

THE CAUL THEME IN TINA McELROY ANSA'S NOVELS

Anja G.M. Boettcher, M.A.

Professor Dr. Christopher N. Okonkwo, Thesis Adviser

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Tina McElroy Ansa's cultural validation of the caul and its aesthetic application as literary device in her novels *Baby of the Family* (1989), *The Hand I Fan With* (1996), *You Know Better* (2002) and *Ugly Ways* (1993).

The project contends Ansa's ability to create a reality consisting of the natural and the supernatural, and offers a cohesive and close critique of Ansa's four novels. I argue that the interactions of the supernatural world with the caulbearer in the natural world will complicate the caulbearer's understanding of self, reality, and identity. I also introduce the term of caulbearer-by-proxy which has importance in the reading of *Ugly Ways*. The discussion drives on interweaving aspects of folklore and literature.