The formation and presentation of this unique personality, as is mostly known with life-writers, promotes insincerity and could lead to fictionalisation. Furthermore, selection and presentation are mostly associated with travel writers, autobiographers, memoirists and essayists, who mostly tell their stories using the first person narrative point of view. The "I" in the story is modelled and presented as an epitome and a symbol of good virtue. The narrator-protagonist, thus, becomes an outstanding and eminent character in the narration. There is the call for the reader to suspend her disbelief and to readily accept the story as it is. Even more important, the reader is induced to, according to Oriaku (1998:8), "identify with their experiences and vision through the remembered actions, ideas, perceptions, words and feelings".

It is this, therefore, which determines the writer's selection and exclusion process, as well as his/her use of language and target audience. Thus, the intention, according to Lejeune (1982), is not primarily about truth or falsehood, but about presenting the life or experiences from a certain perspective or point of view. It is obvious then that they do not only select slices of events, distort already written literature or sources, but they also embellish their stories in order to create, perhaps, an entirely new image. In an attempt to universalize their stories, life-narrators engage in the recreation of truth.

Thus, for Smith (1982), while non-fictional narratives may contain facts, they are nonetheless non-factual tales or history about a person (subject of writing), event or a particular

time. They also offer "subjective" truth instead of "fact". It may suffice therefore to say that non-fictional works are nothing but an amalgam of inconsistent and ever shifting views about the lives of their subjects. It is difficult, then for the life narrator to present a single book, or even a volume, of their experiences or entire life. This is because, for one, the writer's views about the world may change compared to what he or she has documented in the past and hence the need to re-visit the story. Of equal importance is the fact that what he or she recreates and embellishes can be verified or falsified by reference to documentation or fact outside the text.

In this way, life writers paint their own profile and recreate themselves in the story. In this respect, they become nothing but an artificial "I". Arguably, what appears in these narratives is just an "interpretation", rather than the indubitable presence or the "fact" of the life or encounters of the subject. This is so because travel writing, as argued by Clifford (1997:19), is nothing but a process of "intercultural interpretation that is represented according to the memory and perception of the traveler" (that is to say, according to what he remembers). Barthes (1967: 20) on this maintains that "fact only has a linguistic existence", rather than an extra-discursive one. This is to say that the non-fictional writer is not just a story-teller, but also occupies the same position as a literary critic in that he has to narrate and interpret a life both at once.

The debate about fiction and non-fiction is ongoing. In fact, some critics and theorists have gone as far as categorising all forms of writing, whether biography, autobiography, letters or even travel accounts as fiction. Although *Paddle* may not safely qualify as non-fiction in every sense of the term, it is still as reliable as the most reliable reportage. The text seeks a larger truth than is possible through the presentation of verifiable facts, as seen in characters with real names and history, and in the representation of historical facts and pictures that can be verified. On these many grounds, Lababidi and Ogbe in documenting the subjective fact of their alien

encounters, see themselves as different. As they present their perception as euro-Americans travel writers, they present the shared notion of 'we' and 'they' and 'self' and 'other' in their writings.

2.2 Self and Other

The terms "self" and "other" are essential to the understanding of identity. Identity is a construct that is deployed to differentiate oneself from another, particularly in the attempt to demonstrate an element of superiority. The literature variously called exploration or travel writing, traveller's tales, narrative of discovery and literature of travel, is also a literature of "contact", in which the European explorers and travellers, produced the non-Euro-Americans as a representational other, by presenting alien landscape and life in ways different from their own. Bello-Kano (1999: 98) states that

> it was in the early European account of other lands, people and way of life that a sense of cultural difference was mediated, codified, constructed, and as we might say today 'fabricated', as a particular linguistically-based, discursively unified, naturally-given, historically fortified narrativisation of (other) history, difference, and being (a matter of fact distinction, in other words between European and non-Europeans, the familiar and the alien, the superior and inferior) (1999:98).

On this view Fabian (1983) argues that the creation of travel and ethnographic discourse, of the non-European as the other, involves homogenizing and reifying them. It is this very process which allows narrators to claim the status of authoritative factual observers and thus "mark the other outside the dialogue (in which the other is) posited (predicated), as that which contrasts with the personas of the participants in the dialogue" (1983: 85). In understanding oneself, therefore, the self needs to be with the other, just as in the past when men travelled in search of heroism in other lands. This often, involves "travelling along a path of self-improvement and integration, doing battle with the others who are the unresolved parts of

himself" (Blonton, 2002:3). For there is self-consciousness between the self and the other, there is always the need for the self to define its own existence.

"The other", in *Key Concepts in Post Colonial Studies,* is defined as "anyone who is separate from one's self" (1998: 169), Homi Bhabha sees the other as "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite". Furthermore, the German philosopher, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in his work *In Phenomenology of Spirit* (1931: 1997), views the other as a component of self-consciousness. He uses a story about how two people meet to demonstrate his position, where he states that when two "self-consciousness" meet, they can choose to ignore each other or become enchanted each by the other. When the "I" sees another "I" and finds its own power compromised, it ignores the other or sees it as a threat, thereby resulting to a clash of identity between the self and the other. The other, according to this formulation, is one distinct, or rather different from oneself.

Alexander Kojeve in his analysis of Hegel's concept of the "other" in *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* shows the slave to be the other to the master (the self). These concepts of self and other (master slave dialectic) are categories of Hegelian conception. Similarly, it is on this conception that the French feminist and thinker, Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), builds upon her own idea. Beauvoir (1981) introduces the Hegelian idea of the other (Master-Slave Dialectic) into gender studies. She uses the terms "subject" and "other" to describe the exploitation that ensues when the "subject" is man and the "other is a woman". Thus, mutuality between the man and the woman is not equal, because of certain historical, political and social reasons (xxiii) (the man being the superior "self" while the woman the inferior "other").

In the same vein, the "other" in racial relationships, mutuality may be possible between the "self" and the "other", in some cases. In relations between countries of the west and the

orient (non-Europeans), the concept of the other can be a problem of "orientalism" or of silencing the subaltern. Here, the west is seen as "rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion", while the orient has "none" (Igbe 2009: 49). It is based on this assumption that the self is seen to endow the world with all of its value and meaning; and it is the enormity of the task imposed upon it that accounts for the various modernist evasions and failures (Blonton, 2002).

The issue of self and other, based on the submission above, is linked to the emergence of cartography (maps and mapping) and the inscriptions of non-European others in travel and cartographic writings. A useful beginning is seen in the works of Woods and Fels (1986), Harvey (1988), Ryan (1994), Rabas (1995) and Ashcroft, and Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) (Bello-Kano, 1999:11). For this, European map-making has historically served European expansion and the ideologies it engendered. Trade, diplomacy, missionary endeavours and scientific exploration produced its own history of travel writing and British expansionism. Travel writing is, thus, seen as a discourse designed to interpret to the readers encounters in a geographical area, together with its natural attributes, its human society and culture, and between the subjects (self) and the "other".

No wonder the other holds sway in European writings about non-Europeans. Gayatri Spivak in her seminal essay, "*The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives"* (1985), in Bello-Kano (1999), argues that "othering" refers to the process by which Europe, in the shape of imperial power, "consolidated itself as sovereign subject by defining its colonies as 'others', even as it constituted them into programmed near-images of that sovereign self" (1999:116). As Europeans, Lababidi and Ogbe present their encounters in relation to what constituted the near images of the sovereign "self" and that of the "other". As members of a superior race and

culture, they tend to see chaos, crime and illiteracy with the other. They establish (by making an impact of change on some of) what they think is alien and inferior in the indigenous landscape, people and culture of the places they visited.

Self and othering are inevitable in European travel writing about the world, for othering is a normalizing discourse – an attempt to codify difference and the need to "fix the other". On another note, Bello-Kano observes that the explorer and traveller use grammatical structures in the presentation of his/her encounters and observations of the other. This is seen especially in the use of the present tense, as Bello-Kano quotes Fabian (1983), where he states that:

> The present tense (which) 'freezes' a society at the time of observations about the repetitiveness, predictability and conservatism of primitives (for this) reveals a cognitive stance towards its object. It presupposes the giveness of the object of (travel writing) as something to be observed (Fabian 1983:81-82).

This implies to a certain degree, that the writer of the other presents himself in the light of the "other's" experiences. The notion of "self" and "other" at the narration and textualisation level cannot be fully realized without the journey. As a pertinent concept in travel writing, the other helps the self in the understanding of the way differences are constructed, whether of gender, race, nation, religion or culture. The other is the antithesis of the self, and therefore serves an accentual purpose in the conceptualization of the self. The presentation of difference makes travel writers discriminate between what is familiar and what is alien and exotic. In turn, the readers are then moved into believing that they are encountering people and places that are sufficiently foreign. (Igbe: 2009)

Through the self, the traveller's identity is frequently put in a state of flux and made to negotiate between social convention, literary convention, personal motivations and nationalist agendas in trying to portray the differentiated encounters between the self and other. The self they write about, is also turned into an "other" as the narration unfolds. Thus, who they think

they are when writing a text is already another self, as they can only know and write about themselves from a limited perspective, as members of a particular society (Igbe 2009). The presentation of the eight technologies of othering/otherness presented by Golding (1997), as cited in Bello-Kano (1999) in travel writing is inevitable; these include curiosity, noise, cruelty, appetite, skin, nomadism, contamination and dwelling assist in the presentation and justification of alien encounters by the subject (self) about the other within the corpus of travel and travel writing. It is pertinent, therefore, to note that the concept of the self and other depends on how and who uses the term, as the self can be the other, and vice versa. The traveller and writer (self) may be one and the same, yet could be different, especially when studied critically.

2.3 Travel Writing/Travelogue

Travel narrative, just like any other narrative, is about suspense, and about making the reader want to feel the encounters that are being presented. The reader will in turn wish to be part of the encounters and will want to know how, where and when the encounters took place. One way or another, everyone leaves home to encounter an external world. Travel takes place for many reasons, some of which are for leisure, mercantile purposes, exploration, or when one is being forced to leave home due to either natural or social catastrophes. Examples could be war, epidemic or famine. These are some of the many reasons for travel, and which, depending on the motive, determine the accounts of experiences of other lands that are presented in travel literatures.

Literature of travel enjoys a long and honourable history. It began with sagas, myths and legends – narrative mainly concerned with what Philips (1997) calls man's contest with nature. It was this literature that extended to cover stories of explorers, geographers and other storytellers

who embarked into the unknown – the savage lands and emerged successful (Philips:1997). Early travel writings like that of Herodotus (440 BC), Strabo (23 C. E), Pausanias (170 C. E) and other modern accounts of travels, render the strange, the exotic, the dangerous and the inexplicable. In this way, they convey, according to Blonton (2002), information about other lands and places, exotic cultures and often the familiar side by side the foreign.

For Espey (2005), travel writing involves encounters of moving between cultural worlds other than one's own. It thus occupies a space for the comparison between home and away. On this, Anita Desai argues that travel writers, whether fictional or non-fictional, 'inevitably compare their home countries to a new culture and growing beyond the limitations of national identity' (Espey 2005: 176). Thus, there is a space in-between what is familiar (the home) and what is alien (new lands and cultures). These two places, as Dawson (1994) posits, are divided by travel. They, therefore, have little in common, and are defined either in relation to each other, or mapped as distinct spaces characterised by differences.

Speaking on this, Kamp and Singh (2001) argue that travel writers frequently fall back to defining the cultures they encounter in terms of binaries, thereby leading to complicated responses from their readers. The writers' identities move under the allure of others' cultural, racial, religious and economic activities. Travel then becomes a process of locating oneself in space and time over a series of encounters and translations made for specific audiences to read, understand and appreciate in comparative terms. James Clifford argues that travel is "a translation built from imperfect equivalences; by using comparative concepts in a simulated way to become aware of limits, sedimented meanings, tendencies to gloss over differences… made for specific audiences" (1997:11).

What the writer learns over the centuries is ultimately more important than the trip itself, which makes the life of the traveller a "perpetual journey", that is learning all the time (Blonton, 2002). Blonton (2002) further argues that travel writing is the space where other cultures can have their say; a place where the self and other can explore each other's world. Salman Rushdie, in Espey (2005), views travel writers (men and women) as people who travel in search of something different from home, especially to poorer and less civilised countries. Travellers, he states, are always coming from wealthier countries to poorer ones in search of "self realisation and fulfilment". Travel, thus, assists travel writers to associate with gendered racial bodies, class privileges, and specific means of conveyance, beaten paths, agents, frontiers, document and the likes, in the realisation of who they are, and learning a lot about people, cultures and histories different from theirs (Clifford: 1997).

For this reason, Clifford views travel as a term embracing a range of more or less voluntarist practices of leaving "home" to go to some "other" place in search of spiritual, scientific knowledge, and or having an "experience" (exciting, edifying, pleasurable, estranging, broadening); which was in the past predominantly western and strongly male from the upper-middle class. All these contribute to make the traveller (by definition) to be someone who has the security and privilege to move about in relatively unconstrained ways, while others move about under strong cultural, political and economic compulsions (Clifford: 1997). Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes* (1997) reveals most of these travellers to be bourgeoisies, scientists, commercialists and aesthetics, moving within highly determined circuits.

This shows why travel writing was dominated by men due to either the hardship faced during the journey, or basically the search for heroism. Modern travel writing, however, involves a lot of female writers who write differently and on different issues from the men.

The masculine tradition of travel writing is mainly considered to reflect public and professional concerns, whereas the feminine tradition is considered to fall into the private and personal sphere even though Europeans (male and female) cannot, whether consciously or otherwise, avoid the issue of superiority. Modern travel writing, especially by women, according to Espey (2005), offers the reader with both the outer and inner journey of the travellers. These travellers write about the geography, history and archaeology, climate, botany and zoology of a certain place, politics, culture and national characteristics such as mood, memory, identity, belief, self and home as they are affected by travel (Espey: 2005). The descriptions of the journey by travellers take different forms, such as diary, letters, autobiography and memoir. These forms sprang from many different impulses like business, pleasure, adventure, science, escape, opinion and self-discovery. Travel writing is the description of journeys, making it the best in narrating adventure, encounters and others' worlds. Travel writers celebrate the interdependence and common aims of all cultures, presenting encounters with others in a more positive way. They reveal to readers moments of empathy, recognition of difference, realizations of equality and insights into shared values. Hulme (2000) views travel writing as a way of presenting experiences and having access to people and places unknown for the understanding of self.

