

**THE IMAGE OF THE FEMALE IN WRITTEN IGBO**

**DRAMA.**

**BY**

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**MATRIC NUMBER: 68618**

**A Thesis in the Department of Linguistics  
and African Languages,**

**Submitted to the Faculty of Arts in partial  
fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

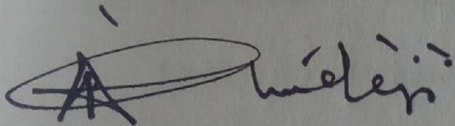
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*JANUARY 2010*

## CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by **Mrs. Martina Chinelo Onuegbu (Nee Ozor)** under my supervision in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. It has not been presented to any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and the sources of information are specifically acknowledged by means of reference.



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.....  
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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated with all honour, thanks and adoration to the Almighty God through whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit and our Mother Mary, this work was accomplished.

It is also dedicated with love to my loving daughters: Ijeoma Evelyn Onuegbu, Ifunanya Cynthia Onuegbu, and Ogeechi Blessing Onuegbu and my loving husband Chief Iheanyichukwu Cosmos Onuegbu (Ugwuchinyere).

Finally, it is dedicated with loyalty to the memory of the women who paved the way for women emancipation, the forerunners of Western Feminism: Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Candy and their African counterpart Nne Nwanyereuwa, the Aba Women Riot Leader of 1929.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study came to the limelight through the assistance, advice, kindness and the encouragement of some dons, colleagues, and friends, without whom the dream of achieving this level of performance could have been shattered. I wish to place on record their various contributions: moral, financial, intellectual and kind support to the development of this work. It is also noteworthy that no amount of appreciation could ever be sufficient to express my heart-felt gratitude for their assistance in this work.

I am very grateful to my supervisor, Professor Philip Adedotun Ogundeji. I lack words to express my gratitude to a fatherly, ever welcoming, humble, kind, considerate and encouraging supervisor. I am grateful for his help in bringing this work to reality and for his ability to bring light and hope to the continuity of the work when almost all hopes were lost. An astonishing aspect of his behaviour is his down-to-earth nature. He is a rare supervisor who is bent on equipping me for the future through his numerous books, which he provided both for my use and for my private library. He is a Professor who respects and humbles himself before even his students. Every human being, to him, is very important and should be respected, no matter his status. He is a role-model, a very simple and a God-fearing man who could buy books and carry them from one place to another just to help his students. I thank him for all his efforts. May Almighty God reward him and bless his family. It is my prayer that the Lord should lead him to greater heights in Him and in life.

I also appreciate Dr. S. A. Odebunmi of the Department of English, University of Ibadan. He is a God-sent, humble mentor, teacher, a workaholic and a genius to value at all seasons. I am highly appreciative of your unquantifiable assistance towards the success of this work. Your tangible suggestions and efforts in reshaping and panel-beating this work are greatly cherished. The Lord will continually uphold and increase you in every aspect of your life. May you, never be thirsty for good things in life.

I am also highly indebted to Dr. Ayo Kehinde, the former Sub-Dean (Postgraduate), Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan. He aided the speed approval of my abstract at the postgraduate school, a task very difficult to achieve. I thank you so much, Sir. May God, continue to assist you in all your efforts towards success.

I also express my deep gratitude to my former supervisor, Dr. Olukoju, who is now retired. May Almighty God continue to guide, protect, provide for and bless him and his family members! Amen.

I must but mention Dr. Remi Oriaku and Dr. Herbert Igboanusi (*umunne m di na mba*). Dr. Remi Oriaku is a wonderful and great literary critic whose criticism of this work expanded my knowledge, horizon, and understanding of what is expected in it. He voluntarily took up the task of reading, criticizing and suggesting better ways of polishing the rough edges of the work. He even referred me to some books, which I must read to be well-equipped for the task ahead. Dr. Herbert Igboanusi has always been there for me, providing clues, suggestions, encouragement and avenues of success. I praise him for his philanthropic nature and the brotherly love he exhibits. People like him are rare.

My immense gratitude goes to Dr. Duro Adeleke, who not only helped me in the choice of the topic but provided some very useful criticisms and suggestions in the course of the work. I also owe much gratitude to Professors Adeniran, Egbokhare, and Wole Oyetade (former Head of Department, of Linguistics and African Languages), Late Rev. Mother Uwalaka, Mrs. Regina Obakhena (who accommodated me at the beginning of the work), Dr. Mrs. Adejumo (the Departmental Post-Graduate co-ordinator), Dr. Tunde Awoseni of the Department of Theatre Arts, for his constructive corrections, Mr. Kelim Oleniloa, Mrs. Funmi Owuh and Mrs Yemisi Faseru for their contributions to the progress of the work.

I owe Professor Innocent U. Nwadike (a literary authority in Igbo language) a lot of gratitude too. He is my academic father and was my undergraduate supervisor. He brought me into the field of Igbo literature. His ever-keen interest to see that I reach the peak of my academic pursuit helped me to achieve this level of success. He never forgets the past, and he is very humble and gentle. He is a man who bears my academic burdens as if they were directly his. He used his money to buy some useful books, journals and newspapers that were used for this study. He always called me on phone to find out how far I had gone with the work and if I needed his help. It is still very fresh in my memory how he held me in his hands like a father and his tender child, devoted his time and energy and took me round some departments of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in search of some data that were used for this work. From the bottom of my heart, I pray that the Almighty God will bless him and reward him for all his efforts to see that I am successful in life.

I also express my deep gratitude to Late Dr. L.O. Arohunmolase, Prof. Wale Osisanwo (now a lecturer at Covenant University), Dr. Mrs. Yetunde Akorede, and Mr. R.A. Ogunyemi (my senior colleagues at the School of Languages, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo) for the assistance, which they have rendered towards the progress of this work. Late Dr. L.O Arohunmolase started this race for me through his fatherly advice, academic suggestions and the books he provided for me. He and Dr. Wale Osisanwo gave me some wonderful encouragement while Dr. Mrs. Akorede provided some useful information through the Internet and other sources to enrich the work. Mr. Bright Nnabuihe, a genius and a wonderful brother in need and indeed, also provided some useful data for the work. His concern kept my spirit afloat and gave me hope in the time of travail and confusion.

My thanks go to the two God-sent warring angels in the form of human beings whom God used to conquer the battle of the enemy against this work. They helped me immensely in the turbulent period, which is linked to the postgraduate school regulations on duration of courses. They are Brother Tunde Adetunji of the postgraduate school University of Ibadan, and Mrs. Oladiti, the Record Officer Postgraduate School. Without their help, this programme would have been cancelled completely. May God, reward them all accordingly.

I owe my departmental colleagues and friends a lot for their spiritual support and their encouragement. They are Mrs. Nkiru Christiana Kammelu, Mrs. Katherine Chiaka Nnadi, Mrs. Elizabeth Ihuoma Umeh and Mr. Austine Onyinye Chukwu. They bore my official academic responsibilities and rendered all possible assistance in kind to see to the progress of this work.

I am also most grateful to my husband, Chief Iheanyichukwu Cosmos Onuegbu, my loving first daughter, Ijeoma Evelyn Onuegbu (who took up some of my responsibilities at home) and my good and considerate brother-in-law, Master Uchenna Collins Anyañwu, for their kindness to me, encouragement, financial and spiritual support towards the success of this project.

Finally and most importantly, I give all glory, adoration, honour, praises and thanks to the Lord God Almighty who perfectly planned and graciously executed his plans for this work. I bow down before You Oh Lord in adoration and thanks. Father! YOU are a wonderful Lord! A mighty God in battle! YOU make impossible tasks, possible. Thank You Lord!

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## ABSTRACT

Research on Igbo women has only taken cognisance of the definition of feminism in the Igbo language, the heroic attributes of the female in Igbo oral literature and the grammatical aspects of Igbo female names. The image of the female in Igbo written drama has been largely ignored. This study, therefore, examines the various ways in which the female has been represented in written Igbo drama with a view to determining the extent of the positive or negative depiction of the female in Igbo literature.

The theoretical framework employed is a combination of the African feminist theory, the theory of binary opposition and the feminist gender theories of difference and dominance. The study employed the content analytical method of research. Data were obtained through interview and questionnaire which were applied for additional information on Igbo world view of women. Eighteen purposively selected Igbo drama texts, written by male playwrights (Goddy Onyekaonwu, I.U. Nwadike, Ben Igbokwe, Chika Anyasodo, Ođinaka Azubuike, Enyinna Akoma, Godson Echebima, Chike Gbujie, Anaelechi B. Chukuezi, J. C. Maduekwe, B. E. Okoro and A. Ubanj) and female playwrights (G. I. Nwozuzu and Obioma B. Mogboğy) were content-analysed.

Three categories of women are imaginatively depicted in the selected plays, namely: women that are completely compliant with male dominance, women that are partially compliant with male dominance and women that are not compliant with male dominance. In, the main, most of the fictional female characters are completely compliant and are all uneducated traditional women who play stereotyped and subservient roles. Their names, which are archaic, portray them as uncivilised, selfless, second class citizens, and sexual objects. For instance, *Mgbogo*, *Ikodie*, *Utediya*, and *Ihudiya* are good illustrations of this claim. Very few of the women are traditionally self actualised and independent human right fighters, while most of them are presented as either house-wives or female house helps. The few, who are educated and subtly apply wisdom to overcome male dominance, are partially compliant. Although women careers are neglected in some of the plays, including *Ihunanya*, *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*, *Ajo obi*, they are vaguely presented as students, graduates or working class women and girls. A few of the women characters are presented as non-compliant in *Ajo Nwa a Na- eku N'ikpere*, *Okwe Agbaala* and *Ugomma*. These characters, one of whom is uneducated, and 20 of who are educated are not economically empowered, rather they are portrayed as promiscuous, covetous and diabolic beings, murderers, gold diggers and stubborn women and girls.

The largely negative portrayal of the female in written Igbo drama is established. Since most of the perspectives presented on the Igbo female relate to the traditional woman, Igbo playwrights should be more positive and balanced in their depiction of women by focusing more on the contemporary experiences in Igbo society in which the female is more emancipated and empowered.

**Key words:** African feminism, Patriarchal culture, literary portrayal, Empowerment, Igbo written plays.

**Word Count:** 469

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background to the Study

The purpose of this work is to determine the image of the female in written Igbo drama using the Womanist African feminist theory as the theoretical framework. It is obvious that there is a connection between the literature of a society and the real society. Anpe (1990:63) opines that literature "is a mirror of the reality that exists in the society." This is true because some works of literature reflect the reality of societal life. Igbo indigenes who possess significant awareness of what Igbo society was in the past and what it is at present are the playwrights of the plays chosen for this study. Commenting on the fact that literary writers write out of their experience from their society, Ogunsina (1990:2), in his discussion of Yoruba writers, declares that Yoruba writers have a great knowledge of Yoruba people's life because they are exposed to "activities, events, and episodes" in Yoruba society. In the same way, the playwrights of the Igbo plays chosen for this study were groomed in Igbo society; they experienced and observed activities, events, and episodes in the society and interpreted all based on the Igbo cultural background, the Igbo social structure, and their own psychological situations at the moment of writing. This agrees with Ngugi (1972:48) who is of the opinion that "literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum". Literary works like those chosen for this study are imaginations based on known realities which exist in the writer's society.

As the knowledge of literary events and activities are linked to societal realities, it is believed that the knowledge of the image of the females in these plays can aid our understanding and knowledge of the image and status of the females in real Igbo society. This does not necessarily imply that the literary image and reality will be the same. Plekhanov (1957:11) observes that, "art develops man's knowledge" Irele (1971:22), Ngugi (1972:45, 1975), Wellek and Warren (1973:94), Roscoe (1977:23), Eagleton (1983:16) and Jeyifo (1985) have all discussed the importance of literature and its relevance in the understanding of society. Literature does not only awaken people's consciousness, but it is also capable of promoting the struggle for a better condition of people. Some of the actual statuses accorded to the females in Igbo society are highly embedded in Igbo literature. Therefore, a critical study of Igbo plays will expose some of the norms and values of Igbo people. Literature also draws



people's minds to certain important issues that require attention. It increases mass consciousness and the zeal to seek liberation, improvement and development where necessary. It is the image of Igbo women in Igbo society as presented through the selected plays that we set out to explore. The intention is to awaken the consciousness of Igbo society and Nigeria as a whole; towards women issues, thereby promoting the welfare of the female in Igbo society.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Igbo drama texts and their portrayal of the female image have not received the required attention and criticism. The image of Igbo female in Igbo literature, especially in written Igbo drama, is yet to be established. Although some scholars have worked on various aspects of Igbo literature, basing their studies on different theories of literature, only very few have adopted the theory of feminism. Frank (1984:35-48) portrays the true colour of the situation in Africa when she proclaims that feminist criticism "had yet to gain legitimacy or even visibility in African literary studies". This is true of Igbo literary study as feminist criticism is yet to be introduced fully into it. However, feminism has developed so stupendously in some other African literary studies that, according to Bamikunle (1994:1) and Nnolim (1994:248), there are various dimensions of it. Such dimensions are African feminism (a facet of womanism), which is the African type of feminism and the type adopted in this study), Motherism, Africana Womanism and so forth. These are some of the offshoots of feminism in Africa.