Furthermore, travel writers tend to discriminate between what is familiar and what is exotic, so that readers are satisfied that they are encountering people and places sufficiently foreign. Travel writers sometimes depict the other as a source of danger or that of comedic celebration to the self. Travel writing is, thus, a vehicle for social, political, or philosophical comment. Travel writers, like autobiographers and memoirists, present subjective information about the geography, culture, fauna and flora, government, and trade and customs of other lands

and people. As observers, they convey the essential quality of the alien place by documenting a voyage of self-discovery (by way of reviving oneself), travellers expose shared superiority to the other and his environment. Coming closer to life writing, the writer with his opinions, aversions, and desires, is depicted at the centre of the travelogue as the accounts and narrations by the travel writer (the self) is recycled in their memories with the other.

Hence, the literature of travel is vast in that "it has a thousand faces and forms" (Espey 2005). It is to many scholars an old and persistent form of narrative (story-telling). The literature captures a framework of expectations – ranging from departure, passage and return. Travel literature has over the centuries remained the most popular and best selling form of literature (Espey:IX). Thus, novels like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and even Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* enjoy popularity up till today due to their concern with travel, experiences and encounters. These travels take different forms, for while some are spiritual or to have to do with pilgrimage, others are about quest, adventure, exploration, scientific discoveries, educational tour and migration, amongst a host of other reasons for travel.

From the foregoing, travel is documentation by one culture viewing another, and an excellent way of introducing concepts of cultural difference, encounters and structure of the other, by the self. Travelogue on the other hand, is the construct which tells us much (if not more) about the culture and life of the writer (the subject) and that of the other. Thus, travel and travelling are valuable sources for both female and male narratives on travel and life encounters.

2.4 Female Life Writers

With the wide spread of female education, women from the late nineteenth century started writing, especially fiction, which was once largely dominated by the males. This

development led to the emergence of new female writers who wrote most often with the intention to inspire other women. Since then, the literary contributions of women have become increasingly important. These new breed of female writers became storytellers, novelists and poets, authors of dreams, encounters and ideas. Prominent among them are Jane Austen, Emily and Charlotte Bronte, and George Elliot, who had to adopt a pen name in order to get published. In the perception and narration of encounters, however, each individual's point of view is unique depending on society, time and place. This point of view shapes the stories people tell about themselves and their relationships with others, other lands and environment.

As the places, cultures, and communities in which women writers live changed, so do their roles, status, interests and opportunities. It is this resultant changes that these writers understand and represent in their works. How these changes expand and reframe their perception and thinking about their identities and encounters and the manner by which such is experienced, is captured in how their works are presented. As Brown (1999) observes that there are four ways to write a woman's life:

> The woman herself may tell it, in what she chooses to call an autobiography; she may tell it in…fiction; a biographer, woman or man, may write the woman's life…or the woman may write her own life in advance of living it, unconsciously, without recognizing or naming the process (Mary Daniels Brown, 1999).

Men have always had the advantage of telling their own stories in narratives of various nature and kinds. Women, in turn, are now getting their own advantage of writing their life encounters in a society largely dominated by the male gender and can also choose to present such stories in various kinds of narrative (fiction or non-fiction). Women, however, write about their achievements, ambition and the likes (just like the male), but must importantly they resort to writing about the personal and domestic. Their works are mostly anchored along gender role in

the society, as whenever they write, they cannot help but be feminine in nature. Their works, apart from that, have a moral undertone, mainly focusing on virtues, piety and pain.

Brown (1999) argues that female writing offers a compelling view of the cultural and social conventions that have undergone or are currently undergoing changes. These works are imbued with elements of history and have, more or less, an autobiographical feel. In the structure of their narratives, they present their ideologies through historical periods to their present, as seen in the work of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), a fictional text that presents one literary period after another – from the early Elizabethan times to Wolf's present. There is no doubt that the faintly self-mocking irony of the text inspired many female writers.

Furthermore, Elaine Showalter (1985) views the movement of women's literature to be divided into three stages. First is the feminine – a period beginning with the imitation of male writing in the 1840. In this phase, female solidarity always seemed to exist as a result of a shared and increasingly secretive and ritualized physical experience. The period moreover, for Showalter, is full of imitation of the dominant structures of tradition and its views on social roles. These women attempted to integrate themselves into a public sphere, a male tradition, and many of them felt a conflict of 'obedience and resistance', which appears in the many narratives of female writers such as the Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Gaskell, Harriet Martineau, and George Eliot, amongst others.

The second phase is the feminist – from 1880 to 1920, which saw female writers going against traditional standards and values and demanding that their rights and sovereignty be recognised. The works during this period 'explored genuinely radical female protest against marriage and women's economic oppression'. Female writers such as Sarah Grand, George Egerton, Mona Caird, Elizabeth Robins, and Olive Schreiner made 'fiction the vehicle for a

dramatization of wronged womanhood… demanding changes in the social and political systems that would grant women male privileges and require chastity and fidelity from men'(Showalter: 1985).

Female writing turned out to be more engaged with the presentation of a female point of view, rather than with the creation of art. These females rejected male imposed definitions of sexuality and of the female and the oppression meted out to them. This opened door for the third phase writers, female aesthetic. In search of identity, these female writers, for Showalter, "applied the cultural analysis of the feminists (before them) to words, sentences, and structures of language in the novel". Writers such as Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, Doris Lessing, Margaret Drabble, A.S Byatt, and Beryl Bainbridge accessed women encounters using previously taboo language and situations.

These three phases, coupled with the twentieth-century Freudian and Marxist/Feminist analysis, allowed later female writers to write about their lives at home and in contact with the other during travel. Richard Nordguist quoted Rosalind Miles (1943) who argues that women and women writers, right from pre-history to date, present a vision of women breaking free from male domination. She further added that women stories are about the history of life, love, and about throwing new light on old truths, in their desires to debunk the perceptions of the day about their lives. The efforts to write as women led to the apparent development of a feminine tradition in the novel, with the dominant themes of marriage, domesticity, pain, children, and the traditional woman's role in a man's world, as gendered narratives, all in search of identity. However, according to Miles words women have not recently burst forth into the literary arena, but have been there all through, even though they are sometimes biased, always wondering where they fit into history.

Occupations like craft, business, and industry were in the past reserved for men, just like writing, with women living as wives, mistresses and surrogates. Recent developments however, have shown women to top the position of womanhood, by having freedom to be part of what has before been dominated by men, especially with the new context of women travelling and modernity. Blunt (1994) and Mills (1996), in Young and Hulme (2002), observe that works on British women travellers focus on their ability to transgress the confines of 'home' in social as well as spatial terms. In trying to present their lives, female writers, as Mills argues, had to negotiate many literary conventions and social discourses that ultimately determine how the books are produced and how they are received by the public. Cheryl McEwen, in Young and Hulme (2002), maintains that:

> Writings by white women were posited geographically, metaphorically and metaphysically between the dominant culture and the 'Wild Zone'. While both men and women have occupied these margins in literary production, they (women) have been positioned there in very different ways (2002: 228).

Unlike in the past, when women faced educational insecurities and the constricted notions of the feminine (weak) in social and literary constructions, women writing in the present implies a group (however diverse) who share a position of difference based on gender and inward emotional feelings.

On the whole, the literatures so far discussed on fact and fiction, travel writing, self and other and female life writers provide a general perception of Lababidi's *Paddle* and Ogbe's *Crumbs*. This is intended to aid our understanding of Lababidi and Ogbe's works as non-fictional female travel accounts. No doubt, female writers of travel, such as Ogbe and Lababidi, write as women and their works cannot escape such elements that have to do with feminist ideas and the issue of female identity in a patriarchal society. Female works are, therefore, subjective and generally feminine in nature, whether fictional or non-fictional. Literature of travel by women is

thus a relatively new phenomenon compared to the male. Thus, while the male accounts map the relationship between the self and the other, and are most often concerned with colonisation and imperialism, female accounts present a balanced view: they are anchored around both the political and the personal, with the latter given more emphasis. This, in addition to other things, differentiates female from male travel accounts. This is not to say however that female travel accounts are entirely different from the males'.

The literatures considered under travel writing today belong to both sexes. Female travel writing from inception borrowed heavily from the male tradition and has since then, to a certain degree, been dependant on some male literary models. However, female writers are now re-making the narrative as a vehicle for, by, and about the female life, with all its rich individuality and creativity. Women in life narratives, whether in fiction or non-fiction, present nothing but gendered observations and interpretation of their encounters in what Clifford (1997) sees 'as questions…opposition of native and non-native, insider and outsider'(77). This binary opposition, he argues, stems from a discredited, hierarchical colonial structure. On this view, Lababidi and Ogbe, like other female life writers, present pieces of information that seek to tell their life encounters, using the properties and tropes of narrative in an alien world and in opposition to the natives' ways.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 NARRATIVE REPRESENTATIONS IN *PADDLE* AND *CRUMBS*

Non-fictional works, like fictional works draw heavily on narrative tropes to furnish their stories; though they contain fact they are nonetheless non-factual stories about the subject's past encounters. This implies a process of selection and deselection of events which makes the truth presented to be a representation or imitation of it. As such the understanding of the narrative is closely tied to the life experiences of a writer. In narrative theory, the travel story features regularly as either the narrative or the means for narrative. This, for instance, is seen in Vladimir Prop's classic study, as pointed out by Kai Mikkonen (2012) where the narrative functions are structured along a travel pattern between the hero's departure and return. The travel here is used as a means for narrative.

Lababidi's and Ogbe's narratives represent travel encounters that recount (through the plot system) places encountered such as Nigeria, its people, cultures and landscapes. The travel narrative here represents the encounters through the main plot structure, from departure, journey/encounters and return. Lababidi's and Ogbe's narratives are also inter-textual in nature, in that they are built parasitically on previous narratives. This is in how they document and make references, present histories and views from other writers and books to substantiate some of the claims deployed.

Narrative means different things to different people, as consists of concepts like narration, narrator, narrativity and story. Bello-Kano (2005) points out a series of theorisations, like the formalist, structuralist, hermeneutical and post-structuralist narratologist in discussing what narrative is. As narrative is itself a very broad literary area, this work limits itself to the

question of what a narrative is, how it is deployed in narration and its relation with travel writing. Edward Said holds the view that narrative, narration and narrativity (event, time and point of view) are fundamental processes which are at the heart of the "Structuring, assimilating or excluding one or another version of history" (Bello-Kano, 1999). Thus, Bello-Kano (1999) further quotes from another important recent work by Sa'id on narrative, who states that:

> Stories (narratives) are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world (and) the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their history… these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative (Bello-Kano 1999: 30).

This confirms that the narrative is tied to our being in the world and with our identity as historical agents. In other words, the narrative is the representation of a story and encounters, most importantly for travellers who came into contact with strange and exotic new regions. Thus, narrative is concerned with the act of illustration and narration of events and how such events come together to form a life and perspectives. Bello-Kano (2005) further argues that "no events in themselves can be described or represented as literal facts outside the conventions of narrativity" (71). Speaking on this, Peter Brooks (1985), in Bello-Kano (2005), observes that "our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories we tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we narrate to ourselves (and to others)" (2005: 1).

This way, stories or whatever form of information that attempts to explain a situation or circumstance is narrative. Travel narrative is the crafted evocation of the writer's imagination and journey, usually written in the first person point of view – often narrating a sequence of experience(s). These travel stories present scenes that attempt to illuminate a place, culture or the human mind. There are thus different types and forms of narratives such as, for example, the fictional and non-fictional. Speaking on variety of narratives, Abbot (2002) quotes from Barthes' landmark essay on narrative, *The Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,* thus:

> The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances as though any material were fit to receive man's stories.

Narratives are not only stories of travel, for encounters/experiences of the world can take place whether at home or abroad. Ogbe's and Lababidi's narratives, however, depict encounters that are foreign and exotic. The narratives are also concerned with how the people they meet can be improved or changed. These narratives are, thus, nothing but the desire to state that all is not too well in the writers' travel encounters. These writers present and concentrate on the natural world and the relationship between people and the beauty, splendour and power of nature, as they depict from the beginning to the end of their stories. Talking on the features of any narrative, Miller, in Bello-Kano (1999), observes that for any narrative to be one

> There must be some version of these elements, beginning, sequence, reversal, personification, or more accurately and technically stated, *Prosopopoeia*, surrounding a nuclear figure or a complex word (Kano: 1999: 134)

These elements are present in many narratives, especially in non-fictional travel accounts. Travel narrative, however, is made up from the writer's imagination and encounters, with beginning, middle, reversal and end, and normally surrounding a complex world as the writer-subject sees it. In truth, however, narration and narrativity in travel writings do show narrators as patterned by the events and people encountered. This helps to explain one of narrative's great power – that of narrativity. One key issue in the debate on narrative and narrativity is the question of whether narrativity is the configuration of events into the beginning, middle and end structure, or whether it is derived from the act of telling stories which itself is derived from the events themselves.

Narrativity in travel narratives is derived from the latter; that is the act of telling stories just as travel writers present their encountered events, in relation to other events as they

experience them from beginning to the end. This concurs with David Carr's prediction on narrativity – as one derived from the events themselves with the 'beginning-middle-end of narrative' (1986:122). Carr was right in his argument that every account is narrated after the fact (of event encountered); and that it is not only novelist and historians who view 'events in terms of their relation to later events' but all human subjects. For that however, Carr further argues that human existence is patterned upon the structure of narrativity, for he claims that human beings strive, with varying degrees of success, to only 'occupy the story-teller's position with respect to their lives. This explains (generally) that life itself is structured around the beginning-middle and end of every human being (i.e. from birth, life to death).

Ricoeur, in Bello-Kano (1999), argues that the narrative is a synthesis of the heterogeneous, which unites all the desperate elements of life within a coherent and harmonious whole. In other words, narrative is a 'semantic innovation' which, through the resources of language, brings forth a new significance to the world. This for Ricoeur, however, does not describe the real world; rather, it re-describes it (1984:14, 102). For that, narrative structure is the representation of encounters in time and space recounted using the plot.