Another point that necessitates this study is the fact that many of the forerunners of feminism in African literature who are Igbo neglected the application of feminism to the study of their indigenous literature (Igbo literature). Some of them are Buchi Emecheta (1974,1976,1977,1979,1982), Chikwenye Okonjo- Ogunyemi (1985,1988), Flora Nwapa (1986a,1986b), Chioma Opara (1987,1995), Maria Umefi (1988), Helen Chukwuma (1994:2236), Rose Acholonu (1994,1999), Catherine Acholonu (1995), Chinyere Okafor (1997,1999), and Maria Eboh (1998). The major focus of their criticisms is the English-medium African literature. Only Helen Chukwuma made an attempt to study Igbo literature in her work (1994:22-36). The writers mentioned above have discussed various predicaments of Igbo women in Igbo society as a patriarchal society in English-medium African literature but not in Igbo literature. Even the indigenous Igbo language scholars who attempted the adoption of

the feminist criticism failed to consider the image of the female in Igbo plays (Ogbulogo 1999:61-69; Chukwukere 2000:1-5, 2003, 2006:65; Ikekeonwu 2001; Ikeokwu 2006:51-58; Onyejekwe 2006:101; Chijioke 2006:132; and Ezenwanebe, 2006:139).

It is a surprising fact that, even at the present stage of the development of Igbo language studies, many renowned African literary scholars, including some Igbo scholars, still believe that the Igbo language lacks enough texts to warrant any rigorous literary criticism (Echeruo 1976:35-44). Many scholars also doubt if the Igbo language has any qualified feminist text writer (Chukwukere 2000:1)<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, some scholars argue whether feminism had been in existence in the African society (including Igbo society) before now or not. They ask whether feminism is a new entrant into Igbo society from the Western world. Secondly, many feminists: Larson (1971:149), Frank (1984:354), Bryce (1988:52), Acholonu (1994:39), Bamikunle (1994:1), Aidoo(1998a,1998b,1999), Chukwukere (2000:1), among others, are of the opinion that the image of the African woman, which Igbo women are part of, has been negatively presented in African literature. They believe that African literary writers are predominantly male.

All these assumptions motivated this study, which is designed to answer the following questions: Are Igbo females negatively represented in African literature? If so, Why? Are Igbo literary writers male-or female-dominated? How far has the Igbo female contributed in creating literary awareness to the Igbo female situation in Igbo patriarchal society? How can the image of Igbo females in literature be improved for the better?

## 1.2 Aim and Objectives

It is evident that what one reads about oneself or about others psychologically affects one negatively or positively, directly or indirectly. Literary critics, like Plato and Aristotle, who share this view warn that materials presented in literature must be carefully selected in order not to cause havoc to the readers (Blamires 1991:3-13). It is also the view of Modleski (1979:121-138); Friedan (1983; 51) and Okereke (1998:185) that the negative image of women in literary texts is partly responsible for the subjugation of women and that it promotes women's culture of imprisonment in their shells. He is also of the opinion that what women read about themselves holds a psychological prison that keeps them captive. It is then believed that the

consciousness of imprisonment and captivity disempowers women and keeps them under societal limitations. Based on the above reasons, it becomes necessary that playwrights portray a good image of females so that women, growing girls or ladies and the general public will profit positively from their works.

The main objective of this study, therefore, is to critically analyze the various images of Igbo females in Igbo written plays (drama texts). This becomes important as such a study will inform whether Igbo women are favourably or unfavourably represented in Igbo literature.

Moreover, this study will compare its findings with what the Igbo females are in real life based on the results gathered from questionnaires and the oral interviews conducted for this study. Through this, the study will contribute towards the ongoing worldwide cry for the liberation and emancipation of women, the eradication of violence against women and women poverty amelioration. The study is very important because females form about 70% of the Nigerian population (Obanya, 1994:1-5) and a nation can never achieve full development if more than half of its population is not empowered.

Finally, this study will provide an insight into Igbo women's situation. Recommendations made from the findings will encourage a general improvement of the standard of living for both men and women in Igbo land. It will also lead to the general development of the Nigerian nation. As a literary study, this work may not present the exact or real situation of Igbo females in Igbo society, but it will go a long way in giving an insight into the actual situation of the Igbo female. This is because literature is a reflection of the society; it draws its ideas from the interactions between different individuals, men and women, in a given setting.

### 1.3 Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for the study. This enabled the researcher to have access to Igbo people and their culture in order to ascertain the relationship between the real Igbo societal world view in relation to the findings of the study. Samples of information were drawn from men and women, youth and elderly ones, literates and non-litrates. Also, the married, the unmarried and divorced men and women were randomly selected from the five major states of Igbo land.

However, in order to gather some vital information from Igbo people so as to achieve the objectives of this research, three hundred and fifty copies of a

questionnaire, evaluated and validated were issued out to respondents through a simple stratified random sampling procedure. Efforts were made to see that nobody responded more than one questionnaire. The researcher and some research assistants went to the respondents individually in their homes or, at times, during their town meetings, giving and collecting back completed copies of the questionnaire immediately. The researcher and her research assistants were always by the sides of the respondents to assist them in explaining some aspects of the questionnaire when there was the need to do so. The sampling procedure was objective in nature. The questionnaire was aimed at measuring the actual responses the researcher intended to get from the target group used as samples and to help the researcher to be able to decipher the reality in Igbo society as it concerns Igbo women.

Nevertheless, some problems were encountered during the course of giving out questionnaires to respondents. Some of them rejected the questionnaire because they were reluctant to answer some of the questions which touched their private lives while the others rejected them out of ignorance. Some were afraid to accept the questionnaire from the researcher because they thought that the research team members were government agents and might hold them responsible for their utterances and answers in future. At the end of the process, 300 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and used for analysis.

Besides, oral interviews were conducted with about fifty elderly men and women especially those who could neither read nor write. Interviews granted to some Igbo people who held important positions as regards women matters in Igbo land which were televised on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) were also used for the study. Also, oral interviews were conducted with workers of some ministries of women affairs in some states in Igbo land.

Another technique adopted in this study is observation. The researcher is Igbo and she has spent most of her lifetime among the Igbo people. Thus, she knows much about Igbo people and the Igbo worldview of women (the cultural perception of womanhood and the patriarchal nature of Igbo society). It is assumed that she can correctly tell much about Igbo people and their culture

A more rigorous and explorative aspect of this research work is the use of the content analysis procedure. This implies reading, analyzing, and discussing the image of women as portrayed in the selected plays. As a result of the shortage of Igbo written drama which focuses mainly on female protagonists or antagonists, the

researcher was forced to select 18 plays based on the ability of their plots to discuss mainly female characters. The presentation of the image of each female character in the plays based on their negative or positive characterisation, level of compliance and non-compliance to male dominance, general portrayal of their levels of economic, educational, political, socio-cultural and religious empowerment, and their onomastic portrayal, as compared to those of the male characters, are critically examined.

As this study is a pioneer effort, it is also based on both primary and secondary texts to achieve its objectives. Works written in other language medium which discuss the image of Igbo women are referred to and are added to those works done on typical Igbo literature. Information was also collected from the works of some eminent literary scholars and other scholars.

All the contributions provided by the oral interviews, questionnaire, various methods and techniques adopted in the study, expose the true image of Igbo women in Igbo society. From the various methods and techniques, efforts were made to examine both the negative and positive images of women in the real Igbo society with the aim of determining whether their image status is appreciating or dwindling, compared to the findings of the study. At the end, the implications of the image status of women for gender studies were considered.

#### 1.4 Scope of the Study

There are some Igbo literary texts that discuss women in great details either intentionally as feminists or unintentionally; they merit feminist criticisms. Some discuss male and female characters as they are portrayed in their normal day-to-day activities in the Igbo society. Some of these texts also have women as their chief protagonists.

However, the study then is limited to some select Igbo plays which are female-dominated, or those in whose plots women play major roles. These select plays are eighteen in number and were published between (1977 and 1999). The plays are classified broadly into two: feminist /womanist and non-feminist/ non-womanist plays.

The study is limited to the study of female characters in the plays selected. We examined the roles of the female as a member of the society, as an individual in interaction with others (male and female) and her status (economic, administrative, socio-cultural, religious, and political) in the plays. The male characters that, in one

way or the other, participate in the events in the texts concerned are mentioned and discussed only in relation to their female counterparts, since our focus is on the female.

Although this study focuses on written Igbo literature, it does not include Igbo oral literature, because the latter forms the fundamental basis of the former. The traditional and indigenous practices upon which both literatures are based and derived are also inevitably referred to in our analysis. Relevant Igbo home videos are referred to as supportive texts where necessary.

Our data analysis is based on the African womanist feminist theory. References are made to the theory of radical/mainstream feminism or Western feminism only where necessary. In essence, the two versions of feminism have common grounds that this study aligns with. It is at the point of divergence where Western feminism differs from African feminism that the study disagrees with the Western brand. This means that the study disagrees with some feminist ideas adopted from the Western feminist pursuit which do not suit African feminism. The African Womanist theory of feminism accommodates all classes of humanity and the African culture, but rejects all African cultural practices, which are imbued with patriarchal violence or marginalisation of the African woman. It also rejects all negative portrayal of the African woman either in literary form or in other fields of life. This is unlike the radical/mainstream feminism which accommodates prostitution, lesbianism, home breakage, and other practices, which the African woman's cultural views reject.

The two categories of the plays adopted for the study are discussed below:

#### **1.4.1 Feminist/ Womanist Plays**

In this type of plays, women are protagonists. They are positively portrayed and they challenge the patriarchal norms of Igbo Society. They are self-actualised and victorious, and do not reject heterosexual love and passion. The women do not interrogate family and motherhood. The women reject any move that will make them inferior and they strive for recognition. The females in these plays devise their own method of revolt, which reflects their originality and make them independent. The African feminist theory, an offshoot of the Womanist theory, accepts aspects of the African cultural worldview that does not suppress, oppress, subjugate, or exploit women. Therefore, in this study, Igbo cultural practices which do not suppress, oppress, subjugate and exploit women are acceptable.

In a feminist womanist play, there is a struggle to emancipate women. The women do not want to be seen as inferior, unrecognised, or weak. They do not want to be silent mothers and bearers of children. Women in the plays want to be called dignified names and titles because they are achievers. The reader of such texts is made to understand the female motives, hopes, desires, frustrations, and ambitions. Finally, the texts must contribute to the course of the female masses a solution to some problems the female encounters in life. Such feminist/womanist plays are:

PLAYWRIGHT	TITLE
Chika Ayasodo's	<i>Ezinne</i>
Odinaka Azubuike's	<i>Ihunanya</i>
Enyinna Akoma's	<i>Obidiya</i>
Goddy Onyekwunwu's	<i>Erii Mara Ngwugwu</i>
Ben Igbokwe's	<i>Ajo Nwa A Na-eku N'ikpere</i>
Innocent Nwadike's	<i>Onye Kpaa Nku Ahuhu</i>
Obioma B. Mogbogu's	<i>Adaaku</i>

It is noteworthy here that the feminist plays available in Igbo do not adequately fulfill all the pre-requisites for feminist plays. Feminist plays in Igbo literature are very few. As a result of this shortage, only the ones mentioned above are available for the study. The non-feminist plays are greater in number than the feminist plays. This is, however, not surprising since the Igbo society from which the plays is emanated is patriarchal.

The classification above is based on the image of the most prominent female characters in the plays. We should note here that some of the plays classified above are not purely feminist. Some of them share qualities of both feminist and non-feminist texts. We had to classify them as above because they have more features of feminist plays than non-feminist plays. Also, the feminist plays studied do not completely adopt the mainstream Western feminist ideology. They are considered womanist (African/Igbo) feminist plays.

#### 1.4.2 Non-feminist /Womanist Plays

These are plays in which women are protagonists. They rely on the traditional idea of marriage and child bearing as their only means of self-definition as fulfilled

women. The women in such plays do not oppose patriarchy and may have put up some struggle against patriarchal oppressions but are unsuccessful. They are subjugated and may or may not have any form of emancipation, and the images of women they present are negative. They have no fruitful contribution to the struggle of the female in Igbo society. Examples of such plays are:

PLAYWRIGHT	TITLE
Goddy O. Onyekaaonwu's	<i>Nwata Rie Awọ</i>
Grace Ihuaruugo Nwozuzu's	<i>Ajọ Obi</i>
Godson Echebima's	<i>Ugomma</i>
Chike Osita Gbujie's	<i>Oguamalam</i>
Ben Igbokwe's	<i>Ogbu Mmadu ndu na-agu</i>
Anaelechi B. Chukuezi's	<i>Akwa Nwa</i>
Innocent Nwadike's	<i>Okwe Agbaala</i>
J. C. Maduekwe's	<i>Otu Mkpisiika</i>
Goddy Onyekaaonwu's	<i>Ọkụ Ụzụ Daa Ibube</i>
B.E. Okoro's	<i>Nka Di Na Nti</i>
A. Ubani's	<i>Ojimba</i>

The non-feminist plays listed above are so classified because they do not fully satisfy the feminist ideological criteria. They neither challenge nor subvert patriarchy and instead of presenting a good image of womanhood, they present a negative image. Some of the non-feminist plays used here too do not completely disobey the prerequisites for being true feminist plays. In *Eriri mara Ngwugwu*, for instance, some female characters fight against male suppression while some do not.

Furthermore, restricting our study only to the feminist plays will give just a partial view of the image of the female gender in Igbo literature. This is why this study has combined the non-feminist plays with the feminist plays to allow for a comprehensive perspective of the image of the female in Igbo literature in general.

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is multiple in that it has both theoretical and practical values.



Theoretically, there have been some assumptions that African literature tells much of 'his' story than 'her' story and that generally, female characters are represented negatively, especially by male authors. Our findings will provide a concrete presentation of the Igbo female in written Igbo drama whether it is negative, or positive, and how the playwrights (male and female) have presented the female in various plays. The study will also show whether the Igbo written drama tells much of 'her' story or 'his' story and provide some recommendations for future playwrights on how to generally improve on the image of the female in future literary works.

Practically, the study will be an eye-opener to the situations of the Igbo females in Igbo society, as literature is said to reflect the society from which it emanates. It will reveal whether or not the Igbo females are economically, educationally, politically, religiously and socio-culturally empowered. It will determine if the Igbo females are dominated in those fields of life mentioned, and proffer solutions where necessary. The study will also contribute towards the ongoing worldwide call for the liberation and emancipation of women in all fields of endeavour, the eradication of violence against women and women poverty amelioration.

Finally, recommendations made from the findings of the study will encourage a general improvement of the standard of living for both men and women in Igbo land. Such recommendations, if properly implemented, will also lead to the general development of the Nigerian nation and the recognition of the equality of the Nigerian male and female citizens. The work will create awareness on the areas where feminists' activities in Igbo land and Nigeria, as a whole, should focus in order to better the lot of the Nigerian female.

#### **1.6 Mainstream and African Feminist Texts: Definition and Clarification.**

A feminist literary text is any literary text which subverts patriarchy by its female worldview. Such a text challenges male dominance of society and questions the idea of male superiority. It questions male dominance of the society and creates a more positive image of womanhood (Orjaku 1996:76). Feminist literary texts take their textual life from an encoding of the dynamics of women's oppression and women's resistance. According to Rosenfelt (1991:269/270), many feminist literary texts, especially those in the realist mode, the majority mode of American feminist novels, narrate a mythic progress from oppression, suffering, victimisation, through various stages of awakening consciousness to active resistance and, finally, to some

form of victory, transformation or transcendence of despair. Feminist literary texts give way to women's bonding and female friendships. Feminist texts reject marginalisation of women, and their characteristic tone comprises rage at women's oppression and revolutionary optimism about the possibility for change.

While all feminist texts may align with the above description, there is a sharp difference between a mainstream/core feminist text and a womanist/African feminist text. Their differences lie in the fact that a mainstream/radical feminist text subverts heterosexual love and passion, and interrogates family and heterosexual love and passion, and cherishes some societal cultures, which do not marginalise motherhood. On the other hand, a womanist/African feminist text plot accommodates women or oppresses them. It also accommodates marriage, family and motherhood but does not accept female stereotyped roles. Whereas a mainstream/core feminist plot ends in divorce or total collapse of the family, a womanist/African feminist plot accommodates both the husband and the children in the relationship but the female gradually pulls out of any form of suppression experienced in the marriage without breaking the marriage. Finally, all plots of feminist texts portray a good image of the woman and contain some aspects of struggle for liberation from certain forms of oppression either by individual characters or by communal efforts.

Nevertheless, all feminist texts can also portray some violence meted out to women in a society and women's resistance against such violence. The United States of America Global Fund for Women (2005), discussing the need for the world to pay attention to the violence meted out to women, declares that, "The silence regarding violence against women is louder than the roar of the Tsunami waves". Oppression or violence against women gave rise to unequal distribution of roles amongst men and women. This is part of some of the activities that are condemned in feminist texts.

However, it is difficult to find Igbo plays that fulfill all the pre-requisites of a complete feminist text, going by its definition above. For this reason, in this study, all the texts that portray positive images of women, women's struggles and experiences in the Igbo patriarchal society are classified as feminists' texts.

### 1.7 **Feminism: Definition and History**

The definition of feminism has been as contentious as feminism itself because it focuses on specific experience of women in specific geographical and cultural environments. As a result, there is no consensus or agreement on a particular

definition of the concept (Sheila 1980, Bunch 1981, Davidson 1983, Richard 1992:10-14, and Butler 1994). Feminism means different things to different people in different geographical and cultural areas depending on such people's perception of the feminist ideology.

Due to such differences in the understanding of the term feminism, different scholars have conceptualised feminism from different perspectives. Scholars like Hamish (1978); Sheila (1980:40); Anderson (1983); Allen and Sheldon (1986); and Ezuma (2000), view feminism from a socio-cultural perspective. To these scholars, feminism is a social propaganda against the socio-cultural relegation of women to the background and the patriarchal oppressions, exploitations and the suppression of women by men, culture and the society. It is a social reform aimed at achieving equality of men and women in all spheres of life in the society.

Some scholars are of the opinion that feminism is any political struggle or movement or activism which is based on ending socio-economic, and cultural or religious sexist oppression and marginalisation of women. Such scholars include Hooks (1984:24), Jaayawardene (1986), Fatunde (1988:95), Giddens (1993), Ekpong (1994:20), Olaluwoye (1994:20), Chukwuma (1994:ix), Nnolim (1994:249), Miles (1996); Pereira (2000), and Nnonyelu (2003:46). To them, feminism is a commitment to the achievement of full legal, political, social, religious, educational, and economic equality with men for women or the struggle for women emancipation. Adeleke (1996:22) sees feminism as that which denotes the activities of women and male sympathizers and its aim is to combat all forms of discrimination; social, personal, economic, legal, and literary which, women suffer simply because of their sex. It is not only women who are feminists; men who pursue the course of women and contribute towards women's bid to be emancipated are also feminists. Ogini (1996:11) notes that:

Feminism has two main axes: as a belief, it emphasizes equality for men and women in all areas, among which are legal, economic, political and social affairs. As a social movement it advocates equality of both sexes and it is widely known as women liberation or women's rights movement.

One thing very important to note in Ogini's definition is that feminism, either as a belief or as a movement, focuses on the emancipation of women. However, scholars like Carby (1982), Chinweizu (1990) and Mohanty (1991) reject the conventional

definitions of feminism. They feel that such definitions are incomplete and flawed because they do not inculcate the whole story of feminism but have made it to include a limited analytic usefulness in terms of struggle. They criticise feminism in terms of cultural imperialism and narrowness in its expositions on gender. Modern feminism has been extensively criticised as being predominantly, but not exclusively, associated with Western middle-class academia. Chinweizu (1990) opines that feminism "is a revolt in paradise". To Chinweizu, feminism is a revolt by women who are well placed in the society and are enjoying their lives. He feels this way because, to him, women have no cause to ask for liberation because they are already in power. He believes that it is the men who need to be liberated from the bondage women have placed them as men's lovers, wives, and mothers. Other critics who disagree with the preaching of hate against females by some feminists are Ferguson (1950:3) and Moers (1976:451). Such critics, who are third wave feminists, agree that women, especially with the current achievements of first-wave and second-wave feminists, equally oppress men. They believe that gender equality means oppression of neither gender, that male oppression could be found in the U.S.A where it is reported that males die from suicide '4' times more frequently than females due to some feminist affiliated issues, such as: male isolation when he is divorced and the suicide methods of death preferred by men who may be abandoned by their wives (<http://www.who.int/mentalhealth/meia/en/374.pdf>) and (<http://www.dumen.org>).

There are also some scholars who view feminism as an individualistic struggle. One of them is Mugo. Mugo (1998:26) sees feminism as "the means by which, as a woman, she can break out of the prison of confining roles". This means that feminism may not only be a movement for individuals. It could also be a struggle put up by any woman to change her circumstances and free herself from stereotyped roles. To Lauretis (1986:29), feminism means "a critique of male supremacy". To Greer (1971:20), "the beginning of feminism in a woman is manifested in her ability to devise her own method of revolt, a revolt which will reflect her own independence or congeniality". In other words, when a woman begins to seek for self-freedom or revolt against oppressions around her, feminism is in action. Therefore, feminism could be an individualistic or a group action or a reaction against male oppression and suppression which could be cultural, social, economic, political, religious, or educational.

It was in the light of these postulations of various scholars about feminism that Adebayo (1999:25) opines thus

Defining feminism is a question of taking a political stance. It is contingent upon the way the definer understands the past, present, and future relationships between men and women...definition of feminism is difficult because of the diversity of feminist thought because there are varieties of feminisms, that are concerned with the relationship between men and women and how both should relate better.

The basis of feminist ideology is that rights, privileges, status and obligations should not be determined by gender. Feminist activism is a grass-root movement, which cuts across class and race boundaries. It is not Western middle-class women propaganda, though many of the proponents of Western feminism may be of this class. Feminism is culturally specific and it addresses issues relevant to women of particular societies. For instance, we can talk of genital mutilation in Sudan and the Tiv of Nigeria, female circumcision in Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa ethnic groups in Nigeria; glass ceiling in North America; and female trafficking in Nigeria. There are some issues that are universal, such as rape, incest, and wife battering. Feminist claims about the disadvantages Western women encounter are often less relevant to the lives of black women because of some cultural and geographical differences. Many black feminists prefer the term womanism for their type of feminism, as they feel more comfortable with it considering the black women's love for nature and culture.

Furthermore, feminism, as an ideology, rests on the proposition that women should be given equal rights and opportunities as men. It articulates the politics of gender discrimination, exploitation and liberation. It is an ideology that exposes the yearnings of most women who have become conscious of negative impositions made on women and what they could lead women unto in their different cultural environments. The central concern of feminist ideology includes the fact that human rights, status, obligations, and privileges should not be determined by sex. According to Anderson (1997:320)

A good feminist analysis must address race, class, gender relationship between men and women, gender socialisation; interpreting women's status in work, and the family. It must explain the social control of female reproduction, health and sexuality comprehending female crime and deviance and their connection to gender

relations, relating the ideology of sexism to the social institutions in which it is produced.

From all the definitions given above, we consider feminism to be a revolt by women for recognition and equal opportunities. Women want to be given recognition in their societies globally. They want to acquire equal rights with men: legal rights, political rights, social rights, religious rights, marital rights and cultural rights. They reject the idea of being classified as inferior, child-bearers and raisers, silent, weak, sexual objects and unachieved personalities who must only be identified through their husbands and who are not worthy of highly placed administrative and political positions. Feminism either as a belief, a critique, or a struggle is a social theory and a political movement primarily informed and motivated by the experience of women. Many proponents of feminism focus on analysing gender inequality, which is now a global issue and the promotion of women's rights, interests and issues. Feminism focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. Conversely feminist political activism campaigns are on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual violence. Themes explored in feminism include discrimination between male and female genders, role stereotyping which favours males, objectification of females (especially sexually), oppression against women and patriarchy which gives men freedom to oppress women. In other words, feminism is a demand for the obvious need for men to give women a chance to actualise themselves.

Thus, feminism could be seen as either a struggle, a recognition of women's effort to be liberated, a movement aimed towards women's emancipation, a critique of patriarchal subjugations, the activities of male and female feminists or a belief that men and women should be equal in all fields of endeavour. Feminists identify the fact that women are suppressed, exploited and maltreated by men and the society. They agree that there should be a solution to the problem of women but they do not agree on the theories to be adopted in correcting the anomaly. As a result, some feminist theories have been postulated: namely black feminism, African feminism, African feminism, womanism, Stiwanism, Motherism and Sisterhoodism. All these are feminist theories with diverse ideas. However an obvious fact about all the various dimensions of feminist theories is that they all have the same objective: emancipation, liberation and better life for women. The stance of this study is that whatever method or theory of feminism is adopted to achieve emancipation for women is feminism in

action. The term feminism is sufficient for all faces of the struggle against male domination, oppression, exploitation and suppression of women. Therefore, feminism is an umbrella word that covers all facets of feminist theories.