Furthermore, the issue of beginning, middle and end, as first theorised by Aristotle in his famous work, the *Poetics*, plays a vital, social and psychological function in all human societies. Plot is perhaps the most important element of narrativity, which allows readers/listeners/viewers to watch or read how events are configured and presented using the beginning-middle-end system in a narrative. This model, for Aristotle, creates a coherent and integrated whole (Kano 1999). From the above, one can say that travel narratives convey and provide a theme, lesson, message, and point of view, which are all (most importantly) presented using the plot system. This is not to say, however, that narratives must necessarily follow the beginning-middle-end

model, as there are countless narratives that adopt the flashback system and other types of narrative representation. The understanding of any narrative, therefore, will to a large extent depend on the understanding of the plot system deployed, which will in the end determine how the story is presented. For this reason, therefore, the next section of this chapter will be concerned with the kind of plot system deployed in the works under study; in addition to how the model is utilised in the narration.

3.2 Use of Plot

Plot, like many terms used in literary discussions, is endowed with several meanings. Plot is defined by Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary as "the series of events which form the story of a novel'" (114). For Hawthorn (2005), it is simply an ordered and organised sequence of events and actions in a narrative. Encarta (2009) also defines plot as a description of events and people that the writer has invented or an account of what happened to somebody or how something happened. For Alison Booth et al (2006), plot is the arrangement of any kind of event or series of events recounted in the story. From the foregoing, we can posit that plot is the arrangement of events in a narrative using either the Aristotelian structure of beginning, middle and end or the system of flashback, to mention but a few. In the case of travel narrative, plot mostly follows an ordered and organised structure of beginning middle and end. This structure allows the events presented to be connected in order to form a whole narrative structure.

The concept of beginning, middle and end of narratives as first theorized by Aristotle in *Poetics,* as observed earlier, was adopted by travel narrators in the presentation of series of events as they were encountered by the subject-writer. Although not all narratives follow this chronological system, it is still pertinent that for a narrative to make meaning there must be an

end relating back to the beginning. Culler (1997) captures this when he states that 'there must be an end that indicates what has happened to the desire that led to the events of the narrative (1997: 84).

Travel narratives mostly conform to the chronological system of beginning, middle and end. The beginning normally introduces the place where the intention to travel and the entire story begins, in addition to the writer's quest or reason for leaving home. The middle reveals the writer's travel encounters through a series of scenes that are ordered chronologically or thematically. The end presents the resolution of the quest and ties the story back to the situation introduced at the beginning or the present situation of the writer at the time of writing. In a way, Lababidi and Ogbe present their narrative in a chronological order with beginning, middle and end as shall be discussed below.

Lababidi employs the plot pattern that was famously introduced by Aristotle. The first part of Lababidi's travel account presents the onset of her travel encounters. It presents the place and time when the journey was initiated as stated in the title of the first two chapters. Chapter one is titled 'Never Talk to Strangers' while the second chapter is titled 'This Isn't a Free Ride'. The text opens with how the subject-writer, Lesley, met a stranger called Maan Lababidi, a Syrian who lived in Beirut. The narrator then tells of her curiosity to know about him (Maan) and to satisfy her curiosity, gives him her phone number and her name (3-4). She further discloses how confusing and challenging the relationship will be since Maan, the stranger she met and who later became her husband, is a Muslim and an Arab, while she is an American and a Christian. This helps to explain why the first chapter is called "Never Talk to Strangers". The confusion and challenges she envisages becomes reality when she eventually left for Beirut along with him (Maan); this explains why the second chapter is titled "This Isn't a Free Ride". In

the attempt to prepare her readers for the journey of encounters that is to follow, the subject-narrator informed the reader how the memorable journey began:

> In October, 1971, I boarded an Alifalia flight bound for Beirut… As I heard the squeal of the tyres first contact with the tarmac; I remembered the words of Ovid: 'chance is always powerful. Let your hook be always cast in the pool where you least expect it, there will be a fish'. I had certainly taken a very big chance and caught a big fish and the hook was drawing me into a new and unknown sea… slowly sleeping onto the black hot surface, a shiver ran down my spine at the thought that nothing in my past had prepared me for what I was about to experience (8-9).

Lababidi who chooses to have a relationship with Maan (who is an Arab) and voluntarily decides to leave home in the quest for something unusual and different, has actually gotten a big chance to travel out. Maan, the stranger that drags her into her adventure, later turns out to be her life partner. The quotation suggests how the journey actually began, which forms the first part of her arrival in Beirut. This also sets the stage for the middle part of the story and introduces us to Beirut, the place where the narrator's alien encounters began. Understanding her present encounters, Lababidi often compares her new encounters with what she was already used to back in America. This she captures when she says that, "each minute was a new experience; this was the first time I was in the minority" (11). This helps to explain her anxiety at being in a place where her kind are rare; being the first time, as she states, where she is surrounded by the majority, Arabs.

Again, the narrator moves on to describe the events in her new setting, moving from Houston to Beirut. Here, the text presents the difficult and different conditions she faces, a context that is different from what she left back home. She as much as possible obeys Um-Walid's alien rules because of her love for Maan. Often also, she has to battle with a new culture and language (that is Arabic). The story then takes us to Ghana, an African country where the writer and her husband have to move to. The change of environment is necessary considering

that Lababidi has to follow her husband who must take over his father's business, the Flour Mill. In Ghana she loses her first pregnancy before finally moving to Lagos, a city in Nigeria, where she has serious and unforgettable encounters with a people and place different from hers and her husband's. On their arrival in Nigeria, the narrator presents how dirty her host country is in the detailed description of her apartment; she states:

> We were seated in the centre of a dark, dirty and sweltering room. Only a ceiling fan… The blades were caked with dust and it did not make a silent humming sound …curtain hems were stained brown from an unobservant servant's mop, the green velour couch was pock marked from careless smokers, everything was dusty. A lone cockroach nearly two inches in length lay on his back, dead.

This scene provides the readers with the first impression of how untidy and unorganised Nigeria as a country is. It further sets the beginning of the couple's life and encounters as husband and wife with Maan in Nigeria. Maan is in Nigeria to build on and continue with his father's business of flour production. Lababidi's stay in Nigeria allows her to view how Euro-Americans are treated by Nigerians as expatriate, and as a race that is superior and more organised. This explains why almost all of them lived in clean parts of Lagos, as the narrator herself observed. As an expatriate and an observer of people and surroundings, she judges every tribe she meets through the eyes of her servants and the people around.

The plot moves to her participation in the daily activities of Nigerians. As a new member of the society, she has to learn how to speak Pidgin (a distorted variety of English) and Hausa (the predominant language of the people in northern Nigeria). She has to also endure the problem of poor water supply and constant power shortage and outage in addition to living around dilapidated and dirty roads and environment. Another important encounter is that of eating Nigerian dishes, and that of admiring Nigerian crafts. She further states how corrupt Nigeria is and the need for one to know anyone in government before he or she can achieve anything. Her

husband thus suffers before setting up the flourmills company because he does not have strong ties with anyone in government. Another issue is how crimes are not taken seriously, due to lack of thorough investigations. This appears in the case of Alh. Audu, who after being arrested by the police as a suspected arm robber is released after a little joke, as: "... so many conflicts in Lagos begin in anger, they end in laughter" (148).

The end is presented in the last chapter, "The Street of Kofo Abayomi", when the time has come for them to leave Nigeria for Beirut. She recalls to the reader her arrival and encounters and now her return. The end also captures the story of Um-Walid's death, although she died when Lababidi and her husband were in Nigeria. It also captures Lababidi's woes at leaving Nigeria, a place where they stayed for more than 20years and one that changed her life forever. This she states in her lamentation:

> I did not want to leave the dusty streets crowded with stories that vibrated throughout the day. A day in the life of this street sweltered under the monotonous plodding of searchers. In each footprint that scrapped its soles along the broken pavement, there was a story… tales of pain and joy, tales of sorrow and riches, stories I would never know and yet… I knew. I had become accustomed to the restless movement that marked the passing of a day. Here, our family began, not easily, often not happily but never lonely. Here flourished two young children and here, two young souls lingered, lost but not unremembered … so it was with the people who came into my life for only a moment and stayed for a life time. (155-156).

By using the first person narrative voice, Lababidi chronologically narrates the encounters of her life in post-colonial Nigerian society. She becomes not only the writer, but also the subject-narrator from whom we hear the story of her travels from America to Beirut, Ghana to Nigeria and finally back to Beirut.

Ogbe, like Lababidi, also narrates step by step the story of events as she experienced them year after year, as she comes into contact with different people and culture. Her enjoyment, appreciation, unhappiness, pains and understanding of the events that form her travels are also

captured chronologically. The story opens on the 18th birthday of a young Jewish girl who happens to be the subject-narrator. It is 1939; she and some Jewish youngsters were about to escape to England, an escape from the Second World War, which led them to be stateless. The narrator moves the story to her arrival and experience in England as a house help, and later with her mother and brother. It then depicts how the family kept struggling in order to survive by working hard and using their talent and creativity. This led them to work in a factory in order to survive.

Being different from the English people, they were termed and classified as aliens she reports: "we, as aliens, had to report to the police once a week to show our presence and to have our alien registration book stamped" (11). Ogbe compares the life of the English people to that of her own back home in Germany. The plot moves to their stay in a camp called the "Isle of Man", and later to another camp where they helped in war work in 1943. It is in the second camp she was opportuned to meet people from different parts of the world as she states: "…people from far away exotic countries" (39). She was particularly drawn to Africans (at that time they were subjected to subjugation from the English people), which led her to be friends with a Nigerian named Tommy, who later became her husband. She further portrays how Africans are seen as unusual beings, especially in a white neighbourhood.

The narrator further recasts how her relationship with Tommy went on in England, and how creative and intelligent he is. They later get married in 1952 in England and have their first son, Monurubi, before leaving for Nigeria where she hopes to be a permanent settler. In England, before leaving for Nigeria, the narrator is given a British citizenship in 1949 which transforms her from a stateless individual to a British citizen. In Nigeria, the narrator assumes a superior status. As a foreigner, she turns to being the "self" and the Nigerians the "other" and "alien", as

she was called while in England. She continues with her comparison between the said Nigerian structures and that of the Jews and Europeans. Nigeria turns to a permanent place for her while Spain a gate way to Nigeria, as she states:

> …Spain, for me, was the halfway house between Europe and Africa. The sun, the colours, the rhythm, the exuberance and the passions had all prepared me for the continent which was to be my home for the rest of my life (74).

On her arrival, she comes face to face with her second alienation; a new culture, religion, language, environment, food and clothing. Her first encounter is with insects in Lagos, the "praying mantis" and "sugar ant" which she accepts, as she points out: "well, old girl, I told to myself, this is Africa and you must expect the unfamiliar" (92). The plot shifts from one event to another, from one setting to the other, exposing the narrator's series of encounters and initiatives; as a woman who struggles hard to be a participant in world dominated by men with examples of how she helps and contributes to the economic life of some Nigerians. She further reveals her encounters with her husband's family members, market place and the society in general. She also discloses her pains as her husband became aggressive and was into Poker (125).

Again, the writer moves the discussion to Warri, the scene of the Nigerian independence, Akure, the Shell BP in Port Harcourt and then to Ibadan. The plot moves to another birthday of the narrator in 1962 in Enugu, and then to the most important thing in her life, the silver jewellery business. Nigerian rituals and festivities are not left out, nor the Biafran War of 1966. Her travels with the surplus money from her silver business is also not left out as she believes the best way to spend her surplus money was on travelling. She travels to countries like India, Mallorca, England, America, Singapore, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Germany, France, Egypt and Israel sometimes with her children. This reveals how the narrator expresses her freedom

from her husband's pains; the pains which allows her to use her talent in pursuing her happiness and enjoyment in her alien world.

The concluding part of the plot (the end) explains how she went on sickle cell counselling, as part of her freedom from pain, and her widowhood with notes on the Zodiac signs, and about what later became of some of the people she had encountered. She also presents how Tommy falls sick and later dies:

> Tommy had an easy and dignified death. He did not have to suffer, did not have to be dependent on anyone and I had been there when he needed me. He had brought me to this country where I could fulfil myself. He had broken my heart, but I had forsaken him. This thought was a great comfort to me.

For 56years, Tommy and Hilda had remained friends before he died on the 23rd of June, 1999. The above reveals how grateful she is to the man (Tommy) who assists her in coming to terms with her adventures and travel experiences. The narration of her story is arranged according to her memory of how she remembers it from the beginning, middle and end. Each and every event in Lababidi and Ogbe suggests and explains how the events shape their memory, encounters and understanding of the different structures of home away from home. For that, both Lababidi and Ogbe, as travel writers, present their cohesive plot system by maintaining a good chronological plot structure in their narratives. In a way, every travel narrative is a process of at least two journeys: the journey in the world and in words, using the first person narrative voice. It is, therefore, important at this juncture to understand the importance of the voice which speaks, and through which we get to know of the journey as it had taken place.

3.3 Narrative: Voice and Authorial Point of View

Klarer (2005) argues that the term point of view or narrative perspective represents the way in which a writer presents persons, events, and settings. These are mediated through an exterior, interior or unspecified narrator, which refers to the voice in the narrative. Claude Bremond, in Abbot (2002), maintains that "neither words, nor images, nor gestures, but the events, situations and behaviours signified by the words, images and gestures" (Abbot 2002, 18). It is clear, therefore, that these events and situations rely on the narrative discourse and a narrator who makes these events and situations to be what they are in the story. The narrator, therefore, cannot speak on his own, as he will have to rely on a voice which conveys his point of view.

However, it is through the voice that readers are able to understand the narrator's point of view(s) or authorial intention, who speaks depends on the narrative style adopted by the author. We can have three specifications of the narrative voice, as below.

(a) Narrator as participant (writing in the first person), this is where a narrator says "I". The first person narration which is used in life writings, is where the subject-narrator presents the events that come to shape his/her life. The first person narrative style (voice) can also have a narrator minor character in the story, or an observer who presents the events as a participant. First person narrators are mostly fully developed characters bearing a name, history and personality (Culler, 1997).