In conclusion, it is noteworthy that behind every feminist movement, be it political or social force, is a feminist theory. A Feminist theory then, is a social and political thought that lies behind much of feminist politics or movements. It forms the basis for social policies and social actions that have driven change in recent years. It has guided some of the basic transformations in the lives of both men and women and it aims to understand the nature of inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality.

Feminist theory developed out of the thought behind women's movement. In fact, the two are inextricably linked because behind feminist politics lie modes of analysis: feminist theory, which guide and inform social and political action. Feminist theory is infused with gendered assumptions about the character of social world, its problems, its inhabitants and its meaning. The purpose of feminist theory is to aid our understanding of the conditions in society and to make us envision the possibilities for effecting social changes based on existing problems. It is not formulated for its own sake but has a purpose to lead to political or social change. Different feminist theoretical frameworks normally lead to different political or social frameworks in the feminist movement. Secondly, different feminist movements have different assumptions on change in the society. It is necessary for one to understand the theoretical framework behind a feminist movement for effective achievement. It is the intellectual root or thought behind a feminist perspective that directs the activities of the feminist movement (Eisenstein, 1981). There are three major political perspectives developed in feminist theory. They are: **liberal feminism** (Lunberg and Farnham 1947:145-155; Waddle 1951; Lipset 1962; Rossi 1973; Poston 1975), **social feminism** (Mitchell 1971:148-149; Sanday 1973; 1997:361; Friedl 1975; Hartman 1976:138 - 140, 1981b; Van Den Daele 1977:24 -54; Peacock 1978; Beneria and Sen 1982; Stacey 1983; Hartsock 1983; Mendelson and Harding 1986, 1991; Smith 1987, 1990; and Jaggar and Rothenberg 1993), and **radical feminism** (Bransom 1961; Giddens 1971; Marx and Engels 1884/1972:234-137; Dye 1975; Flax 1976; Eisenstein 1979:16-17; Sokolof 1980:71; Mackinnon 1982:515; Ramazanoglu 1989:11; and Anderson 1997:341-45).

### 1.7.1 **Feminism: A Historical Background**

Feminism, according to Adebayo (1999:24), originated from the Latin word "Femina" which means pertaining to women. Feminism is a theory as well as a movement that concerns itself with the advancement of women's position through a struggle to achieve political, legal, economic, literary rights (for women) as are accorded men (Offen 1988:33). By the explanations of Moers (1976:10) and Offen (1988:33), feminism started in the United States of America and in Europe as a women's liberation and emancipation movement against the oppression and exploitation of women.

The emergence of Western feminism, according to Davis and Schleifer (1989), Lerner (1994) and Adebayo (1999:24), dates back to the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. In France, it was introduced during the agitation of women in the aristocratic class for equal rights with men. The suppression of women is worldwide though it has different dimensions, depending on the culture of the people and their level of civilisation. Virtually all societies have relegated women to the background at one time or the other. Adebayo (1999:24) supports the fact that women's suppression is worldwide by her opinion that the "woman is born free and everywhere, she is in chains". Grimke (1970:5) believes that men worldwide have used women for their own self gratification and have not allowed them the freedom that nature has given them. Women actually have suffered greatly in the hands of men, especially in patriarchal societies. The sexist oppression suffered by women in the Western world certainly differs from those experienced by women in the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world. According to Akorede (2005:11), in Europe, the social condition of women between the seventeenth and to early eighteenth centuries was a little better than that of slaves. Women's resistance to perceived social, political and economic injustices led to formation of women's groups which had the goal of liberating women from male dominance and exploitation.

In the early American Society, women were not allowed to vote. They were excluded from decision-making and from holding any political position. They could not be voted in as members of the congress so they had no representation by a member of their sex. Apart from political matters, Hirach (1981: ix) notes that

...Women were also oppressed in the area of education...  
In the early American Society, women were denied admission into what was perceived as male-oriented discipline. For example, they were not admitted to study



courses like Medicine and Law. This was because the eighteenth century patriarchal American Society saw Medicine as a field of study mainly for men.

Hirach explains further that the first medical school in the United States of America was established in 1767. It never admitted females until 1847. Also, women were not allowed to be members of the American Medical Association until the year 1915. This was because the U.S. Society then doubted the capability of women as medical doctors. According to Sheila (1980:9), women were only considered suitable for domestic courses and were admitted into colleges in America for the first time in 1833, only to study Home Economics, Religion and other "female subjects". It was over a hundred years after this that Harvard University granted admission to the first set of female Law students in 1950.

As a result of the educational inequality between American men and women, which marginalized women, the men had a great advantage over the women. The men held positions of authority and leadership in public offices, in politics, in economic and social fields, the women were subordinated to men (Mill, 1970 and Giddings, 1984). They were restricted to the home while the men were exposed to the public. In China, according to Young (1973:214),

For thousands of years, China was a male centred patriarchal society. Women were regarded as useless economically. They were disqualified by sex from formal schooling and had no access to positions of political power.

From Young's statements, Chinese women were discriminated against economically, educationally and politically. Even their efforts as home-keepers, housewives and mothers were so insignificant that they were regarded as useless economically.

Stenton (1957:191) also reported that in England,

the end of learning is to fit one public employment, which women are not capable of. Women must not speak in the church it's against custom. Solomon's good housewife is not commended for Arts and Tongues, but for looking after her servants.

The above report spells out the relegation of English women by their men. While the men work in public offices, the women were confined to domestic chores just as is the case of the United States of America and China above. Woolf (1979:44), while narrating the history of England, opines that

the history of England is the history of the male line not of the female. Of our fathers, we know always some facts, some distinction. They were soldiers or they were sailors; they filled that office or they made that law. But of our mothers, our grandmothers, our great grand mothers, what remained? Nothing, but a tradition. One was beautiful; one was red haired, one was kissed by a Queen. We know nothing of them except their names and the number of children they bore.

Apart from the above facts given by Woolf, Stenton (1957:202) asserts that in England in those days, women were not allowed on stage and, in some cases, boys acted women's parts on the professional stage. It was not "until January 3, 1616" that women began to appear on stage. Women in England were also segregated against educationally. She observed, in support of Woolf's claim above, that in Britain, educating boys was a normal as well as an expected feature of boys for adulthood, while educating girls was a controversial topic. She explains further that the education of the few girls that went to school in the 17th century Britain was focused on training them in domestic science which includes needle work, cookery, and laundry which are "useless accomplishments that are supposed to make girls more attractive to potential husbands".

In Africa, the situation was worse. Until the present, though with little improvement these days, African women are expected to perform some stereotyped functions, and if they fail, they earn themselves names like 'witches', 'agents of the marine spirit', 'child eater', 'old hag or prostitute'. Ogunidipe (1986:29) describes African women as their men's "possessions" and a group of people who are "voiceless and rightless in their husbands' families". Azikiwe (1999:4) asserts that African women of some centuries and even of some decades ago were deprived of formal education. He observes

...Women's roles are purely domestic, childbearing and rearing. In view of her traditional roles, she does not need formal education to perform her roles... Patriarchy that encourages and perpetuates all discriminations against the female sex... other cultural factors that hinder women education include preference for the boy child, sex stereotype and division of labour that assigned all domestic chores at home to the girl in African societies.

In the olden days, African society regarded formal education as an abomination to females. They felt that education was irrelevant to the female. From birth, the girl

child is taught traditionally how to be a good housewife, mother, cook, laundry attendant and housekeeper. They copied the style of their colonial masters in relegating women to the background, educationally, socially, politically and culturally. The society prepared the boys for the labour market as breadwinners, while the girls were prepared to serve the men and be economically dependent wives and mothers. The females were provided with the skills with which to support and make life easier and more comfortable for their male folk. Kolawole (1997:2) argues that the "Education of women in the olden days was largely domestic: Western education favoured boys and created greater avenues of empowerment for males than females". As a result of the educational disparity between African females and males, the males are more politically, economically, educationally, socially and religiously empowered. Many African countries deny their women property rights, decision-making and administrative positions. African women's marriages are dependent on the ability of a woman to bear children, male children in particular.

Women, generally, are seen in many societies as second-class citizens who should only be recognised as wives to men. They are not to talk in any gathering where men are present. A woman could only speak her mind through her husband or should remain silent. Some people believe that women do not desire knowledge and are simply described as people "of low parts...soft fickle - nature" (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974:191). It was for reasons like this that early European literary texts written by females were published under masculine pseudonyms, in order to attract fair and positive criticisms from the public. Such texts are Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) published under a masculine author Currer Bell. Another is Marian Evans, *Silas Marner* published under a masculine author George Elliot. On the idea of the general assessment of women's position in any given society, Cochrane (1982) argues that the overall position of the woman in any society should be evaluated and assessed on the amount of control she exercises over economic, social, political and domestic spheres of life. Secondly, her status could be assessed based on the personal autonomy she enjoys, and the esteem that society accords her.

### 1.8 Feminist Movement and Feminist Theory

The unequal rights of men and women and their unequal access to the various fields of labour gave way to the early women's feminist liberation movement (Gordon 1998:26). The feminists argue that the difference between the male and the female is

purely physiognomic. Stenton (1957:191) avers that "though nature hath differed mankind into sexes, yet she never intended any great difference in the intellect". Women, when given equal opportunities with men would do better mentally, socially, politically, economically and administratively. The only difference is that both sexes perform different biological roles as nature so desires.

According to Dubois (1978) and Sterling (1984), feminism started as a movement in America in the activities of some educated African American women, white women and men, who struggled for the abolition of slavery in the 1830s. One of the abolitionists well known is Charlotte Forten (1784 – 1884), an African American reformer. She trained her three daughters Margaretta, Harriet and Sarah Louis, to become active abolitionists. Other abolitionists are the Grimke sisters: Sarah Grimke (172-1873) and Angelina Grimke (1805 – 1879). They were daughters of a slave-holding family. They formed part of the delegates to the first Anti-slavery Convention of American Women held in 1837. Abolitionism provided American women with a way to escape clerical authority, an egalitarian ideology and a theory of social change (Dubois 1978:32). Such insights made the women and their male supporters, for example, Fredrick Douglas to add to abolitionism, the oppression of women as part of what they are fighting for. This transformed the abolitionism into an Abolitionist Movement and Women's Right Movement. Frances Wright was an active spokeswoman for the establishment of equal educational training for women. She and her colleagues in the struggle argued that education for women would extend the "rights of women" to all persons and would generally empower all human beings. As a result of their efforts, Oberlin College became the first college in America to admit women in 1833, Mount Holyoke college opened in 1837 and Bryn Mawr, in 1885 (Flexner, 1975), they all admitted women. There was a shortcoming: only women of the upper class had access to this form of education. Many of the women who received such educational opportunity joined in the abolitionist and the Women's Right Movement. The movement was a joint effort of African American women, white women and white men. However, the white women activities discriminated against Black (African American) women activities. They used racist appeal to argue for extension of voting rights to white women (Anderson 1997: 305). This selfish request made by the whites, led to racism amongst the abolitionists.

Moreover, the white women also began to challenge the assumption of the natural superiority of their men among them because the men neglected their

capabilities. With the joint activities of both men and women, women learnt how to organise themselves. They now felt that fighting for their rights would favour them and attract self-respect and social power. Such a realization was proved right in 1940 when there was a world Anti-Slavery Convention held in London. Many women delegates at the conference were relegated to the galleries and were prohibited by the men from participating in the proceedings of the convention (Evans 1977:6, Anderson 1997:306).

The relegation of women at the Anti-Slavery Convention in London incensed two women, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Candy Stanton, who met severally and formed a full Women's Right Movement which was formed at a convention which they organized at Seneca Falls, New York, where Stanton lived. That convention, called the Women's Right Convention, was held on July 14, 1848. This convention became the first women-organised convention for Women movement only. It also became the official beginning of the Women's Suffrage Movement. The second of such convention was held in 1851 in Akron, Ohio ( Hole and Levine, 1971:6, 191, Mathiasson 1974). According to Nnolim (1999:47), other women suffragists are Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, Harriet Mill and Abigail Dunway. These women also fought for the rights of women, resulting in Women's Suffrage Movement. After the war, in 1961, slavery was abolished but feminists gathered momentum campaigned and fought to add sex to the Fifteenth Amendment of the Seneca Fall Declaration but they failed.

Other forms of women suffrage movements are The National Women Suffrage Association (WCTC) (France Willard was the President) and the Congressional Union, which was formed by Alice Paul (Flexner, 1975, Rothschild 1979). There was also the Contemporary Women's Movement. It fought boredom experienced by American women; especially the middle class women. Technological innovations made house chores easy and less tasking and created an alternative problem, boredom (Friedan 1963 and Hole and Levine, 1971:18-28). Finally, on August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment gave way to the right of women to vote and this declaration was adopted. (Ferree and Hess 1985, & Rupp and Taylor 1987).