(b) Narrator a non-participant (writing in the third person) it does not carry the "I" which speaks. Rather, events are presented using the "He" or "she" in the singular, and "they" in the plural form and the last voice is the omniscient narrator.

(c) Omniscient narrator also referred to as the third person narration, is one who is all knowing, who according to Cobley (2001) and Hawthorn (2005), knows all things and is infinite in the knowledge of the events he/she presents, that is he sees into the minds of all, or some, of his characters, moving when necessary from one to another.

It is through this voice that readers get to understand the narrator's point of view(s) or authorial intention. Who speaks in a story, therefore, depends on the narrative style the writer adopts. There are, thus, various forms of narrative presentation. In the case of non-fictional works, the first person narrative style is used where by a narrator acts as a participant (writing in the first person) using "I" in the singular and "Us" in the plural. First person narration is the dominant form used in life writings, where the subject-narrator presents the events that come to shape his or her life. First person narrators are mostly fully developed characters bearing a name, history and personality (Culler, 1997).

Lababidi and Ogbe narrate their stories of experiences and ideologies as observers and witnesses. The writers adopt the first person narrative voice throughout the travel accounts of women conditions using "I", "Me" and "We" representation system in the presentation of the alien encounters. These narratives (*Paddle* and *Crumbs*) are often filled with attempts by the writers to represent their encounters; often denigrating alien encounters in favour of old ones and in that way naturally celebrating the self/traveller over and above the discovered/encountered. All these are made possible by the writers as they tailored it in the narratives.

CHAPTER FOUR

ALIEN ENCOUNTERS IN *PADDLE* AND *CRUMBS*

4.1 Introduction

Paddle Your Own Canoe: An American Woman's Passage Into Nigeria is an account of the adventures and experiences of a young woman who left her continent as a teenager for a brief sojourn with her husband's family and people in Syria, Lebanon. The adventure took her to another continent, which is Africa, where she first settled in Ghana, and finally Nigeria. The narrative bears an autobiographical feel, as it retells a gendered account of the writer's life in a mixed marriage that crosses racial, religious, cultural and linguistic frontiers. Lesley and Maan Lababidi, her husband, faced daunting challenges in both Ghana and Nigeria especially in the couple's attempt to build a life and family in Nigeria. The work represents a very important period in the history of both the subject-writer and the settings depicted especially Nigeria. It is a product of an observation that is largely self-centred (like most travel accounts) and a narration that captures alien encounters, human sensitivities, diversity, hardship, poverty and empathy.

The writer presents her encounters in postcolonial Nigeria of the 70s, by representing the background of Nigeria and providing more or less historical generalisations of the country, often from a Eurocentric point of view. The encounters represented are seen through a woman's eye, and are so compelling that as readers we cannot escape laughing and wishing we were there, or be glad that we were not. The story is filled with information about her encounters with alien people and environment. Lababidi's narrative, as with many modern women accounts, presents the theme of marriage, domesticity, pain, the traditional woman's role in man's dominated world

and travel as a sense of self location and understanding of oneself. The text stands as an instance of a self-conscious and a multicultural textual production, inclined towards looking out for connections between local cultural events and their globalization (Clifford 1997).

This chapter thus explores the elements that come to shape the relationship, behaviour and interaction of structures – between the alien and familiar encounters of the writer. Feminist literary theory is used in the attempt to reveal how Lababidi's text cannot escape what is generally associated with feminine works, as her ideology as a woman can be found in every pages of the text, especially with regards to the state of women.

4.2 Lababidi's and Ogbe's Feminist Ideology

4.2.1 Lesley Kitchen Lababidi Feminist Ideology

Lababidi ideologically captures both the localised dimensions of her cross-cultural marriage encounters and the woman's place in alien landscape and the discourses of the difference that constitutes shared racial assumptions. She, a Christian, promotes a unified ideal of herself as the wife of a Syrian Muslim merchant while in Beirut and Africa respectively. She struggles to distinguish between her identity and that of the other – in terms of religion, nationality, environment and culture. Ideology is a medium through which perceptions and views of life operate or are passed across. It is a set of principles that guides one's goals, thinking, actions and expectations. Ideology can be a set of beliefs held by a particular group that influences the way people behave. For Louis Althusser, in Brooker (2005), ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.

Althusser further views ideology as that which distorts our perception of the real and true social conditions. Ideology then represents or provides a mirror to a person or writer through which he or she views societal beliefs and norms. For that, ideology is the state or feeling of being very similar to being able to understand somebody or something.

The Ideological motif, by the writer, in a self-reflective mode, represents the conflict between the encounter and the encountered other thereby providing a theatre for acting out varying issues of identity, superiority, ideology, and self-representation. Ideology is in this sense a comprehensive vision and a way of looking at things and comparing them (worldview). The main motive behind ideology is to offer either change in society, or adherence to them, where conformity already exists through a normative thought process. In this case, Lababidi adhered and conform to her alien encounters (as second class citizen) in her new world.

On this view, Showalter (1986) observes that naturalising the socially constructed patterns of human behaviour forms part of what has always been an important mechanism in the production and reproduction of ideologies to which feminist theorists have paid close attention to. No wonder the female writers present how they can fit in the male dominated world in most aspects of life. *Paddl*e, it should be noted, is enmeshed with the writer's construction of herself as a woman though difference from the people, religion and culture. The text also portrays societies (Syria, Ghana, and Nigeria) that are similar in comparison with the writer's home, America, especially with regards to the place of women and the privileges and rights they are accorded with. The text offers a generalised perception of other people and environments using the few characters the writer comes into contact and associates with, and the fewer places she visits. It is through these few people and places that she manages to present a general perception of the Africans, Arabs and their cultures.

Lababidi's depiction of characters (especially of the relation between male and female), events and scenes conform to the norms and prescripts of the societies she captures. These societies, as depicted by the writer (like hers), are cultures that regard women as powerless in comparison to the male who enjoy all the advantages of patriarchy – a system that puts them in authority in the family and society and in which power and possession are transferred from father to son. This is seen in the case of Abu Walid and Maan.

> Abu Walid, the only son of his father…had to mature quickly accepting the financial burden of his aged father, mother and four sisters…his son's and grandson's university studies…his daughters, their children and his sister's children. As there is usually one person in every family who shoulders the financial requirements and…the responsibilities extend past the immediate family members to the brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and their families. (43-44).

This is why Hamilton (2008) argues that as individuals 'our identities are a fluid assemblage of the meanings and behaviours that we construct from the values, images and prescriptions we find in the world around us' (2008: 3). Common with the Middle East tradition, there is usually one person (male) in every family who shoulders the financial responsibilities of his family. Abu Walid happens to be the one who shoulders the responsibilities of his family (the Lababidis). This financial responsibility is customarily passed on to other immediate family members such as brothers, sons, or uncles in the event of death or financial incapability. This explains the superiority of men while the women are inferior. Um Walid, as a woman needs to encourage and accept her husband (Abu Walid) decision in depriving themselves of worldly enjoyment for the sake of their family.

Lababidi's ideology as a writer and a woman reveals how women (young and old) are ill-treated and not given proper role in the society some right from childhood, from being maid to marriage. This she captures (as a female writer) through language and discourse. "The maid, who was no more than six years of age, offered me a glass of water… I wondered who these people

(Maan's family) were who would employ a baby as a housemaid" (19). With Maan further explanation she felt sorry for the girl (Laila).

> She comes from a family of ten children and they are very poor. If she was not working with us she might be abandoned or left to beg on the streets for her existence. Her father takes a monthly salary for her employment. Most of her sisters who are old enough work as maids. They stay in the homes until the father comes to fetch them when they are of marrying age (20).

This explains how a woman, right from childhood, is deprived of education, livelihood and freedom and instead becomes a source of income. The place of women, as presented by Lababidi, is almost the same everywhere – they are appendages and dependants. The maltreatment of women is however dependent upon the norms and expectations of the society they belong to. In most societies, they are categorised as second class citizens who rely on the male to provide for them, and who are often without defined roles. Women, in the case of Um Walid, advocate for the right of women in the society although they rely on the men to provide for them through the institution of marriage. Um Walid always fights for her right, as depicted in her refusal to leave her house for the local Homs governor.

> In 1944, Um Walid led her own defiant war against the local Homs government. The governor of Homs wanted to take over her house for his own…Um Walid had just given birth to their ninth child. The police pushed Um Walid and her children out…gathering support of passers-by with her shouts of anger. Upon returning to the house, she dragged a mattress…laid down with her newly born son next to her…she enlisted the women to yell from the balcony that the police were moving a woman still within her forty days…the policemen…were too embarrassed to enforce the orders from the governor and retreated. The governor found another place to live (46-47).

Though a full time housewife, who depends on her husband to cater for her financial expenses, the above express how strong, determined, disciplined and courageous she is. She is also feared and loved by children, neighbours and the needy for " she was known for her generosity…not an unclean habit or disobedient child got past her without being

reprimanded"(47). Unlike most Arabian women who live as queens and princesses languishing on Persian carpets, Um Walid was strong and decisive.

Lababidi's depict the state of women (as inferior and dependents) bearing in mind her confusion of were to belong to have a share of freedom.

> I needed to know if I could continue with this marriage or not. I boarded the Alitalia flight once again… The step onto American soil was a painful reunion. Pictures of past dreams held no answers, no roads open to travel. Too many painful memories, too many unresolved questions stung my brain like electric shocks leaving me frightened and confused. After a few weeks in Colorado, I discovered that I had changed. I began to realise that I had associated myself with loss rather than abundance. I had searched for a change in the direction of my life and I had accepted that challenge yet I had feared the commitment. Committed to a life of diversity, I must look beyond myself and be open to the unexplored. I knew I must try. I knew I had to go back and adapt at all cost, encouraged or not (49).

This explains how Lababidi is accosted with the slogan in her alien society and culture to "love it or leave it". For this she decided to visit home for a change, wither to stay or return to Beirut. Back in Colorado she realises that she cannot accept the condition accorded to women, though that of Beirut seems worst. But in the alien place she seem good and different as she states her encounter with a taxi driver "…he said with a big smile, 'you American?' somehow, I confirmed the fact with an aggravated nod. 'America good', he emphasised. I was American; therefore, I was good. Now I could trust him to drive me back to the apartment…" (25). Here she feels at home with the man just as the master with his servant, he needs to obey and mean no harm.

Lababidi as an alien adapts or conforms to the cultural, economic and environmental inconsistencies of her new societies. Lababidi is fully aware of the position of her sex in the countries she visits, and therefore could not escape depicting the male as superior. This is seen in her presentation of male characters such as Maan Lababidi and Abu Walid whom she depends upon for her accomplishments. This dependence eventually turns her into a loner and a serving

housewife who must remain in the confines of her home. This adventuresome behaviour was not appreciated in my in-law's home. Um-Walid appeared to look at me, suspiciously, after a mornings absence…I was wrong. This was not America, I could not go out alone, move freely and talk to people" (25). Married to a Muslim, Lababidi cannot be allowed to roam around or even leave her husband's house without his permission. Through the confines of her home, she observes the few people she has the opportunity to encounter, that she paints her experiences of encounter.

Coming from what the writer considers a civilised society, unlike the places she visits, Lababidi considers she is more intelligent than the other women. Um Walid is an example of such women. Having realised her new situation, however, Lababidi is forced to view and compare her familiar world with the new and strange one. The opportunity for her to avail and display her thought over and above 'others' is when Um Walid left for Syria, leaving her all alone in Beirut to take charge of the domestic affairs of the house. With the help of Salah, the concierge in Lababidi's home and the person who helps her to learn the language and culture of her new society, Lababidi is able to change the look of the house, and to take charge of feeding Maan and his father. She changes the look of the house in order to be part of it and to demonstrate her superiority as a "self", as she states:

> I did believe I knew more about a tastefully decorated home than Um Walid. I was an American and that automatically allowed me to be an expert in comfort, convenience and style or so I arrogantly concluded… Ah to these western inventions could I so improve my mother-in-law's old and backward ways (36-37).

The changes she made include hanging the kitchen utensils instead of leaving them in the drawer, pushing the kitchen cabinet from the door and decorating the guest toilet, amongst others.

Lababidi as an alien and a daughter in-law must accept Um Walid's conditions in her own house or risk being thrown out. This manifests upon Um Walid's return to Beirut when, to Lababidi's surprise she restores the house to its former self. Worst she never said a word of thanks to Lababidi for keeping her plants alive, cleaning the house and feeding her husband. This teaches Lababidi a lesson, which is that one, should "never assume to have rights in another woman's house" (49). Although they are all women, Lababidi and Um Walid do not share the same perception and never see the world in the same way. As a wife and an alien, Lababidi must accept the condition she finds herself in; and must accept her fate as a wife of a Muslim Arab in whose society she lives – a society completely different from hers. Her confusion and marriage was fortunately saved when Maan was sent to represent the interest of his father with the Iranis in Africa.

Lababidi's ideology goes beyond the new culture and society she finds herself in, Beirut. As an alien, she is also faced with the confusion of whether she has to accept Islam as a religion before she can get married to Mann. To her surprise and sudden relief, she is told that she only needs to pronounce the Arabic words for the sake of the consummation, but not to be a Muslim. This she captures as she recounts her experience and fears prior to the marriage: "I don't want to be a Muslim" (30). This explains her confusion and perception of a Christian marriage to a Muslim, but which is cleared when Maan explains the situation to her. Another interesting encounter is when Lababidi visits the Palestinian camp in Beirut. Her visit confirms one thing, and it is that there is more hardship and poverty in the camp than what she heard over the television and radio. Unlike the likes of Um Walid who depend on marriage for financial sustenance and fight for the emancipation of women, the women that Lababidi encounters in Ghana are different.