In Britain, the suffrage movement began in the 1860's although women did not win full voting rights until 1928. One of the leading suffragists in England was Emmeline Pankhurst (World Book, 2004). By 1990, women had the right to vote in almost every country where men had the right. Some countries still did not allow

many or all classes of people to vote. Kuwait for example, extended the vote to men but not to women (World Book, 2004). In the United Arab Emirates, the parliament is officially appointed, neither men nor women have the right to vote or stand for election (<http://www.ipu.org/iss-e/women.htm>.)

The women's suffrage movement lasted at least seventy years; from the first formal women's convention in 1848 (Seneca Falls Convention) in New York, to the passage of the 19th Amendment. English women won full voting privilege later than American women but women in both countries began the worldwide suffrage movement. Opponents of the suffragists' movement also argued that men could represent their wives better than the wives could represent themselves. Some of them feared that women's participation in politics would lead to an end of family life. Some feminists argued that men should not take positions of leadership in the movement, because men, having been socialised to aggressively seek positions of power or direct the agenda within a leadership hierarchy, would apply this tendency to feminist organisations (Freeman 1973). On the other hand, women having been socialised to defer to men would be hindered in developing or expressing their own self-leadership in working too closely with men. However, as events unfolded, women took over the leadership of feminism although not all feminists are women. However, most feminists do accept and seek the support of men.

The awareness and support given to feminist pursuit worldwide gave rise to the United Nations endorsement of feminist's political aims. The United Nations then set aside in Africa a decade for a woman; that was 1975 to 1985 at the International Nairobi Conference. About 151 United Nation countries were at the conference (Acholonu 1995:81). Humm (1992:7) also hints that "feminism is a global phenomenon". Another World Women Conference that attracted a lot of female personalities all over the world is the fourth United Nations conference termed Beijing conference. It took place in China in the year 1995. It helped women to discuss and push forward burning issues of women's right and their emancipation. The feminist movement initially was based on emotions and legal convictions. According to Moers (1976:10), "It lacked a coherent approach". A coherent and more organised feminist movement came into existence in the late nineteenth century (Ferguson 1950, Ferguson 1984:3). The strength of the new feminist movement of the century lies in the conscious departure from "discourse conducted within the apparatuses of sexuality" (Foucault, 1972:220).

Feminism has various facets and offshoots. For instance, we have, apart from the Liberal feminist, Radical and Social feminists. Other subtypes of feminists are Christian feminists, Integral feminists, Amazon feminists, Anarcho feminists, Cultural feminists, Eco-feminists, Existentialist feminists, French feminists, Gender feminists, Lesbian feminists, Individualist feminists, Male feminists or Men's feminists, Post-colonial feminists, Post-modern feminists, Psycho-analytical feminists, Separatist feminists, Pro-sex feminists, Girly or Fluffy feminists, Spiritual feminists, Trans feminists, Third-world feminists, Womanists and Proto-feminists or Post feminists (<http://en.. Wikipedia. Org/wiki/feminism>).

Apart from the above, feminism has also been introduced to various fields of study: literary feminism, for the field of literature, and medical feminism, for the field of medicine, as examples.

### 1.9 Igbo Literature: Definition and Delimitation

The emergence of Emenyonu's work: *The rise of the Igbo novel* (Emenyonu 1978) which classified both works written in the English language and those written in the Igbo language as Igbo literature introduced unending controversies which could be categorized into three schools of thought which are the Emenyonu School, the Emenanjo, Ugonna and Maduka's School, and the Nwadike's School.

The Emenyonu school justifies any novel or literary text rendered in foreign language(s), (provided the author is an Igbo, whether the literary creation embodies Igbo worldview or not) as an Igbo novel, poetry or drama (Emenyonu 1978). The Emenanjo, Ugonna and Maduka school, on the other hand, is of the view that only those novels or written literary texts rendered in the medium of the Igbo language constitute Igbo novel or written literary text (Emenanjo 1982, Ugonna 1979, and Maduka 1980). This group focuses on the use of the Igbo language in the writing of a literary material. To them, no matter whom the author may be or whatever socio-cultural content and background of the work of art provided it is written in the Igbo language, it automatically becomes an Igbo literary material.

The third school of thought, which is led by Nwadike, argues that Igbo literature is any literary text which is about the Igbo people and is written in the Igbo language. The author of the text may be a biological or non-biological Igbo. The school emphasises that if the literary work has the following three elements: Igbo author, Igbo cultural milieu and Igbo language, it qualifies as Igbo literature .To

Nwadike (1995), any literary material with the three elements would be an excellent Igbo literary text.

There have been so many critics of the various groups mentioned above and as such, it becomes very difficult to specifically define Igbo literature. However, for the purpose of this study, we identify with the definition offered by the Nwadike school of thought, which defines Igbo written literature as any literary text that is written by either an Igbo indigene or a non-Igbo indigene in the Igbo language and which is about the Igbo people. As a result, all the plays to be examined in this study are written in the Igbo language by Igbo indigenes and their contents portray Igbo cultural life. We adopted the third school of thought because language is a vehicle of culture, which contains its original native virtues, rhythms, the allusions that depend on auditory effects, the original sound effects and semantics, which makes a work of art, depict its richness and resonance in the original form. Therefore for the purpose of this study, the works of indigenous playwrights which portray Igbo characters and Igbo worldview become very necessary, as they will help us to really understand and study the portrayal of Igbo females in the plays.

#### 1.10 Plays, Drama, and Theatre: Definition and Clarification

Several definitions of drama abound. The word "drama" originated from a Greek word that means 'to do' or 'to act', while the word "theatre" was derived from the Greek word 'theatron' which means 'a seeing place' (Adeleke, 1995:9). According to Aristotle, "drama" is called "imitated human action" (Holman, 1983:138). The above definition does not specify the meaning of imitation, so, this generated criticism from other renowned critics. As a result, other people came up with other definitions. Manly for instance, defines drama as "a story" (Holman 1983: 138). Just like Manly sees drama as composing three basic elements: story, action and characters, some other groups still believe that "dialogue" must be added to a proper definition of drama (Holman 1983: 138). On the other hand, Styan (1959:11) refers to drama as any artificial picture of life, which must start from the detail of actuality while Arnott (1971) agrees that drama and ritual are almost the same, as drama is believed to have been an offshoot of ritual. According to him,

Drama and ritual can be almost indistinguishable as far as form goes: in both, the actor or celebrant engages in imitation by action and word, costume, objects and settings. It is in the intention and in the kind of belief



accorded to the imitator that they differ... one might say that ritual and drama are the same phenomenon seen from different points of view, and that ritual passes unto drama when the old faith is replaced by a new kind of belief (Arnott 1971:20-21).

From the above, the only difference between ritual and drama hinges on the belief attached to the imitator. Secondly, drama makes the audience believe and imagine what the action would look like in real life. Considering drama from the audience point of view, Arnott (1971:20-21) stresses that drama "is an expensive art form and must please a large number of people who are prepared to pay for their pleasure, either directly at the box office or indirectly through taxation". He is saying that drama is an art form which gives pleasure to people. However, Oladele (1967: 68) opines that drama "is part of the life of the people". He (Oladele) is of the opinion that "social functions, religious ceremonies and traditional festivals lend themselves easily to dramatic performances". Echeruo (1981:136-141) also observes that festivals per se, as well as associated or isolated rituals, do not constitute drama, although they may contain elements of drama. He contends that drama "only emerges from the selective elaboration, re-enactment and re-interpretation of significant aspects of a festival myth". From Echeruo's assertions, festivals and rituals are not drama though they contain some elements of drama. Drama emerges as a re-enactment of rituals, social functions, religious ceremonies and traditional festivals that embody speech, music, ritual, song, dance and mime, and its aim is to 'open the ear' of the mind of a spectator in a corporate audience as well as open the spectators eyes to the beauty of form.

As drama continues to grow due to increased knowledge, some new dimensions are added to the definition of drama. Nzewi (1979:15) asserts that drama is

An organised audio-visual (could be merely visual) representation of a story/theme (whether scripted or extemporised) enacted in a prepared physical venue by an organised team of actors and actresses.

Of course, the essence of such audio-visual/visual representation of a story should be for the benefit of an audience. It should be to give pleasure to the audience as already mentioned above.

Finally, drama could be defined based on the recent scientific knowledge and technological development as an organized audio/visual representation of a story for

the theatre, radio or television and video. In other words, any play for the theatre, radio, television, video and even the most recent one, compact disc, is drama. With the above definition, one may ask how about written drama. Written drama is also drama because it is written to be performed or acted and displayed in the theatre, on the radio, on the television, on video or compact disc. Again, the playwright builds audience reaction into his play or literary text (Arnott 1971). He notes that

Reading a play may provide an unforgettable aesthetic experience, but it is clearly something different in kind from being present at a performance. It is like reading a poem or a novel: there is nothing specifically dramatic about it. In a sense, a play only exists when it is being acted before an audience (Arnott 1971:21-22).

From Arnott's (1971) point of view, drama text or written drama is like an ordinary written script which embodies all the necessary things that can make it a play but which, by its nature, becomes a play only when it is acted before an audience.

Whichever way we want to see the definitions of drama, we have to be wary of getting bogged with definitions as knowledge shifts its traditional and ancient confines and gives way to new horizons. Just like Nzewi (1979:16) asserts,

In an age of specialisation and empirical specifics... we prefer to discuss a less distinctive aspect of the subject: theatre instead of drama. In doing so, we shall assume the distinction that the gist of theatre as a life and rationalized presentation (not as a monument) is drama or its "element".

It may be because of the ideas raised by Nzewi above that many scholars equate drama with theatres Brockett (1979:3-5) and Crow (1983:1 – 6). aver that theatre embraces a performance space, performers, action, masks, or make-up, costumes, music and an audience. Adeleke (1995:9) observes that theatre is an elastic term that does not exclude the auditorium, the proscenium, the prop, the actors/actresses, performance, and the audience who are the consumer of the theatre product. Adeleke (1995:9) believes that 'theatre' is a professional terminology used to describe human and non-human materials usually employed in performed plays. Brockett (1979:3-5) opines that drama is an integral part of theatre that refers to plays whether textual (drama as literature) or performed (staged plays, plays on celluloid). Textual plays are just read with the aid of stage directions. Such scripted plays are often for academic purposes. A point against a textual play is that it has an inherent discriminatory nature. Its audience (readership) is limited to those who are literate in

the language of its composition. It is only when the textual play is performed that non-literate audience has access to its message. Performed plays are meant for the theatre, television, film, and radio audience. In performed plays, actors and actresses impersonate to enact a story for the entertainment of an audience. According to Adeleke (1995:10), to make up a dramatic story, a series of events are woven together in a pattern often opted for by the dramatist or sometimes imposed by the director. It is the interaction of the characters that brings about the series of events, which often generate conflict and action on the part of the characters. New scenery is introduced as the spot of action changes and as the scenes change, the audience visualises the story of the play. Adeleke (1995:10) sums up drama as being constrictive and as that which involves "vision, plot, scene, action, conflict and resolution and is an integral part of theatre." As a result of the relatedness between drama and theatre, it is found in most texts that people use drama and theatre interchangeably. For instance, Ogunbiyi (1981:4) is of the opinion that "...Nigerian theatre and drama lie in the numerous, traditional, religious, and functional rituals to be found in practically every Nigerian society". Apart from theatre and drama being rooted in the traditional, religious and ritual activities of Nigerians, Ogundeji (2000:2) adds that both drama and theatre, are "quintessentially mimetic and therefore performatives". He notes that presentational arts, like music, dance, poetry, dialogue, chant, song, role-playing, acrobatics, costuming, make-up, masking, spectacle, story telling and so on, are their components. Ogundeji (1995:10) emphasizes the point that despite the above qualities incorporated in both drama and theatre, they both have areas of difference. Theatre, to Ogundeji (1995:10), includes drama and all the other arts which are harnessed primarily for entertainment or aesthetic purposes, and this makes theatre larger in scope than drama.

However, it is obvious that theatre is a dramatic performance which presents a story line that is the plot, in a performing place (the stage or arena) before the audience. The actors and actresses "employ various necessary and relevant arts as constructional instruments." In playing the roles of characters, one necessarily has to comply with all the constructional requisites all the time. Moreover, drama constitutes the "quintessential literary component of theatre in modern times that we talk of plot, characterisation, dialogue and the theme" (Ogundeji 2000:2).

Play, on the other hand, refers to a written or printed text for a dramatic stage performance. Clark (1981:57) refers to play as "drama that is usually first seen in

print before it is seen on the stage as modern drama". Thus, written literary texts are equal to a dramatic written script, which has all the necessary qualities of a play and become a play when they are actually performed on a dramatic stage. The fact that a written literary text is meant for dramatic performance earns it the term play. This is why the terms drama and play are used interchangeably. It is also the reason the written literary texts for this research are referred to as plays.