This group of women, the ladies from the United Kingdom whom Lababidi joins every Tuesday at the home of the High Commissioners wife, spends their time sewing and learning the art of quilting, "using colourful Ghanaian textiles, with the help of a Greek businessman, the quilts were sold and the profits given to charity" while the men remain in charge. This suggests the only thing women do in order to help others. In Ghana, it is a new experience all together. Like in Beirut, Lababidi also views this exotic country and people through the eyes of her cook – a small boy and the driver, as she admits:

> …they became my eyes through which I saw Accra. If they were honest and good-natured, it was easy for me to generalize that all Ghanaians were of such temperament; if they were arrogant and sly, then my impressions mirrored those emotions (58)

Her perception of Ghana and its people however changed as she later admits that it was wrong for her to have judged her host country and its people through the workers that provided services for her. Ghana is the place that allows Lababidi and Maan to explore each other as husband and wife, the same way they explore the country that introduces them to the African culture and food. The couple's live in Ghana did not last long as they have to move to Nigeria, another country in West Africa.

In Nigeria also, as if Lababidi has not learnt from her mistakes of generally viewing the personality of many through a few, she also views Nigeria and its people through the eyes of her servants. Her interaction with these servants also assisted her in learning and adapting to the Nigerian environment and culture. Not all that the subject-writer recounts as an encounter can be acceptable. One example of her error of presentation is her position of haven encountered the first black man in the Nigerian airport. The question here is: what of the black Americans that she must have had the opportunity of encountering in America. Lababidi views cultures in Nigeria through their individual representatives as seen with Joseph and Josephine who represent

the Igbo's, Halidu, Ali and Alhaji Audu, representing the Hausa, Fulani, and Kanuri of the North respectively, and lastly the traders around her. Her neighbours and the chieftains stand for the Yoruba's and their culture. All these Lababidi explores as an observer of people, culture and environment. The Nigerian women, on the other hand, are deprive a lot of opportunities education and the like as she states

> Villagers collected funds to contribute to a student's university education in London or further away, the United States. The education of a bright and promising youth (man) was an investment for the community for not only would they support him at the university but also they expected a return from their contribution. He might be a doctor or lawyer or government official (71).

This suggests the priority given to men as being superior to women, while the women work as maids, or engage in other petty businesses, alongside their role as housewives who must serve their husbands and take care of the family. This is seen in Josephine, the maid who works hard in order to look after her children "At forty-five years of age the petite Josephine came to work for me, not a bitter woman but rather a devoted mother and nanny with a shrewd head for business" (92). It is obvious from this that, women mostly serve the function of wives who must serve their children and husbands. The death of Joseph left Lababidi with different and confusing encounters that express how strong a woman can be in handling serious issues like death, from being a suspect of Joseph's death, to the hospital, police station, and mortuary encounters, and then the issue of 'juju' – a kind of ritual believed by Africans to have the potential to harm others. Juju is also used as explanation for a lot of strange happenings.

Her representation of Nigeria sharply contrasts with that of her home, America. Nigeria, as she represents it, is quite different from her home due to the prevalence of corruption, dilapidated roads, and a high rate of illiteracy, amongst many other things often associated with underdeveloped countries. The environment is also so filthy and unhygienic, in addition to the

noise and the prevalence of uncivilised inhabitants. With time, she however gets used to many of these things, even though she does not fully adapt to lack of water, lack of electricity supply, the sounds, shouts, and the Nigerians incivility. This is portrayed in her explanation of her encounter at the Nigerian Airport

> There was no time to waste; not being first in line meant waiting for what seemed like hours in a sweltering, overcrowded area. We would become victims of claustrophobia and heat exhaustion. What we arrogantly condemn others for lacking in our more sane moments we so effortlessly become…we revert to promoting ourselves as sophisticated creatures (53).

Further to the problems above is the African/Nigerian characteristic, which to an American looked uncivil and barbaric, but she has to be part as her husband needs to move on to represent his father in the flour mill company in Africa. However it was her husband's warning that really alerts her to the rate of corruption and crime at the Nigerian airport and Nigeria as a country "Hold onto your purse, watch my brief case keep pushing, stay with me". (54). Also the issue of corruption she present through her observation of the South African couples for the "South Africans were really not allowed in the country…There is almost always hypocrisy entangled with money and power. The reality was that companies who knew the right people and had the money could quite often get anything done in Nigeria. All of this was an interesting paradox: the white South African couple who were forbidden to reside and to work in Nigeria, did" (90). In getting the certificate of the flour mill back, means you need to know some top government officials. It is these encounters which make her to compare Nigeria to a child, who is being observed by his parents growing without making any attempt to correct his ill deeds; but the Nigerian government was not ready to correct the ills of corruption for the sake of money and power.

For Lababidi, Nigeria is simply a country where her encounters seem different from what she has heard and read in books about the country. For her, "Nigeria is a place where the best is impossible but where the worst never happens" (69). She struggles and survives lack of water, electricity, mosquitoes, noise and loneliness, with her servants around to give her comfort and hope on days when Mann was not there.

As a foreigner, her impression about Nigeria differs in many ways from what is being said in books, radio stations and television about the country. *Paddle* then becomes her medium of expressing and telling her readers back home of how she paddle slowly in understanding the similarities and differences between the alien and herself in a country that gave her home for a very long time. She recounts how people from all parts of the country rush to the capital city, Lagos, in search of wealth and survival. Lagos city faces the problem of lack of space due to the number of people that come in search of greener pastures day in day out. This results in the congestion of the city, and further explains why this person decides to make anywhere a home, no matter how small and dirty it is. "It was grim, twenty men sleeping in the same room on mats or a dirty foam rubber mattress. The only ventilation was through the open garage door but the men kept it closed" (142) this is in the case of Halidu and his people, who according to the narrator live in her unventilated garage. Another interesting experience is how, as the narrator reports, the white man or woman is being regarded as superior and as one who possesses everything, as seen in how people come to her in need of a range of many things: "a child had malaria – did I have any medicine? A cut leg, did I have a plaster" (117). Her understanding of this is that, as an American she is seen to be in possession of everything good or helpful. Though a woman, this makes her believe and accept her alien world as different from home.

Lababidi is in one way connected to her characters as they share many things in common. An example is the struggle for recognition (as second class citizens) and survival, as all of them struggle to make ends meet. It is with Josephine, Joseph, Halidu, Ali and Alhaji Audu that Lababidi is able to paddle her canoe of encounters in Nigeria. Through them, the encounters are worth recalling as they all represent an epitome of struggle and participation. Lastly, the people in the market place represent the Yoruba's. Other minor characters are General Yakubu Gowon, Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, General Olesegun Obasanjo, General Murtala Ramat, and Bamanga Tukur represents the Nigerian government. For Lababidi, the likes of Obasanjo and their unrelenting quest for power, domination (as men) and money led to corruption, a disease seriously ravaging the Nigerian nation. Most importantly they express how men dominate women in most aspect of life.

An impersonal narration, that lets the stories to forever remain with her; the stories of people who came into her life for only a moment and stayed for a lifetime. To add to the truth of her presentation, she uses the names of prominent dignitaries as much to prove that all the characters (in the government) she presents are male without women and important to have contributed to the success of her encounters in Nigeria. This also express male superiority in Nigeria, were all government officials are men. Along with many others, the wealthy and the poor, "I was an inquisitive observer like the artist who dabbles her paint brush in colours and hues to suit her eye, as the world of those who have and those who have not were at my door step" (57).

4.2.2 Hilda Ogbe's Feminist Ideology

Crumbs Off the Wife's Table is a story of a white German Jew, Hilda Garson, later known as Hilda Ogbe, who fled from Germany in 1939 during the World War II and came to England as a refugee. She was engaged in various menial jobs and it was during one such of jobs that she met her Nigerian husband. *Crumbs* captures Ogbe's personal life, from her 18th birthday to her travel encounters in an alien world, her marriage to a Nigerian and lastly her stay in Nigeria from the 50s to 70s. Hilda Ogbe came to Nigeria in 1956 and was naturalised in 1967 when she obtained a Nigerian citizenship. She adapts well and becomes accustomed to Nigerian dress, food and could also speak a little of her husband's language. Ogbe also faced an alien culture and encounters, but was able to adapt. She (a Jew) felt so acculturalised and similar to her husband (a Nigerian) especially with the political slogan s of Hitler's days in London 'Jews and Negroes not wanted here' and "a racial affinity because the Jewish race stems from Africa and the customs of the orthodox Jews and the Africans of today are in some way similar" (43).

Crumbs does not capture Ogbe's life in its entirety; but rather her thirty years of marriage and her stay amongst in- laws and relatives of her husband. The story captures how Ogbe fared as a young girl married to a man of a different culture and origin and is able to grow from a naive young girl to a mature woman with a fulfilled life. She battles with her alien world in order to be one with her husband who is from a polygamist tribe – where a man has or possess two women: one as a wife and the other as a mistress. The wife according to this culture enjoys all that a woman is due in marriage while the mistress only gets the crumbs off the wife's table. That is to say, while Hilda enjoys the whole cake as the first wife, the mistress only gets remnants.

The text reveals how Ogbe struggle for an entrepreneur life in a polygamist marriage. Further, how Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural resources, resources that are not properly utilised due to what she considers as high rate of illiteracy, domination and selfishness. *Crumbs* is filled with the writer's attempt to understand herself in relation to her alien world. She paints a comparison between the alien encounters and the old ones left back home. What results out of this venture is the presentation of similarities and dissimilarities of human sensitivities, diversity, hardship and poverty. The text provides the picture of a sympathetic subject-writer who finds herself in a mixed marriage that cuts across racial, religious, cultural and linguistic frontiers. Ogbe ideologically presents most of her encounters as personal and inward – from being a refugee, to the dynamics of her relationship with her husband and the burden of a race which is alien to her, but which she basically adapt to and understand. Based on the foregoing, this chapter explores Hilda's ideology and how her travel encounters and perception of other lands and people shape her relationship, understanding and interaction with the alien other and his society and culture.

Ideologically, Ogbe focuses on the theme of marriage and women's struggle for survival. She presents three stages of women's struggle and emancipation; the young woman before marriage, a married woman and the woman as a divorcee or a widow. She explains giving detailed description of the Nigerian women, customs, religious practices, environment, economy and ways of dressing. However, her ideology is seen in her presentation of the struggle, pains and success of each in a male dominated world vis-à-vis hers back home and her marital life in a patriarchal society. A glimpse of the suffering women go through in the subsequent stages of the woman is on how women are regarded as second class citizens and dependents on the man to provide for them. As against such, the place of women in the society she finds herself living in,

Ogbe captures how women as participants can always depend on themselves, not necessary on the male. An example of such women is the writer herself, who defied the institution and culture of her husband's society and managed to emerge successful and independent. For Ogbe, women could be soft, but they are also talented and enterprising at heart.

Ogbe's hard work is seen right after her escape from the war (the first stage of the woman) when as refugees in England work as house help with her mother "I who introduced my mother to her/our duties. She was of course an experienced housewife and sweeping, dusting, polishing, washing plates, washing clothes and ironing held no problem for her" (6). Doing domestic work is common with all women but here it seems different because they are working for survival and the pay. "I had very much wanted to study modern languages. But which of us Jewish youngsters could think now of further education when the priority lay on saving one's life and making a living" (11). As refugees and second class citizens they need to struggle hard to survive forgetting about education. She designs leather into attractive adornment and also designs children's dress. She also presents her struggle and hard work as a worker in a factory,

> I was called up for the war effort. The place: Industrial Training Centre, Action, London, may 1943…Each cage held 10 trainees who were being trained in different spheres of light-engineering for war-work. We came from all walks of life. We had been recruited from 'inessential' jobs to help the war effort… I was put down as a fitter (41).

The job is specifically meant for men due to the strains and labour involved, all for money and survival. It is in the factory that the writer comes into contact with people "from far away exotic countries" (39) including Nigerians, were a Nigerian (Tommy who later becomes her husband) is "surprised to see the women…doing men's work" (42). While in Nigeria (her husband country), she breaks the frontier that hitherto relegates women to domestic chores when she embarked in different economic activities. Ogbe embarks on the sewing of blouses and men's leisure shirts, the ice-cream business, silver jewellery business, the craft shop, and lastly

the sickle-cell medication. While in England, she loves and believes in Tommy with whom she works as a team. Through him, she believes Nigerian men to be trustworthy as he informs her of the custom of the men in his society.

> We Nigerians always have a girl-friend in the corner somewhere. These girls come and go. They don't know what love is. They come for the money, they attach themselves to important men for their protection, and they try to have children for them to have some claim on the men. But they only get the crumbs that fall from the wife's table (48).

This she feels is normal, since it is common with men to embark on the above but not publicly, as it is termed illegal. But In Nigeria she happens to be in the society worst than hers; in the case of patriarchy, legalizing what in many cultures is termed illegal.

> One of the many nights when Tommy had gone out, I was worried for him and went to his mother, Granny Obinu… and sister Mewe…I was crying, but the two women were comforting me. 'Do not vex. You have a good husband. He gives you money for food, he does not beat you, and he takes you out to parties. Do not worry. Do not complain (122).

The foregoing suggests the criteria for comforting Ogbe, she is happy unlike the Nigerian women who receive nothing from what Ogbe enjoys. She is supposed not to worry about Tommy spending some nights away from home. Here the saga of the girls around the corner is narrated (this suggest how women are use by men to achieve their selfish interest); from Rosa Okpu, a black American to Sara – Rosa's friend and later his (Tommy) secretary, though he keeps saying he "did not want a female secretary. 'You cannot control them' he used to say" (201) but he ends up having one. The secretary happens to be a treat to Ogbe's marriage; she turns out to be Tommy's partner on many occasions.

> A few months later Tommy told me he was going to a Rotary Convention in Jos, and since I could not leave the children behind he would take the secretary…"Why do you need a secretary at Rotary? Some years ago you told me that 'these girls' in the corner got only the crumbs that fell from the wife's table. This trip is no crumb; it is a whole slice of cake". He denied ever having made such a statement. I now realised that I had based all the structure of our marriage and all my sacrifices on an empty promise (207-208).

Further from the Rotary to England to spending nights with her. For that, after Temi their daughter has left for England Ogbe is "now totally all alone in the house every night" (221). Tommy's secretary (the girl in the corner) who is to take the crumbs off Ogbe's table. Unfortunately, she leaves Ogbe, the wife with the crumbs, while she takes the whole slice of cake.