While many scholars believe that drama and theatre have their origin in ritual, some scholars also believe that ritual emerged from the attempts of the primitive man to grapple with the problem of his environment, nature and his very existence. He took some actions which gave him courage and reassurance about his natural and psychological concerns. He continued to repeat such actions periodically and other arts followed suit over time (Rotimi 1971:36 – 49, De-Graft 1976:1-25, Brockett 1979: 5), and Ogundeji (2000:3). This is where Clark (1981:57) defines drama as ritual. Clark (1981:57) opines that drama means "... an elegant imitation of some action significant to a people...the physical representation or the evocation of one poetic image or a complex of such images..." Just as ritual has aesthetic qualities besides its socio-religious activities and the myths associated with it, it can be considered as a type of drama. To critics like Clark (1966:15), for example, the origin of drama lies in the past of the race and this past could be found in the people's ritual, speech, music, song, dance and mime. To many critics, this form of drama which emanates from the sum total of the doings of people before written records were kept are called traditional drama (Uka 1976). The major difference between traditional drama and ritual lies in the fact that, whereas ritual combines traditional drama and some religious and socio-cultural myths, and continues to be performed in the life of the people except in places where Western religion and civilisation have overtaken them, traditional drama involves the doings of the people before written records. These doings were in the lives of the people before the writing period and are still present in such societies (Eboh 1971).

### 1.11 Roots of Igbo Drama

The specific origin of Igbo drama is quite speculative, just like it is with the other ethnic groups in Nigeria. There is a common agreement that most Nigerian drama and theatre groups originated out of the theatrical traditions of the people (Oladele 1967:68, Emenyonu 1978:1, Ogunbiyi 1981:1, Adelugba 1989:61-87 and

Ogundeji 2000:2,) for details. Before the coming of the Europeans into Igbo land, Igbo literature existed only in the oral form. Emenyonu (1978:1) refers to this form of literature as oral tradition. It consists of materials transmitted by tradition, either by word of mouth or by customs and practice. The Igbo oral tradition had a definite purpose to instruct the young in the principles of right and wrong, mould their opinion and characters to make them better human beings. The imagery created by Igbo oral tradition was non-human while their values were human.

The emergence of Igbo drama can be traced to the Igbo people's traditional re-enactment of Igbo rituals, social functions, religious ceremonies, and traditional festivals that comprise music, ritual, song, dance and mime which were aimed at edifying, educating and entertaining the people in their traditionally set up stage. The stage could be the village square, called 'ama' or 'obom', the arena where the event is taking place or at the shrine, called *Okwu arusi* (shrine) in the case of religious and ritual drama. The festivals, masquerade displays or performance or musical display took place either at the village squares, 'ama' or 'obom', the market square or at the compound of the king's palace. The people of a community, both the young and the old, gather at the venue standing in a circular form with an empty space at the centre for performers as they watch the various performances and are entertained.

Many scholars have traced the origin of Nigerian drama to the various Nigerian rituals (Adedeji 1969 and Ogundeji 1995:105). Apart from rituals, other possible sources of Igbo drama include entertaining performances, such as 'ejije umuaka' (children's play), 'Egwu Onwa' (moonlight play), 'mgba' (wrestling), and 'egwu agha' (war dance) by various dance troupes, and 'ejije dinta' (hunters' drama). The masquerade performance (*ejije mmonwu*) serves both ritualistic and social functions among the Igbo. When used purely for entertainment, masquerades dramatise events that occur in the society among humans for educative and satiric purposes. It could feature a female and a male masquerade depicting the various interactions between a husband and a wife in form of dance drama or other forms of performance. For instance, in Umulumgbe, in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, there is a masquerade performance during the 'Igodo' masquerade festival by a masquerade called *Onyeocha Lett* (the white man from Lett village). The masquerade is dressed in a complete suit, shoes to match, and a wig like that of a white man's hair. The face of the masquerade is that of a white man. He has two black masquerade police officers attached to him. He is carried by the indigenes by hand to all his

destinations within the town. He works like a true white man commanding his police officers here and there, like it was in the colonial days. This masquerade performance is really entertaining and dramatises the way the colonial masters over-used the indigenes during the colonial period. Most masquerade performances in the traditional Igbo society took place during some festivals mainly in the evenings when people would have eaten and drank during the day. They used it as a form of relaxation and a way of promoting social interactions among the people of a town or community.

Furthermore, a postulation that suits the origin of Igbo drama most is that by Clark (1966:118 – 126). He describes drama as being rooted “deep in the past of the race”. Igbo drama originated, in the bid of the Igbo to express the relationship between man, society, and nature. Both Igbo rituals and Igbo drama evolved from the Igbo people’s attempt to grapple with the problem of their environment, nature and their very existence. As man tried to conquer his environment, he introduced some scientific thinking. Through the performances, he forms some form of control over the forces that determine his existence. These rites were subsequently idealized by myths, drama, stories, tales, songs and proverbs which further meant the wish to better one’s environment and the experience of man’s mastery over nature. As the rites so created gained regularity of performance, which was dictated by need, they later on became ritualized. As rituals, they were modified and altered so that it was possible to isolate the myths attached to them and now act them out as traditional drama of some sort. This is what Ogunbiyi (1981:4) means by saying that the origins of Nigerian theatre and drama lie in the numerous traditional rituals to be found in practically every Nigerian society. It is clear that some aspects of Igbo traditional drama emanated from Igbo rituals. Some Igbo traditional drama that are linked to ritual are: ‘*Egwu mmonwu / mmanwu*’ (masquerade drama), and ‘*ejije ofufe*’ (ritual drama). Masquerade drama was performed to accompany some Igbo rituals. Others are ritual dance (used for entertainment during some ritual festivals), blessing of kolanuts at the shrines and other forms of ritual performances. In these aspects of drama, it is difficult to determine the precise evolutionary growth of drama from rituals if at all they can be separated. One point to be noted is that a ritual becomes entertainment once it is outside its original context or when the belief that sustains it has lost its potency. In Igbo society, it is not so easy to differentiate rituals from drama because, in most cases, some Igbo dramatic traditions developed alongside ritual without a clear-cut demarcation. Some are also traditionally performed for entertainment, educational,

satirical purposes during festivals, and social ceremonies. These ones are not linked to rituals at all.

Apart from the fact that Igbo drama stems from the Igbo traditional literature, the coming of the Christian missionaries in the early 19th century influenced the development of Igbo drama. The missionaries introduced the idea of both school and Church-organised concerts for entertainment during school and church celebrations, (Adelugba 1989:62). The concerts were merely for entertainment and didactic purposes to better the moral life of the people. As the missionaries continued to produce and teach more Igbo children, the youths began to organise some students associations that used to meet during vacations, especially during the long vacations. The youths/ students associations of the communities, church members, especially women (during the mothers' day) and church youths organised themselves and presented some drama performances then called concerts. A theatre in those days could be a school hall, or a church hall, for the concert. The traditional drama existed alongside the concert and had its theatre as a shrine, a village square, a grove or any form of improvisation (Ezejideaku 2004:10). The concert form of drama was purely for educational, entertaining and didactic purposes and it was introduced with the help of the Christian missionaries. Then, the attention of Igbo people was gradually being shifted away from Igbo traditional drama to concerts. Gradually, Igbo drama and television drama performances came as a result of the emergence of the electronic media: radio, film projection, and television. Ezejideaku (2004:12) reports that though the Eastern Nigerian Television (ENTV) came into existence in the early 1960s, investigations show that much of the documents that existed on the programmes of the station were lost during the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967 – 1970. As a result, the available documents with the station date back "to the early seventies and thereafter". He explains that not much was shown on ENTV in the form of drama before the war. From interviews granted to some Igbo elders, it was revealed, that immediately after the war, there were cinema houses established in various streets in urban areas. There, some interested youths and adults went to watch some foreign films, like 'Bruce Lee,' a Chinese karate film series in the mould of "Kung Fu" and "Jackie Chan." The cinema shows existed alongside the school and church dramas.

Later on, Igbo drama on television emerged. Many of these dramas lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes and were mainly episodes of comedies mainly for didactic purposes and entertainment. The first serialised Igbo drama on NTA (Nigeria

Television Authority) later NTA Enugu was *Ife si Na Chi* that ran for almost three years (1976 – 1979). Walter Eneore wrote it. Walter Eneore also wrote *Echi di ime* followed by *Icheoku*, a dramatized caricature of the District Commissioners (D.Cs) of the colonial period (Ezejideaku 2004: 13). *Icheoku* later became a national network programme of the NTA. The radio series also had their numerous radio dramas. There was *Izu Agba Aka* and the others.

Nevertheless, as the television dramas were going on, improved technology introduced videos to Igbo society. The emergence of the video film coupled with the government policy which stipulated that government-owned parastatals should be self-sustaining, gave way to the decline of people's interest in radio and television and the shift of interest by the television stations towards commercial programmes. According to Ezejideaku (2004: 15), when *Living in Bondage* (the first Igbo video film) emerged in 1992, people were already clamouring for something to watch following the dwindling of the television and radio drama series. Currently, video films have taken over the attention of many Igbo people. Many Igbo youths also are into film acting and production; numbers of films the Igbo people have produced are innumerable (see Ezejideaku (2004:15 –24).

Finally, the Igbo drama has gone beyond its production in videotapes to its production in compact discs. They can now be watched both on the computer screen and on the television at home, offices, and business centres. The evolution of Igbo drama could be concluded to have had a chequered development whereby it started with the traditional drama, concerts, film shows, radio and television drama series to video films and compact disc films.

### 1.12 The Rise and Development of Igbo Written Drama

To place the rise and the development of Igbo written drama in a proper perspective, let us consider the antecedents of Igbo written drama. The writing of literature in Igbo came as a result of the activities of Western missionaries into Igbo land. It was obvious that the early missionaries were not interested per se in the development of the language. According to Emenyonu (1978:21), their primary mission was evangelism and Westernisation. In order to carry out their assignments effectively among the Igbo people, they had either to teach the people the English language or they themselves had to learn the Igbo language. The missionaries chose to learn the Igbo language. Before 1766/67, the Igbo language was unwritten and the



Igbo people were stark illiterates (Nwadike 1990:69). They wrote in a diagrammatic form called *nsibidi*. The Igbo language studies, according to Nwadike, were done in the Isuama dialect in between 1766 to 1900. It continued in Union Igbo orthography from 1900 to 1929.

The writing of Igbo started with the works of a German, G.C.A Oldendop, who wrote the first Igbo words in his book *Geshichte der Mission der Evangelischen Bruder auf den Carabischem*, published in 1777. The Igbo words he gathered comprise some Igbo numerals and translation of two sentences into Igbo language. Other studies that were done in the Igbo language were done by Olaudah Equiano in London in 1789, and in Sierra Leone, by Mrs. Hanna Kilham in her book *Specimens of African languages spoken in the colony of Sierra Leone*, written in 1829. Igbo studies continued in places like Freetown, Fenanda Po and Onitsha. Therefore, it was as a result of the language learning activities of the missionaries that the Igbo language got its written form. The publication by the missionaries consisted of Igbo alphabet, words, phrases, vocabulary items, elements of grammar and other linguistic matters (Emenyonu 1978:20 –50, Nwadike 1990:69).

However, in 1857, Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther published the first work of real importance, which formed the basis of Igbo written literature. It was a primer, which included a translation of the first chapters of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the Igbo alphabet, words, phrases, some sentence patterns, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. The extracts it contained formed the first literary creations in the Igbo language. It served the early Igbo school children the purpose of reading and writing and remained the major textbook for several decades. The missionaries continued in the development of Igbo grammar, the translation of the Bible and the writing of Igbo/ English dictionaries. Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1869) wrote a letter to his clergy, giving instructions to the missionaries that they should collect the people's folktales, proverbs, riddles and sayings in the native language. This order made the second stage of missionary activities to be based on the collection of narratives and other oral performances. Emenyonu (1978:24) reports that, in 1927, the original primer written by Crowther was revised and enlarged to include nineteen essays on secular topics, a long narrative riddle about the sun, and nine short essays on Christian tales. As a result of this new effort, the Methodist Mission translated the *Pilgrims Progress* into the Igbo language for use in schools. With the primer and the *Pilgrims Progress* (translated Version), the Igbo pupils were taught by the

missionaries how to read and create literature. The interests of the missionaries, were, however not focused on the preservation of Igbo oral performances. They used the stories already accepted in the culture of the people to teach Christian morals to the children. This is because the Igbo parents did not want their children to be taught the white man's religion. The missionaries, in order not to go against the wish of the Igbo parents, taught the Igbo narratives drawing inferences from the Bible. According to Obiechina (1971:74, 1969:11- 12), they collected Igbo folktales, but imposed a Western style of life and Christian dogmatism on them. They equally twisted the framework of a popular Igbo tradition (Igbo narrative) to convey their missionary teachings and messages.

Following the above stage was the translation of extracts from imported foreign tracts by the missionaries. Extracts from such works as *The Arabian Nights*, *Grimm's fairy Tales* and *Tales from Shakespeare* were translated into Igbo and used widely in schools to replace the Igbo heathen narratives already existing in the society. Such works became commonly read and retold until some of their features became fused with traditional Igbo narratives (Emenyonu 1978:28). The pioneer Igbo writers were products of mission schools and the effect of their mission education is evident in the large number of biblical quotations, allusions, Christian imagery and vocabulary in their works. This time, the Onitsha market literature emerged, adopting the same missionary influence. From all the above literary works of the Western missionaries, one can easily deduce that their works were mainly translated versions of imported literature into the Igbo language and adulterated versions of Igbo narratives. The works cannot actually be truly called Igbo literature based on the definition of Igbo literature adopted for the purpose of this work.

If the missionary written literary works were not true Igbo literature as argued above, recognition should then be given to the work of Pita Nwana published in 1933 as the first Igbo written literature. The title of the novel is *Omenuko*. He became the first Igbo to publish a fiction in the Igbo language after it had won an All-African literary contest in indigenous African languages organised by the International Institute of African Languages and Culture. It is a biographical novel based on actual events in the life of the hero, Omenuko. At this same period, Igbo writers independently or through the assistance of the missionaries took up writing about Igbo culture and their experiences in life. Another novel that emerged in the same year with *Omenuko* was *Ala Bingo*, written by D. N. Achara, published in 1933. Other

primers appeared after these two publications but were religious and grammar-based. Later on, many novels which were based on Igbo traditional folktales appeared. Due to the Igbo orthography controversy that ensued from 1944 to 1961, writing Igbo literature ceased, although few novels were written during the crisis but no play was written.

Along the line worldwide, modern drama had started in some countries as a rebellion against the idealism and the romanticism of the nineteenth-century stage drama, which did not present the images of life as it should be. According to Scanlan (1988:114), "the founders of modern drama wanted to present life-as it is... This movement was international in scope". As a result of the awareness created by the modern drama founders, people all over the world wanted to shift drama away from the romanticised and idealistic form of drama to reality. Their motives were to present drama as reality and not imagination. Such proponents are: a Norwegian poet, Henrik Ibsen, and George Bernard Shaw, a London-based Irish (Shaw 1919, and 1923, 1894) and critic who declared war on the idealists of English stage (Shakespeare and others). He extolled the superiority of reality over idealism and romanticism. He was also an admirer of Ibsen who already had devoted the remaining decades of his career to the creation of realistic plays about the problem of ordinary people: *Doll's House* (1879), *Hedda Gabler* of (1890) and *Master Builder* of 1892. For further details about the campaign for reality see Chekhov (1897, 1904), O'neil (1920, 1922, 1924, 1946); Stubbs (1979: ix); and Scanlan (1988:114).

One obvious point is that the emergence of Igbo written drama which form the springboard for the Igbo drama on the television, radio, video cassette and compact discs fall in line with the call for realism, which modern drama is all about. Whether they are called modern drama or contemporary drama, one thing they share is that they are all written based on realism unlike the earlier Igbo literary works that were rooted in traditional drama and ideas perceived from Igbo traditional narratives. It was at this level of call for realism on stage, coupled with the development of novel writing in the Igbo language, that people's consciousness towards writing other various genres of literature was awakened. The writing of the first Igbo play came later after forty-one years of the first Igbo novel. Nobody till now can explain why there was such a long gap between the writing of both genres of Igbo literature. The first Igbo play to be published was *Udo ka Mma* by Dr. A. B. Chukwuezi in, 1974. He was a amedical doctor and a native of Ụmụdim town (now Ụmụduru Onyeoma

community) in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State. As a medical doctor, one may believe that he must have read some English plays and from there acquired the inspiration to write a play in Igbo. The same year too, Professor S. O. Mezu authored another drama text titled *Umu Ejima*. After these publications, other plays began to emerge. Nwadike (2002:4-5) records forty eight Igbo plays. By 2009, there must have been more plays added to the above numbers. According to Nnabuihe (2005: x –xx), there were other literary publications after 2002. Three of the literary texts that he enlists dated 2003, while twenty-three of the literary texts appear without their dates of publication. Although there is evidence that some of the undated publications were written before 2002, it is obvious that some of these works could be recent publications and could include some plays too.

### Notes

1 Others, like the supervisor of this work, Prof. P. A. Ogundeji, of the University of Ibadan, had to ask the researcher to produce a list of Igbo plays to him before she was allowed to proceed with the research. He did this in order to determine if the texts available in Igbo qualified to be Igbo plays. It was also his intention to know whether there were enough plays in Igbo literature to justify the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we consider two major aspects of this study. The first are the existing works on other Igbo feminist literary expositions of the various situations of Igbo women. The focus here is mainly Igbo feminist based literary criticisms, but works from both indigenous and non-indigenous critics all over the world and across cultural boundaries that are of relevance to this study are examined. Information gathered from such critics is categorised accordingly. Furthermore, the issue of female power relations in Igbo land is also examined. A discussion of this aspect of Igbo organisational system will aid our understanding and unbiased views of the image of Igbo women in Igbo society. There are also some expositions of indigenous practices by Igbo people and some African countries or tribes in Nigeria which are raised in order to enable us really understand the Igbo women's situations.

The second major aspect of the discussion in this chapter is the theoretical framework of the study. The various literary theories adopted for analysis are discussed here. Such theories include feminism, which is the basic theory applied in the study. The following various facets of the feminist theory are also discussed: black and white feminism, womanism, African feminism, Africana feminism, feminism in Igbo society, and the deficit, dominant and the difference theories of gender. Included in this chapter also are discussions on Marxism, Structuralism, Binary opposition, and Characterisation in relation to the theory of feminism. The sociology of literature is also examined under this chapter in order to analyse the importance of literature to any society, in this case, Igbo society.

#### 2.1 Existing Works on Igbo Women:

Not much work has been done in the area of feminist literary criticism of Igbo drama. The efforts made so far are in the area of general criticism of Igbo drama based on varying critical approaches. We shall concern ourselves here with the works of critics who have used the feminist approach to analyse works of art, oral and written narrative, poetry and drama. Reference would also be made to some Igbo home videos that portray the image of Igbo women where necessary.

Works are so few on the literary study in the Igbo language because the use of feminism or feminist criticism in Igbo literary studies is still very new. This, in effect,

handicaps scholars of the feminist approach to Igbo literature, especially in the area of drama. Echeruo (1976:34-35), commenting on the paucity of literary works in Igbo generally, opines that

Very little work has been done on the... literature of the Igbo people. Some years ago in the course of editing a book on Igbo, I realized how little else there was on that subject from which any critic or interested outsider could learn about our people.

Echeruo was right because, by then, due to some orthographical controversies, the civil war, and the inability of publishers to publish manuscripts submitted to them in due time, there were few Igbo literary texts (Oraka, 1983; Ondo State College of Education Ikere-Ekiti Igbo Language Series 1990:56-60; and Uwalaka; 2001:54-62). These days, the study of Igbo literature has improved so much that Nwadike (1996:118 – 125, 2002 1-5) has a record of forty-eight Igbo drama texts, sixty-eight novels and five collections of short stories, while Nnabuihe (2005:x – xx) lists up to one hundred and sixty one literary texts in the Igbo language. As at the time Echeruo wrote, there were just two poetry texts, *Igbo Songs and Poems* by F. C. Ogbalu (1974) and *Akpa Uche* by R.M. Ekechukwu (1975); two drama texts: *Udo ka Mma* by A.B. Chukuezi (1974) and *Umụ Ejima* by S. O. Mezu (1974). There were also twenty eight novels<sup>1</sup>.

Despite the fact that at present there are various Igbo literature texts that can be used for various critical studies, the fact remains that feminist literary criticism is yet to gain ground in Igbo literary criticism. This review, therefore, covers other Igbo literary texts apart from drama, because not many works have been done by feminist critics in the area of Igbo dramatic texts. Furthermore, because of the various studies and criticisms about women, this review is classified under various sub-headings.

### 2.1.1 Feminist Critics of Igbo Literature

Notable among the few critical works done using the feminist point of view are Chukwuma (1994), Nnabuihe (1996:99-108), Onuegbu (1997:12-19) and Nwozuzu (2007:27). Chukwuma (1994) worked on feminism and fecundity in select Igbo birth songs. In this work, she, in analyzing Igbo natal songs agrees that

Oral literature from basically patriarchal society such as most African societies cast female characters in subsumed roles in stereotypical obscurity and abnegation ... this is due to the carry over of weakness of women in real life to the realm of

literature. The commoner character types include the old woman, the barren woman, the cantankerous wife and the stepmother, all of whom have uncomplimentary exposure as objects of caustic satire (22-37).

Chukwuma is quite right here because many Igbo folk songs are used to portray the Igbo worldview of the woman as a weaker sex. The Igbo believe that a woman's sexual life and physical worth degenerate fast with age and that they suddenly become worthless at old age. To her, Igbo birth songs offer Igbo women free expressions and psychic release from the inhibitions of socio-cultural norms and expectations. In such songs, women's inner motives and aspirations are expressed. They are able to release their aggression over their male counterparts' oppression against them due to their biological make up. These are mainly things that bother them but which they cannot summon courage to discuss before their male partners because they fear the negative implications of such a bold action. Furthermore, to the Igbo, procreation is the prime reason for a union of man and woman and the woman's failure to achieve this becomes a tragic failure in the woman's marriage and in her life as well.

Moreover, to the Igbo, the wife is the procreator of the lineage and it is this role fulfilment that assures her a place in the home. It is a sort of indemnity. This means that a woman's ability to procreate by bearing a male child (not just any child) to continue her husband's lineage assures her of her continuous stay as a member of the husband's family. Without a male child, her situation could be terrible. She could be sent out of her marriage or her husband may take a second wife and probably begin to humiliate her. Chukwuma concludes her work by stressing that birth songs in Igbo are means of gender rehearsal of their ordeals and a psychological uplift and respite, which is temporarily for the release of tension for women who have been highly made subordinate and inferior (p. 32).

Another scholar of interest here is Nnabuihe (1996:99 – 108) who worked on femininity and heroism in Igbo drama. He describes the Igbo women, as in some oral and written literary arts, as women endowed with great strength and bravery, as warriors who have performed acts of immense courage under very dangerous conditions. One of such women is Nne Mgbafo, whom Azuonye (1981:57) claims married a lazy man, Uduma, who had not yet fulfilled his manhood as required by the heroic ethos of his age by bringing home a human head at the battle. She determines to fend off the shame of living with a good-for-nothing coward as a husband. She



(Nne Mgbafo) cooks a special food for her husband and urges him to go to a war, which has just broken out in Ibibio land. Uduma goes but he is slain in battle. She discovers the beheaded body of her husband in a pile of slain warriors. She buries the corpse under a tree and sacrifices a goat on the grave. Nne Mgbafo assails, overpowers and chops off the head of a young man and subsequently buries his body in her husband's grave as a befitting companion to Uduma to the land of the spirits.

Nnabuihe goes further to liken Nne Mgbafo's courage and spirit of vengeance to that of Obidiya in *Obidiya* (one of the texts used for this study). Other women whom he discusses in his work are Nwamaka, in *Otu Mkpjisjiaka*, and Orijeji, in *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*. Both texts are also chosen for this research work. Although the works done by Nnabuihe above touches on three of the plays used here, they are too sketchy. They consider the image of the females in the texts from a heroic perspective due to the boldness and courage they possess. He proves by his work that men are not the only ones that can venture into risky activities in order to achieve their intentions, and that women can equally take such risks not minding their femininity. Moreover, he only picks the aspects of the female characters needed to buttress his point. He does not critically analyse all the females in the texts.

Another scholar who has contributed to the feminist study of Igbo literature is Onuegbu (1997:12-19, 2003a), who discusses the cultural impediments towards self-actualisation of Igbo women. She opines that Igbo society is highly patriarchal and this has led to various forms of subjugation of women notice in Igbo culture, which include withdrawal of property from widows, polygamy, and concubinage, (even in this modern time) early and forceful marriage, prohibited vocations and professions for women, lack of patrimony, imposed illiteracy, oppression and intimidation from members of the family of a woman's husband.