> Now I had to make the difficult decision: Was I really going to leave our home? I was still full of trepidations. Was I really going to move into my own house and live alone? It was the last week of 1978. Just after Christmas I asked my husband "what have you planned for New Year's eve? Where are we going to celebrate?" He turned on me angrily. "You have had Christmas Day; you can't have New Year's Eve as well". The girl in the corner now had the whole cake. My decision was made. I wrote a farewell letter and pinned it on my husband's bedroom door" (233).

Before Ogbe embarks on her decision (of leaving her husband house) she slowly and painfully, accepts her husband's behaviour by introducing her talent and creative life to Nigerians. As a wife, she tries to be independent although in collaboration with her in-law and friends. However, the goldsmith/silversmith (the Nigerian youths who assist Ogbe in the production of her silver jewellery) and the craftsmen (the people who produce the Nigerian arts in the Ogbecraft limited) assist Ogbe to come to terms with her marital pains and without them the encounters of the "silver jewellery industry" introduce and led by Ogbe and the "Ogbecraft limited" in Benin would not have been achieved. The goldsmith/silversmith and the silver business turned Ogbe into an epitome of celebration in most of the Nigerian cities.

> Tommy got a bit tired hearing people talk about me now, instead of him. He was used to being the centre of attention wherever he went. It seemed as though I was becoming a rival. He did not realise the value of what I was doing, helping to develop the craftsman's skills and promoting Nigeria in the best possible way. Everybody loves a piece of jewellery (170).

Her achievements in the silver jewellery business transformed her in to a personality in her own right, just like her husband, (though as a woman her voice is not suppose to be heard)

at the lower and higher level of the country and "the four corners of the world" (170). Even with that, she still strives under difficult situations that make her unable to express herself even when she is maltreated. The story is thus filled with instances of how she remains subservient to Tommy, her husband, without questioning his judgments on issues, even if they concern her.

> Although I was happy in Nigeria, Tommy's relatives were all very kind to me, and I had advanced from "*Ayami*" (my wife) to "*Egheyo*" (favourite wife in the family), Tommy had become more and more of an enigma to me! He was always angry, dissatisfied, critical,-(120).

Common with her husband's culture, she never argues or corrects him even in situations where her rights are in question. Instead, she keeps praising him and never questions his institutional right as a man and a husband. Her perseverance is however what makes her stronger and allows her to explore her creativity and the possibilities around her. She confesses this herself when she states that "my work became my occupational therapy, which drove all other thoughts from my mind" (202) also she added further that "unhappiness made me successful" (20). Thus, as may be seen, it is Ogbe's life in a patriarchal life that makes her successful; and her unhappy marital life also contributes in making her leave her husband's house in search of something different – at least a place where she can be free from masculine domination and burden.

Betty Okuboyejo, a Scottish woman married to a Nigerian doctor, is an example of women who made a breakthrough as she is said to have introduced a colourfast "Adire" cloth for the expatriate and Nigerian women as part of her talent and contribution (178). Another talented character is Mrs Agnes Esiri, a Nigerian woman, who seems different from other Nigerian women, having different skills ranging from sewing, baking and being an excellent trader. Being trained and brought up by catholic nuns, Agnes seems just like the whites imported into Nigeria from Switzerland. It is Agnes who make Ogbe to understand the importance of jewellery in their

society as she reveals "every woman must invest her surplus earnings in coral beads and gold so that she will never be without means should anything go wrong with her marriage" (138). This suggests that the gold and beads can be sold in order to generate an income to create a business for survival after a divorce or death of the husband - the only available option for women to reveal their potentials. Further reveals how Nigerian women are maltreated by the men

> My other painful sensitivity was towards quarrels and physical violence. It was such a contrast to the controlled lives of the English (British) who would never like to intrude, nor would they have liked to let their neighbours know of any discord in their homes. Here in Warri, the shouts of quarrels, the loud cries of a child or a wife being beaten… (112).

She narrates how women are punished and beaten for any slight offence and are always kept at home and restricted to domestic chores and child rearing. The only women that are engaged in business in the story are those without husbands, thereby illustrating that it is marriage that limits women's potential. Unmarried women are presented as small shop owners who sell, for example, tobacco just like Mewe (Tommy's elder sister), or that fry puff-puff or work as nannies as seen in the case of Eda, Munoburami's nanny.

> As a western woman, Ogbe holds the notion of superiority and sees herself as different, more knowledgeable and disciplined, always on top, and in possession of innovative gift. I found that, as a white woman, I was thought not only to be omnipotent, but rich as well. I was asked to advise on house-keeping and often house-building and furnishing. I was expected to contribute to scholarships, or buy books for this or that relative. Some brought me watches and cameras to mend, but most often, medical aid was needed. 'Missus', said Uncle Omadukpe to me, 'my wife, she refuse to take my pickin to hospital to have needle medical aid was needed (105).

This is her view of Nigerians in search of help, assistance and advice. Thus, she becomes the all-knower, at least one in possession of what the community needs for daily subsistence. Also the presentation of different taste of dishes to her husband family members, different from that of the Nigerians expresses how different she is.

> Sure, the Nigerian dishes are always delicious, but the sausage rolls and the *moimoi* and the *akara* and other fast foods like egg rolls are universally the same and we all could do with a little variety. This is where Foreigners can make a difference because without any formal training in a particular subject, we learn from newspapers and women's magazines, even if we do not study cook-books, ideas are never short. (203).

This reveals how foreigners always consider themselves as learned compared to the indigenous "other" who is often presented in travel accounts as ignorant and unlearned. This she accepts without hesitation, as she helps a lot of Tommy's relations to establish themselves. She taught Ching-Ching (Tommy's daughter) how to offer a different menu from the usual recipes of the hotels when she is given the job of a supervisor in a hotel. This led to the emergence of the first Chinese restaurant in Benin City (203). Cousin Ethel was taught how to make viema rolls in different shapes to be sold in Kingsway stores, at least something different from the usual bread sold there. This made the family successful in a country where all dishes were basically the same. Being omnipotent and rich, she also offers to teach English pronunciation for free in a school for Mass Communication adjoining the other half of her compound.

Nigerians lack of discipline is presented in the story in how they always quarrel amongst themselves, "in the loud cries of a child, a wife being beaten, the wailing of mourners when death had occurred" (112), and the loud voices and music coming from most homes. The youngsters in Ogbe's house such as Ching Ching, Freedom and Lily are not left out, as they always raise their voices and abuse each other. Tommy as an adult, on the other hand, always beats them mercilessly for any small misdemeanour (113). This normally renders Ogbe powerless for whenever she tries stopping him, he shouts back at her: "if you interfere, I'll beat them all the harder" (113).

Ogbe was so powerless that she cannot change anything, nor can she in any way influence the behaviour of Nigerians, old and young. Thus, she had to accept the situation the

way it is but never take part in it. Further, Nigerian indiscipline is presented in Tommy's argument as someone just back from London (a discipline society-as she present) is always anchored around standards, as he normally laments: "we must have discipline in this country. We must have standards, we have no standards" (143). Tommy's complaint however came to pass when he and Ogbe find themselves at the Shell B. P. Camp. It is in this camp that Ogbe feels her husband has found himself in a place at least similar to an affluent European suburb, where she states: "at last he was in a disciplined environment; everybody knew his job" (146). This statement corroborates to her view of Nigerians as people without discipline. The issue of corruption is seen in the letter sent to her brother, as part of it reads:

> …perhaps the worst 'privilege' the government could have meted out to its employees is the advance of one month's wages, repayable over six months. It is a poor moral teaching by the government that encourages a large percentage of the nation to start off with debts life in their young nation. We expect there to be a little less efficiency and a little more corruption. The Europeans are much to blame for showing an example of good living and much leisure, which is of course, misunderstood by the simple Nigerian folk who do not know that tropical climates compel white men to leisure (137)

The above suggests how the Nigerians were trained and pushed into corruption. This also explains how and what made corruption pervasive within the government, which make Nigerians to fight for money and power in order to have enough for their leisure, and not on how to use such money to develop the country. This gradually penetrated into Nigerians, leading to the high rate of persistent corruption in present day Nigeria. Another part of the letter explains how Nigerians depend on foreigners (whites) in most of their activities, as she states:

> If it doesn't work, we'll call the white man back. Both the lyrics and the tune (of the Nigerian national anthem) were created by foreigners. It is as if a child leaves home; thinking that if he makes his way in the world, he could always come back to his mother. (135)

The symbol of the child in this quotation represents Nigeria, while the mother represents Britain, a country that colonised Nigeria up to 1960. Ogbe also tries to present her ideological stance by judging a particular person or group to represent her host country, as in the case of her understanding of Nigerian men through Tommy. Her fourteen years stay with Tommy makes her to believe that Nigerian men are honest and good cooks. She sees Nigeria and Nigerians in Tommy, the only Nigerian she happens to be close to in England (48).

Even though she is productive where ever possible she however battles hard to accept, understand and enjoy her new structures of encounters as a white woman with a Nigerian husband

> In fact, I have been privileged in my own life-time, to see the women of Nigeria make such tremendous progress, as I had not thought possible in only forty years. I now delight to see them educated, professional women, smartly dressed, confident drivers, confident people, yet still diplomatic with their men-folk. Caring mothers too! Sophistication has not destroyed this most important assignment for woman (101-102).

She is happy to see women change from being completely dependents on men to being productive, working together as a team vis-à-vis their domestic activities.

4.3 The Encounters as an Alien Experience

4.3.1 Lababidi's Encounters as an Alien Experience

Lababidi's travelogue, like any other modern travel account, records her cultural encounters in alien environments. The text further reveals a contrast between the narrator's alien environment and that of her home, thereby showing how encounters are appreciated and accepted by foreigners, or otherwise. With differing practices, she assumes a transparency of

representation and reliability of information as provided in her text, while frequently revealing her own derivative and self-reflexive attributes.

Appreciation, acceptance and rejection are what Lababidi fights with in viewing her life encounters and in understanding of her identity as an alien and a foreigner. A reading of *Paddle* shows that the subject-writer is constantly in a conflict, between that of her ideas of home and what she had come across in new and distant places. Consequently, there is that inner battle in her mind, and that is what shapes her appreciation, acceptance and rejection of these places and new ideas. Acceptance is the process of allowing somebody to join something or be a member of a group; or the willingness to join something or be a member of a group; or the willingness to accept an unpleasant or difficult situation. Identity on the other hand implies a singular individual subject with clear ego boundaries (Amina, 1999). She further asserts that identity is the characteristic, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others; a sense of national/cultural/personal/group identity. What we see in *Paddle* is the writer's attempt to understand herself and identity through her alien neighbours and environment.

To achieve this, Lababidi creates her own reality by giving account of her voyage of discovery from one event to another. It is an unfolding drama of her life, from her teenage years to a mature woman, and a careful comparison of her alien encounters and that of what is familiar to her back at home. What the text presents is the attempt by Lababidi to understand and appreciate her new environment, encounters and situation, often presented by comparison. As a foreigner, she demonstrates her adaptation to her new society and how she battles with settling down with strangers in complex societies. Lababidi, as a Syrian merchant's wife, presents her observations of the alien environment, beginning with that of Beirut, where she first settles. Lababidi further discloses the structures of her alien experiences with the environment, history,

domestic duties, flora and fauna, and the festivities she came she witnessed. Beirut is the first country where the writer felt a sense of difference and it is there that her alien encounters and adventure begun, as she observes:

> Each day presenting another adventure, sometimes of significance and grandeur; at other times of a slow, steady learning process… the streets of Beirut introduced me to a beautiful and ugly city (36).

The above introduces Lababidi to a different world with different language, culture and dressing. Her first encounter is with the apartment, toilet and surrounding, which are small compared to her own back in Houston. The apartment is so small that it only provides enough room between the bed and the wardrobe, with no space for two people to stand, while the toilet is not more than five feet with a simple hole in the cement floor. There are just two slots on either side to put your feet, with a short rubber hose that can be used for rinsing yourself without toilet paper. Lababidi's appreciation, acceptance or rejection of her encounters can be seen through Salah, the concierge whom she spends time with learning and understanding the culture, life, dishes, history and the rules of the Lababidi's family and the Arabs generally. Her encounter lessons normally take place whenever Maan is on his mercantile errand.

Her encounters are also through her demonstration of many of the indicators of real social, economic, political, environmental and legal activities. One of the indicators is her acceptance of being part of the Lababidi's family, to fit in with the unusual, she takes charge of the family house when Um-Walid (her mother in-law) is away. Lababidi's decision to embark on her adventure was faced with series of questions from her family who are against her going away with a stranger and a Muslim. Her quest for the unusual however makes her defy all warnings from her relatives. She feels it is something she can handle, even though she does not understand the complexities involved and the encounters awaiting her. Like Ogbe, she does not understand

that theory or rather what she hears of a place or people, is entirely different from practical experience. She reports her confusion on the difference between theory and practical experience when she says:

> I wonder what I would have done if questions were raised such as: what do Muslims believe? Must Christian women convert to Islam? If there are children, what religion would they be taught? What right do women have in the Middle East? Does the Lababidi family speak English or should I learn to deal with the expectations of his family on a daily basis? ... I would not have listened. I had to go (8)

Lababidi's concern and confusion foretells what she is about to face in the later part of the story which were later answered in the subsequent pages. Her experiences help her to understand the difference between her actual encounters and what she thought of them in the first place. What is worth noting is that Lababidi was ready and willing to accept the challenges ahead of her as she reports that she may not understand them at first, but she has to go. The text, thus, reveals her encounters, appreciation and acceptance of them as life time experiences. The questions she raises in the quotation begin to be answered when she reaches Beirut and her early morning sleep is disrupted by the loud sound of the call to Fajr prayer (an early morning prayer). Further answers come to her when she meets the Sheikh, the man who marries her off to Maan, who, according to her, is an oil rich Gulf Arab that spends large sums of money on wine and women outside his country, but maintain strict fundamental Islamic behaviour while at home. The answer to what will become of her faith when she marries a Muslim hits her in the face when she is asked to repeat certain Arabic verses; to her (in a very confused state) it is an experience she will never forget.

The adhan (call for prayers) and the Sheik made her realise that Muslims worship only one God. She learnt of this through the Arabic words that she thought were only recited when one is about to convert to the Muslim faith. Her greatest fear is, must she convert to Islam before

she can get married to Maan? She expresses her deep concern when she keeps saying: "I don't want to be a Muslim" (30-31). Maan's explanation that saying the words does not make her renounce her faith solves the problem. In this she finds comfort and is willing to repeat the verses after the Sheikh so as to complete the marriage ritual. One condition however is that she has to change her name, but does not have to practice Islam, and this she finds acceptable. Changing her name thus shows her first sacrifice in marriage, as she is even willing to sacrifice more. The next thing she experiences is the right of women's in Beirut and their role as devoted housewives who perform all the domestic activities at home such as looking after the children. One thing that strikes her more is how women must depend on men for everything.

Another challenging encounter that Lababidi has to go through is that of communication in a society where most people speak Arabic. As an outsider, she at first finds it very difficult to communicate, even with her husband's parents and immediate relatives. Instead of being deterred, she tries as much as possible to learn a few Arabic words such as "La" - No, "ta'aley" – come, and "Na'am" – yes. This she was able to achieve through Salah, whom she feels free with even when they were in the Palestinians camp because he speaks and understands English. She communicates freely with him unlike with Um Walid and her husband who do not understand English at all. To cover the communication gap, she resorts to learning little Arabic and in situations when she does not know what to say in Arabic she communicates using sign language. This she has to do in order to respond to the demands of her in-laws and her new society.

Relief finally comes when she move to Nigeria with her husband. The Nigerian experience is entirely different; at least, she is in a society where most people can speak some English, however poor. The communication problem is therefore no longer a major problem. Unlike other Euro-American travelers, who claim that participating or belonging to African

culture is impossible, Lababidi breached that idea and enjoyed her alien world and experiences. Being in an alien culture, Lababidi embraces this view out of love and loyalty to her husband who she has to support in every way possible in a culture alien to both of them. To succeed and conquer her new environment, Lababidi embraces the theory that self advancement only occurs when there is self negation. That is, to gain passage into the world of others, one must become one of them; even though what we can see in the text is the presentation of encounters by an alien, an expatriate and an observer, and not a member of the Nigerian society who accepts and shares the same culture and practice:

> I was an expatriate. I was an observer. I was a permanent resident in Nigeria because my husband, civil engineer-cum-businessman, had the work permit. I was an American but firmly ensconced in a cross-cultural marriage. Nigeria's problems were mine, but not really. Questions of acceptance were mine, but not really. Focused on acceptance as the comfort of affirmation and as a basic human need… Movement of people presents changes, sometimes harsh, other times evolutional, but always there is a need for acceptance (73-74).

Lababidi's priority while in Nigeria is always about how as a woman she can adapt and accept her encounters, to a certain degree. She tries to search for things familiar to what she left back home, and in that way she accepts many of her alien encounters and surroundings. For her, there is the need to cross the barrier from being labeled an "outsider" to "belonging" in the society (74). This way, she accepts living with Nigerian problems in Lagos, thereby learning to live with the presence of mosquitoes, and adapting to lack of water and electricity. It is in Nigeria that she learns the habit of saving water in tanks for daily usage, as well as boiling drinking water and sometimes waiting for the tap to start running again. This scene is captured succinctly in the text when Lababidi narrates how her servants report lack of water: "no watah, Mam. De Watah no come. I did not want to believe him. The only course of action we had was to wait, an exercise I had practiced well in the past years" (118). She further laments on the lack of constant electricity:

> When the electricity was jerked from our use, it was like a slap in the face. A roar of anguished and disappointed voices blurted through the heavy air. 'NEPA' don quench', we bellowed in educated frustration…At night and after the unified outcry and in my mind's eye, I could see the fortunate people hurry with flashlight to their generators to turn the key while we, the lightless, scurried in unison to find our candles so conveniently placed in daytime. In domino effect one loud roar preceded the next until the night was a rumble of clamouring generators (117-120).

Moving further, Lababidi reports how she has to adapt to the noise coming from the streets. She complains of how her silence is always disrupted by the noise of young children who strolled lazily on the streets shouting the names of the stuffs they are selling. These children are either selling oranges or banana from a tray perfectly balanced on their heads. This to her is an experience worth recounting. Another source of noise comes from cars and old trucks on the streets, as she reports:

> I had watched an entire street culture developed in less than a year. It had started with one successfully parked truck and containers ….then another and another; some abandoned and some full of goods. The early morning's silence was broken with the turn of the ignition key screeching alive the heavy truck engine. With pedals pumping the roar brought to life these poorly maintained giants intruding upon the silent shadows of dawn (88)

The evenings also present a new experience to Lababidi, as she recounts how the sound of barefooted children song keeps her company. She at first considered these children songs as noise, but later accepted them because of the message they carry. She, thus, become a participant and always loved listening to the children as they voice out their wishes and fears. These songs convey how the children wish their skin colour could change to white, like that of the foreigners. Lababidi enjoys and appreciates the children songs and even repeats after them out of fun: "Oyinbo Peppeh, If you eat Peppeh You go yellow Mamma" a catchy tune (76).

She finds herself clapping along with them and smiling when they giggled at the end of each refrain. Maan Lababidi is given the chieftaincy title of Otun Baba-Oja of Lagos due to his hard work and how he has help in giving jobs to many people in Lagos. This interesting

encounter the writer also captures is so traditional and peculiar to the Yoruba culture. The writer also makes reference to other Nigerian festivals such as the Argungun Fishing Festival, Iko-Okocha and Okunkpa Festivals in Afikpo in South-East Igbo land, and lastly the Christmas festival, which is mixed with traditional beliefs; the Juju man. All these festivals, as she observes, represent a particular tribe, culture and peculiar to men not women of the Nigerian people.

While in Nigeria, she also faces the dilemma of a communication medium due to the fact that the country is so diverse and blessed with over 300 languages. She tries as much as possible to learn pidgin as a form of Nigerian English and Hausa in order to be able to communicate with the indigenous people. Her first encounter with learning pidgin is in the airport, although her aim is to learn it only to communicate with people around her before she leaves Nigeria. This, she states, is the first time she feels different as a foreigner, yet nobody cares: "for being so totally different, I had never felt so similar" (55). Her interaction with Alh Audu and his people makes her understand the importance of the structure of Hausa greetings, which is different from the meaningless "Hi" and "Hello" in the English language. Unlike "hi" and "hello", "Ranka ya dade" means may your life be prolonged, which is more of a prayer. She also learns some words in pidgin not only to communicating with her servants, but also for use in the market place.

The street of Kofo Abayomi is not left out, an important street where she spends her time learning and observing alien ways of life, ways entirely different from hers. As a foreigner, the tree which grew in her compound symbolise her husband's struggle in the flour mill, as the tree survives her cruelty. It also symbolises the cruelty of the Europeans to Nigerians, how Nigerians survive the cruelty of Europeans and are haunted and adored by the Europeans for their talent

and economic abundance; it is also a symbol of how women survive the cruelty meted out to them by men.

Lababidi leaves Nigeria with unforgettable memories and even though she conforms to some, others remain alien. As a female participant and an observer of the people around her, she remains silent on her religious encounters. What is expressed in the work is just a glimpse of such experiences. The question then is, is this experiences not part of her life, especially the range of the period represented and recaptured in *Paddle*? Another important thing she accepts is learning some of the indigenous languages. As an American, she learns and speaks a little pidgin and some Hausa words such as "Na'am", "Zo", "me ya sa?" "Sauri", "Watah", "De", "you savvy" etc. She thus surrendered to these languages in order to communicate with her new world and neighbours. What she however does not accept and indeed firmly rejects is the traditional belief in juju and rituals. She also detests the high rate of crime and corruption in the country, for to her they are the things that bring the country to its knees. What really surprises her is that if anything unexpected happens it is always linked to juju and rituals, and not from God. Such are her encounters in worlds so alien and around people and cultures so strange. Lababidi did not for once forget that she is a woman, as she understands her encounters from a woman's perspective. While she accepts some of these encounters and these remain with her, others she detests and rejects altogether.

Lababidi finds herself battling with a new race and culture entirely different from her own. The text presents how the subject-writer adapts to alien experience. Issues such as customs, rituals, language, history and religion are what Lababidi has to deal with in societies far away and alien. She, thus, show how the alien encounter is different in one way from and similar in another to what she left back home. She also reveals how she has to drop most of what she is

used to and accustomed to in order to fit into the new environment and structure. The struggle to retain old structures (the familiar) and how new structures (encounters/experiences) came to take over has also been analysed. The understanding of the new encounters depends on the old ones, since it is the coming together of the two encounters that will give the reader an idea of how an encounter can qualify as strange or exotic.

4.3.2 Ogbe's Encounters as an Alien Experience

Ogbe's travel encounters are also subjective but are more autobiographical than that of Lababidi's. Even though Ogbe celebrates her husband and herself amidst her alien structures in comparison with her traditional structures through marriage, culture, religion, environment and economic life, she also presents her acceptance of the alien encounters in a new world as she so presents. For her, Nigeria is a place that creates an impulse of escape and freedom; a place termed as "rite of passage" (Clifford: 1997); a place of personal professional initiative, learning, growth and ordeal. For Ogbe, Nigeria is one home away from home, a place where she tends to see and understand her new encounters in the light of her old ones. What is left for her is the question of how to adopt, learn and be part of the culture of her new world.

She depicts how exotic England and Nigerian encounters are, on how she discovers and uses her creative and entrepreneurial mind. By so doing, she transforms and reinvents both herself and the space around her. She narrated how her encounters evolved and changed her life, right from her escape from Germany to England and finally Nigeria. Nigeria to her is a place where she finally purifies, perfects and revitalizes her life. Even though she never expresses the views of her religion, it is always what keeps her strong and moving as she states: "it was always the Jewish social conscience which spoke in me" (210). The Jewish voice is important to her due

to the hard times she went through in Nigeria, battling both with survival and pains and that of the miseries of her marriage with Tommy.

Ogbe's first encounter in the story is as a domestic servant in England, where she first experiences England's extreme cold which keeps her shivering all night before finally understanding what it takes for people to live in such a place. Her encounters in England are nothing more than a struggle for survival and belonging, from one factory to another, and from one shop to another. It is in the course of her struggle and hard work that she meets her husband, a Nigerian with a different culture, religion, language and colour, but at least he speaks good English. Also, she feels related to the Nigerian due to a racial affinity, for Ogbe, the Jewish race stems from Africa and the customs of the orthodox Jews and the Africans of today are in some way similar. Ogbe partially naturalises by accepting and adapting to her new encounters. This is in how she adapts and learns a little of Thompson Ajemijereye's (Tommy) language, customs and later adapts to most Nigerian conditions of living. Even though Tommy keeps telling her "*self*" first which she never took serious. This she later understands when he decides to do what he feels is right even when it contradicts their marriage life. This leads him to having the *girl(s)* in the corner later in Nigeria.

Her stay in Nigeria introduces her to a series of serious encounters that later change her life forever. These encounters change Ogbe from an ordinary citizen to a rich and omnipotent person. Her encounters with insects in the early part of the story are daunting experiences which she adopted and to which she comments: "this is Africa and you must expect the unfamiliar" (92). The Nigerian weather is also hot and sunny compared to what she is used to back home and in England. Although she is at first uncomfortable with the weather, she later accepts it as part of

a very important experience, something at least worth enduring. Her acceptance and the taste for the unusual led her to decide to start a life in Nigeria.

The doubt by her family and friends, on her happiness in Nigeria raises some questions in her mind but which nevertheless, do not stop her from going, as she writes, "How a white woman would be received by her husband's family? In what way would their old customs interfere in our lives (her marriage life)? What would be the position of children from mixed marriages" (94)? All these are questions she can at least at first answer theoretically, though not practically as she is yet to really encounter and experience most of the things Tommy told her about Nigeria, its people and his relatives. For one thing, at least she is prepared for what to experience before arriving in Nigeria. Another important issue is the warm reception she receives from Tommy's relatives on reaching Nigeria:

> As we approached … like bright balloons they burst upon us, shouting, chanting, clapping their hands, stamping their bare feet. Brilliant were their loin clothes. Teeth glistened white in beaming faces. Brown hands fluttered in through the open car windows, searching for ours, gripping us, and pulling us. And all the while the Itsekiri greeting Doh! Doh! Vibrated in our ears. He has come! The lawyer has come! Welcome! Doh! Ayami Doh. One went away and three came back. (95)

The above brilliantly paints how Ogbe is received joyfully by her husband's people as there is always some prestige attached to having a white wife. They were very happy to see her, especially as she speaks some Itsekiri words learnt from Tommy while in England. As they shout, Tommy translated to her that she is the cause of their happiness and for that she is warmly received. This encounter really made her comfortable and free to explore and observe the other encounters she needs to face. However, the Nigerian custom has a way of interfering with Ogbe's happiness, as many of these customs make her in one way or the other miserable. The Itsekiri greeting, language and table manners were things she needs to learn and the basic things she needs to teach her children, as anything they learn must come from their mother:

> Itsekiri table manners were such that anyone ate with his hands, and most people preferred that native way. One never ate with one's left hand. It was used to wipe one's self after going to the toilet. I am in and adjust myself by not offering food with my left hand … kneeling to senior relatives and influential people…to make Monuburami kneel down for any relation was a tough job (102-103).

This shows the difficulty she goes through before she finally adjusts to using her right hand, instead of the left and teaching the kids same. Another important thing that she must learn is the issue of dressing (104-105), as she observes that one needs to "when in Rome do as Romans do". Her decision is to adopt and dress like the Itsekiris and sometimes like the Yoruba's. Though she finds it difficult tying the wrapper and scarf as the silky head tier will not fit on sleek European hair. Thus she devises a short cap that when put on will allow the head tie to stay in place, all in order to be the same with the other women. Next, is the issue of public disturbance, as everybody is connected to "re-diffusion" at home, in the streets, shops and market places, as seen in the loud quarrels of people on the streets, the physical violence (beating) all around and the cries of mostly children from the neighbours?

> An outdoor cinema at the back of our house; where the shouts of the participating audience kept me awake. It was not such a contrast to the controlled lives of the English (British) who would never like to intrude, nor would they have liked to let their neighbours know of any discord in their home… Here in Warri, the shouts of quarrels, the loud cries of a child or a wife being beaten, the wailing of mourners when a death had occurred…myself, I never knew how to quarrel, - and to this day I cannot raise my voice. Which renders me powerless 112?

The above suggests how hard Ogbe finds it to accept something she passionately hates. Noise is not part of her culture and rarely occurs in the western societies she knows, but which she must accept as an experience since she is living in an alien culture different from hers back home. Although she accepts it, she never participates in it, and to this she considers herself powerless. Her new encounters as reported in the story gradually conquer and overshadow the

old ones, as she states: “I had chosen to leave western comfort behind. There was no reason why I should now complain about anything” (116). Her life in England with Tommy is different from the life she later came to have in Nigeria, especially since patriarchy seems more pronounced in Nigeria. This she observes when she laments about how their marriage has taken different turn:

> While we lived in England, we had been a team and there never was any doubt about my equality. Now in Africa, he subconsciously acts upon the attitude of his fore-fathers and expects his orders to be carried out without questions, and his opinions to be accepted without challenge (113).

The above quotation depicts how the World - African culture inclusive has a way of subconsciously instituting in men’s thinking the idea that they are in charge, the woman is weak, and must obey her husband without question or challenge (especially when the man is in his own culture). We see this in Tommy’s changed attitude immediately he arrives home, as the spirit of his fore-fathers’ customs and tradition recommend that he becomes stern in marriage and should take full control. What is most unfortunate however is how he reverts to poker and having the girls in the corner, which may not be part of a good culture anywhere in the world. Even with that, Tommy still remains the master and expects his opinions and attitudes, good or bad, to be accepted without challenge. These girls, as he explains only come for the money, having the crumbs off the wife’s table. In the case of Ogbe, the girls took the whole slice of cake leaving her with the crumbs. This experience turned to a blessing for it contributes in turning her into a dedicated entrepreneur. Her business successes contributed in shading away most of her marital pains, thereby making her an epitome of celebration in the eyes of both the Nigerians and the expatriates. The silver jewellery industry she created in Enugu and the Ogbecraft limited in Benin City all contributed in making her a highly successful woman in a society where women hardly achieve anything beyond the home.

It is the silver business which allows her to understand the God given potentials of Nigerians and how intelligent and innovative they could be. This she presents through the young goldsmith that she trained and the craft men she worked with at the craft shop in Warri. For her, the Nigerians are elegant in their arts and crafts; they build beautiful edifices which demonstrate their great minds. In her praise of Nigerians, she regards them as very good friends, nice and hospitable to foreigners. Just like the Jews, she states, they show a lot of respect to brothers, elders, scholars and religious men. The sickle-cell patient she treats with local herbs keeps her busy as she receives satisfaction from training, teaching, and assisting people to earn a leaving.

So many of the Itsekiri rituals, lead to a series of clashes of opinion between Tommy and his people. Despite difference of opinions, he still respects his elders so that he won't be seen as disrespectful and so as to enable them enjoy their native ceremonies as onlookers. This ritual includes a charmed drink by a native doctor, receiving ancestor's blessing and free advice from a witch doctor. Her environmental encounters the like of insects, buildings and market place are encounters she contrasted with her old ones especially for the understanding of her readers back home as seen in PP 9, 92, 93, 112, 127, 151, 189, etc.

Furthermore, another encounter is how her husband's family's religion tend to be a mixture of traditional beliefs and Christianity. "These women call themselves Christians and go to church every Sunday. Yet they had prepared a charmed drink for me. God knows how much they paid the native doctor for this recipe and ingredients". These are Tommy's words to his mother and sister; this also falls on other members of Tommy's tribe and most Nigerians. For Ogbe there is a strong belief on traditional rituals that even the introduction of Christianity cannot wipe. As a Jew she celebrates Christmas festivities but never expresses or admit her own beliefs, they remain in her. Finally accepting and practicing of Itsekiri customs become

inevitable; she submits as one of the people being called (*ayami*-my wife) by her husband relatives, to the language, dressing, greetings, and festivities.

Ogbe in the story quite appreciates a lot of her husband's actions, relations, the weather, the silver business and gold/silversmiths, the crafts shop and how the pains of her marital life leads to her success. Also, she accepts and appreciates what seems impossible to be possible as she decides to leave her marital home for another place in search of a new life and freedom. What one can find in *Crumbs* is the attempt by Ogbe to represent women in Nigeria through a careful survey of the place of women (worldview), from the 50s- 90s. She does not stop only at that, but also presents how things are different in present day Nigeria. Like Lababidi's *Paddle*, Ogbe's *Crumbs* also makes an attempt at being non-fictional and autobiographical in the sense that it presents names of real places, events and people that can be verified by recourse to history. The final part of the book presents a humorous and factual account of what becomes of some of the characters she presents. The encounters in the story remain unforgettable to the writer because of the experiences they generated during her stay in Nigeria – a country she adopts as hers, and which stays in her memory for life.

Ogbe, in the analysis, uses language, marriage, history, customs, dressing, manners, religion, environment, economy and politics as benchmarks for her comparison of an alien home away from home. These paradigms allow her to study the two societies both at once, identifying areas of similarity and aspects that differentiate such societies especially with the condition of women. This way, she categorises the alien society, which is Nigeria, as inferior, uncivilised and not as cultured, disciplined and historical as her home. The criteria for such judgement however remains hers, as there are areas where the writer can be accused of generalisation and misrepresentation. The narrative medium employed by the writer however allows her to align

both her old and new encounters as one, thereby seeing her life as a continuous journey without necessarily going back to compare both encounters.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Reading Lesley Kitchen Lababidi's *Paddle* and Hilda Ogbe's *Crumbs* allows the reader to assess how women in patriarchal societies especially of mixed marriages, are represented. The understanding of alien encounters is seminal with how travel writers whether men or women map up another space. The intention is almost always about presenting a differentiated perspective of home and away. Ogbe and Lababidi, like all female travel writers, are drawn from the familiar to the unknown that is from home to abroad/strange/exotic. Thus, travel accounts are mostly subjective narratives that detail encounters and experiences of travel that represent the other, distant and exotic places in relation to encounters at home. This study thus examined how the encounters presented in the texts under study affect the writers who were engaged in a cross-cultural marriage across racial, religious, linguistic, cultural and societal norms. It also examined the narratives techniques employed in the representation of the writers' encounters in alien worlds.

As female writers, Lababidi and Ogbe presents a bitter and unacceptable encounters in a world that has for long defines female as inferior and the male superior. Both text are product of a time when female writers where in their peak of participation in the literary canon. The writers are concerned with and speak openly about how women can participate and understand their identities as females. The two writers differ in the depiction of such themes; the plight of women and the issue of "self" and "other", as presented in the texts *Paddle* and *Crumbs*. The analysis of

both writers' encounters as women in alien places (Asia and Nigeria) from the Fifties to Nineties provides a lot of similarities and differences in focus.

The similarities between the two writers are in their presentation using the female psyche and through their mixed marriage. Ogbe depicts a new female as much to deviate from what is obtainable as at the period. For one thing, she is a full participant and more concerned with the place a woman deserves. In *Crumbs,* most women are presented as conceptual thinkers and not totally under the masculine help and domination, while Lababidi, unlike Ogbe, depicts a female who is part of what obtains at the period in the whole world -women as dependents on men. For, her concern is shown only through words but not in action as in the case of Ogbe. Both also remain supportive of the male.

As with all female writers, Lababidi and Ogbe seem shy, reserved and awkward in their new settings. As foreigners they describe themselves in such a way that conveys to the reader that they are acutely aware of their unusual appearance in an alien country. Another important issue is that they seem more aware of the 'gaze' as they evaluate and observe the natives, culture, environment and societal norms. While the natives on the other hand tend to evaluate them as presented in the two travels encounters *Paddle* and *Crumbs*.

The two writers use many examples in their narratives especially those that please them. They focus mainly on the female, the poor and the servants, although both Lababidi and Ogbe accompany their husbands, the former on a commercial voyage, while the latter as migrant, who turns into a permanent settler. Lababidi's and Ogbe's encounters, background and reasons for traveling are diverse expression in written records. Language being an important tool is used in discussing the overall encounters between the *self* and the *other.* The *self* suggests the role and place of Euro-Americans and superiority in the African society, while the *other* (Africans and

Asians) as inferior beings. The *self* contribute to the well being and furtherance of the *other* and his nation. The travel writers use simple English, pidgin, and a little of Nigerian languages (Hausa and Itsekiri) to bridge the cultural divide, which is also an essential reason that creates the relationship between them and the natives.

However, the American (Lababidi) and the German (Ogbe), seem just like the impoverished white woman in desperation; this desperation (of escape and the taste of the unusual) leads to their decision to embark on an equally distant new home. What importantly brings these two narratives together is the two women's sense that traveling is essential to educating and understanding oneself (Identity) as both are married to partners that have a different culture, background, religion, language and race. Both narratives capture the growing cultural anxiety that circulates around women's increased mobility and their ability to express their appreciation of such mobility in print.

Lababidi's and Ogbe's travel narratives are written in place of autobiography as most women writers, One way they have justified the choice to write about themselves, to claim authority through direct encounters of travel. This is seen as a mode of being privileged in the domain of masculine selfhood. In both writings a woman subjects herself to public scrutiny and gender ideology. These travel writings, serve as paradoxical purposes that justify the autobiographic act, while at the same time heightening the dangers to a woman's reputation. The travel writers also wrote their stories for readers back home as the writings provide the autobiographers/traveler with the chance to reveal his/her understanding of the possible reading she will receive from a public that holds the key to her reputation. As such, it is the argument of this study that Lababidi and Ogbe are presenters of invocations of the wilderness as a historical space of authenticity, purity and national identity.

However, this female difference and the focus of travel writing on minute instance of humour and anecdotal accounts are evidences of a shared quality of humanness. Not so different also, the narratives consist only of a collection of memories, encounters, and future hopes, all following the magic world of their maestro conductor in Nigeria. Also the presentation by the writers of public disturbance (noise) is another instance of new encounter in a world full of illiteracy and lack of organisation; Lababidi could hear the mixture of horns, footsteps, greetings, a haphazard beat and vibration of the city that make her dance to the sound. Ogbe on the other hand, can hear the sounds, laughter, cries, shouts, music and stories by people in and around the society. Each person's encounters have equal affinity with the experience from which the song is conceived.

Their marvellous (real) travel narrative set in West Africa, allow the writers to explain how they follow their husbands in search of adventure, fun, prestige and love in a kind of anthropological way. They present the adventures of their travel from leaving home to getting 'there' and being part from different perspectives. Ogbe's travel is essential for her survival as a Jew on diasporal movement, a real cosmopolitan than Lababidi. On the other hand, Ogbe's viewpoint is somewhat that of a migrant while Lababidi's is as temporal traveller. Lababidi presents her experiences in post independence Nigeria, while Ogbe from pre-independent to post independence Nigeria, though they both need to fix upon certain things. There is no doubt that every sentence in Lababidi and Ogbe establishes the otherness of the indigenous landscape, peoples and ways of life. For without these encounters, the journey cannot be "written". Travel narrative, therefore, is nothing but a close up of an aspect of autobiography which contains an aspect of the life of the subject, as she steps back and zooms down that aspect of life, encounters and as contribution to the overall development of her life.

Adventure stories generally contain a search for facts about a place, are pre-occupied with geographical facts and surrounded by maps and charts, just as other narrators-fiction and non-fiction alike. Travel narrators also use their adventure and imagination to furnish their stories as adventure does not set the imagination completely free. Both Lababidi and Ogbe use geographical facts as the medium of their knowledge of the alien world by commenting on real events and names of people that can be identified in order to be deceptive in presenting their thoughts and imagination. Otherness in the narratives is not just an abstract concept but vividly expressed in the text, in the language used which is represented throughout the narratives.

However, the concept provides new information to their readers on what in the past was considered the 'dark continent' when it was seen as a desert dominated by powerful wild animals and the people are portrayed as less than human, and sometimes as monstrous as in the works Joseph Conrad, Leo's Africanus and their likes. Both writers rely on their memories, observations and reference to historical accounts in their presentations; here memory plays a vital role in the two texts. Like with other travelers, the lands, cultures, means of transportation and the varieties of people they encounter furnish the excitement of the narratives.

Both narratives are means to regulate imagination by realities and instead of thinking about how things may be, see them as they are. Their varied perspectives are in the ways they gather their information and observations. Lababidi is mostly on foot, walking around in order to understand her surroundings fully; while Ogbe is mostly on the road, either on a bicycle or in her car. Their narratives express their uniqueness as individuals as no two people are the same.

Furthermore, the background of these writers varies. So are their thinking and expectations. Both narratives have what is considered of travel literature: the impressions of one culture viewing another, and women viewing others (women). These make the narratives

important in the concept of cultural difference, in which gender shapes perceptions. Therefore, the representation of women and alien encounters by female travel writers, occupies a wider range of structures than that written by men.

Moreso, *Paddle* symbolises a quest for survival and adventure by an American woman, through a careful observation of natives and their environment. *Crumbs* on the other hand symbolises a quest for survival and discourse in a polygamous world, through a careful observation, participation and understanding of natives and their culture. Thus, this study occupies a central position in revealing through the perspectives of *Paddle* and *Crumbs*, how women empowerment can actually facilitate not only their quests for self-fulfilments, but their contribution as well, to nation-building. Lababidi and Ogbe being domestic and emotional writers, present how their gender is affected politically and economically (in all aspects) in the world especially in an alien world. They also present how their encounters shape the success of their struggle as women in a mixed-marriage. Through the research findings, the researcher resolves that Lababidi and Ogbe to be feminist writers by presenting their commitments to the emancipation of women and the general wellbeing of all. The interpretation of the works requires the understanding and depiction of many critics and researchers to add to this. These works hope for critical consciousness as there is less criticism actually done on *Paddle* and *Crumbs*.

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