Nwozuzu (2007:27-33) also discusses the image of the traditional Igbo woman as either a villain or a victim. She explains that the Igbo traditional woman ranks among the best in the world in terms of her playing a dual role of a very caring wife and mother. She asserts that the villainous role ascribed to her in Igbo folk tales is not in conformity with her normal character and role in society, rather she is merely a victim of the prejudice arising from the war of the sexes. Nwozuzu concludes that the Igbo traditional woman in Igbo folk tales is a helpless and exploited victim of social prejudices based on male chauvenism and biased value judgement in a set-up that is a

man's world. Nwozuzu's work is not based on Igbo written drama but on Igbo folk tales. It is also not detailed but a sketchy paper work.

Other feminist critics of Igbo literature are Ikekeonwu (2001), Chukwukere (2003 and 2006:65), Onyejeekwe (2006:101), Chijioke (2006:132), Ezenwanebe (2006:136), and Ikeokwu (2006). Ikeokwu (2006:51-57) thinks of an Igbo alternative to the word feminism. He suggests the name Nwanyereṽwa. This is the name of the leader of Aba Women's Riot of 1929-1930. His reasons for such a suggestion lie in the fact that character evokes the image of an activist, a womanist, a motherist, a liberal feminist, a matriarch who "... history either consciously or unconsciously" has obscured. Another reason is that a linguistic analysis of the name Nwanyereṽwa evokes the following meaning: Nwa + nyere + ṽwa =Nwanyereṽwa (the child + gives or makes + the world or place). Ikeokwu is to be commended for his efforts to adopt Igbo historical facts to proffer an alternative to the English word feminism, but a fact stands out that history does not always have the answer to every puzzle, as is the case here.

Other suggestions on the Igbo alternative to feminism are those of Ikekeonwu (2001), who suggests the Igbonisation of the word feminism. Her alternative word is femunizm, while masculinism becomes masuklinizm. Chukwukere (2003) disagrees with both Ikeokwu and Ikekeonwu. To her, Chukwukere, an indigenous alternative that is rooted in the Igbo language and expresses the Igbo ideology of gender should be used. She suggests the word Nwaanyizie (put women right) in which case the opposite masculinity should be Nwokezie (put men right). If one should continue to think of an Igbo alternative to the word feminism, several arguments will be generated based on the different ideologies and facts of feminism. This is because, though there are indigineous traces of feminism in Igbo history and the Igbo also have linguistic provision for gender, feminism is a movement and an academic ideology that originated from the Western world and has to be embraced as such. Moreover, it is an international concern taking into consideration the globalised involment of women towards feminism. This paper, based on the above reasons, therefore, suggests the Igbonised form as feminizim as opposed to maskulinizm. There is slight amendement of Ikekeonwu's femunizm to feminizim, whereby the vowel /u/ in femunizm is replaced by another vowel /i/. In obedience to the Igbo spelling rules, another vowel /i/ is added between the /z/ and the /m/.

Chukwukere (2006:65) comments on the consistency in the pattern of distracting and irrelevant themes like clearing of throat by characters, summoning/abuse of wife or servant, kolanut, palmwine and tobacco snuff powder appearances and the evil woman image in Igbo literature. On the other hand, Chijioke (2006:132) and Ezenewanebe (2006:139) hammer on the emergence of the changing roles of women in the society. They suggest that the archetypal roles of Igbo women which are of old practice are fading away in Igbo society and should reflect in future Igbo literary writing.

It is good for literary writers to hearken to the suggestions raised by the above critics as that will update Igbo literature and elevate it to the current 21st century literary writings. Giving Igbo women respected and enviable positions in the society of literature will inculcate in the growing Igbo females and the general reading populace the need to have great aspirations and achieve success like their models in the texts they have read. It can also help in changing most of the traditional conceptions of the woman as a weaker vessel, a subordinate or second class citizen from the mind of readers.

Furthermore, Onuegbu (2003b:325-236) declares from her analysis of *Adaaku* that the Igbo society believes that a woman's fulfillment starts from a man's kitchen, that Igbo women are regarded as animals and objects which can be sold or used as the owners (men) wish. According to her, adultery, when committed by Igbo men, is an act that goes unpunished, but when committed by Igbo women, it becomes an abomination and attracts condemnation, ridicule, and punishment. She goes further to express the common belief of Igbo men that women are evil, flirtatious, not worthy of trust and can bring about the death of any man who is not careful.

Onuegbu (2004:326-334), while analysing J. C. Maduekwe's *Uru Nwa*, comments that the Igbo believe that male power and male domination is from creation. This is why they have a saying that: "*O haghiri nwoke na nwaanyi ka nwaanyi ahala, o ga - anoriri n'okpuru di ya*". (Men and women are never equals. No matter the height or class of a woman, she must be under the control of her husband). She is right here because Igbo men feel that they are lords over women. A small boy of about fifteen does not see a woman of any class worth anything more than himself no matter her level of education or her social class. Igbo women are highly underrated by Igbo men due to the cultural values inculcated in them at an early age. She laments that Igbo culture denies women divorcee's access to their

children. She declares that such practices should be discontinued. She advises women to take up all possible channels available to them to fight for their rights and pave a better way for Igbo women.

### 2.1.2 Igbo Women and Education

In pre-colonial and pre-literate Igbo land, the form of education that existed was very informal and traditional. It was channelled towards the teaching of stereotyped role-playing, which was meant to prepare Igbo women for the domestic spheres of life. It depended mainly on the mothers. This was why if a child misbehaves especially a female child, it is likely that somebody tells her "*Nne gi o zukwara gi azu?*" (Did your mother train you at all?). The type of education then was by instruction, emulation, and practice. They listened to their parents and elderly siblings, watched and emulated them. It was an informal education aimed at imparting skills and Igbo etiquettes on Igbo children, instructing them on the accepted norms, values and practices of the people. This traditional form of education was also a source of transmitting the culture of the Igbo people from generation to generation. The venue for such education was usually at home (by the fire side at times for folktales), in the farm, at apprentice workshops, in the playing ground, at the market and every other place where learning is obvious.

At home, parents trained their children on both character formation, vocational and moral aspects of life. The vocations children were trained in were farming, black smiting, carpentry and weaving. Mothers taught their female children cooking, home keeping, shopping, and laundry techniques.

In the farm, children were taught how to make heaps, hunt (how to read animal foot-prints and how to shoot them either with dane-guns or catapult), how to set traps for different animals and how to clarify that an animal is completely dead before carrying it), plant seedlings and care for them and when to harvest and how to harvest the crops. The child was given a small portion of land and small quantity of seedlings with which to practice. Learning then was purely by practice.

In the market, children accompanied their parents to buy and sell. As the parents did so, their children learnt from them. The same way, children were taught medicine by watching their parents administer herbal treatment to patients. Festivals and ceremonies were used for the historical re-enactment of past events in the people's lives. Parents passed historical events in their families from children to

children and their children quoted their parents as the authorities behind their assertions or stories. The human standards were then very high and moral was maintained by setting high standard sanctions against immoral acts. The fear of the punishment that went with any crime scared people from committing crime. They were taught pharmacy by the use of herbs and concoctions to cure the sick. Their counting system was very simple. It was made up of addition and subtraction.

The period of British colonisation of Igbo land and Nigeria as a whole introduced Western education to the Igbo people. These colonial masters acted as enemies of women in terms of acquisition of education before and during the early seventeenth century. This is because in their own culture, they believed that women should not be exposed to some courses and some fields of labour. They restricted their women as could be deciphered from the old European concept of education for women as described by Rousseau (1974:88):

The education of women should always be relative to that of man. To please, to be useful to us, to make us love and esteem them, to take care of us... to render our lives easy and agreeable. These are the duties of women and what they should be taught at their infancy.

The Africans whom they colonized inculcated this idea coupled with their own cultural views of women. The European women as reported by Azikiwe (1999:8) were full-time housewives who stayed in the house to bear children, took care of them, their husbands and their homes. Their men were the sole breadwinners. Stenton (1957) avers that the form of education that was provided for girls in Britain involved needlework, cookery and other trainings for home management. Emulating the British the early Igbo that sent their wives or girl- children to school made them to learn what the Igbo called *omumu domestiik* (domestic training). There, the women learnt things like baking, sewing, cooking and training on how to keep the home. This then became the order of the day for newly married women then and for some spinsters whom their parents believed would offer them a better chance to get married. Allele-Williams (1989:32) call these breeds of women either "full-time house wives or wives of leisure".

Secondly, in the days of the colonial masters, the interest of the white men, was mainly on the need to train men for the post of clerks, priests, messengers, interpreters and administrative assistants. The focus was mainly on men than women (Kolawole 1997:1). In support of this view, Emecheta (1974:6) opines that in "every

Igbo family...where their children attended school, boys were usually given preference..." The Igbo did not bother about the education of women; hence they felt that females did not need formal education in order to play their naturally assigned domestic roles. Again, the white missionaries did not require the services of women in the course of discharging their duties so they did not mind uplifting the educational status of the females like they did the males. Supporting this notion Davies (1986:29-30) observes that

The selection of males for formal education was fostered by the Colonial institutions, which made specific choices in educating Males and females....with few exceptions; girls were kept away from formal and especially higher education

Davies in, Stenton (1957:791-202), while discussing the educational suppression women undergo in Africa, also asserts that

The sex role conditions common in many African societies supported the notion that Western Education was a barrier to a woman's role as a wife and mother and an impediment to her success in these traditional modes of acquiring status. With few exceptions, girls were kept away from formal and especially higher education.

The words of Boyce Davies above may sound ridiculous but it was so in Igbo land of not up to four decades ago. The few women who found themselves in school were there probably because their parents were among the first breed of educated Igbo parents. These women were stigmatised and regarded as prostitutes. Many of such women were not recommended for marriage, as people used to feel that they must have damaged their wombs through incessant abortions, as they were often seen in the mist of male classmates who were believed to have been dating them. The Igbo man also accepted the idea of keeping the girl-child away from school because he felt that going to school would interfere with her success in efficiently discharging her traditional roles (Kolawole 1997:1).

As a result of the delays mentioned above, Brown Lloyd cited in Olaluwoye (1994:9) laments that the African female were not opportuned to be educated earlier like their male counterparts. He says

... Reflects a truism in modern African History-that until relatively recently, women did not enjoy comparable educational opportunities, so that correspondingly fewer acquired the literacy.

Lloyd's observation is right. It was only recently when the Igbo saw some of the earlier educated females economically empowered and helping their families or their husbands with their salaries that they now began to change their minds to send their female children to school. Even as it is now, they still prefer to send their male children to school rather than the female. This is very common with families who cannot afford the financial implications of sending all their children to school, as school fees are highly exorbitant in Igbo land.

Nevertheless, the present Western education in Nigeria, according to the United Nations resolution, is the inalienable right of every child irrespective of sex. In Nigeria's National Policy on Education 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (1998:7), education is necessary for Nigerians for "each individual's sake and general development of the society." This same policy on education states that

There is need for equality of educational opportunities to all Nigerian Children irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability...the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both outside the formal school system.

The above statements mean that education is the right of every citizen as well as the instrument per excellent for development. Despite the declaration in the National Education Policy above, the Igbo girl child is still marginalised in this contemporary period but not like in the olden days. UNESCO/UNICEF (1994a: 3), observing the current situation of the female, laments that the problem of the girl child are as follows: "Beginning early in life, girls are often underfed, neglected, overworked, and denied access to proper health and education". This is true because in Igbo society, some parents still hold the belief that a woman's education ends in the kitchen. That no matter how intelligent or educated a woman is she must end up in a man's kitchen as his cook, steward and nurse.

The extent of damage done to the female in the past education wise could be imagined from the results of the following researches. Kwesiga *et al* (2004) place female literacy in Nigeria at 56%, while the female primary and secondary enrolment are still below 50%, 49.2% and 45.6%, respectively. Data presented by World Bank (1994: XI) show that there is a gender gap in enrolment in favour of males at the tertiary level in Sub-Sahara Africa. Also, Azikiwe (1992, 1999 :1-8) and UNESCO/UNICEF (1995), in their various researches on women education and enrolments at

the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, report that the enrolment of the female in Africa and in Igbo land per se in the above sectors of education are very low. Furthermore, the grass-roots Igbo women are non-literates because of what Grace Alele-Williams (1989:53) calls the "fear of excessive emancipation". Other scholars who supported her assertions are Okeke (1989), Obanya (1994), King (1996), Adebayo (1996:37), Onuegbu (1997), Kolawole (1997b:1-4), and Azikiwe (1999:4-8), who have enumerated some of the constraints on Igbo women; education even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to include socio-cultural and religious factors whereby women's roles are purely domestic child bearing and caring. Obanya (1994:1-5) notes that it will be difficult for Africa's development needs to be met when "women are not as educated as the men". Even the few who are educated cannot rise as high as they wish to because of frequent pregnancies and continuous caring for infants, which at the end, make women mainly dependent on males for material provision (Firestone 1971, Mitchel 1973, Giddens 1993 Hartman 1997:103 and Nonyelu 2003: 51). As a result of being dependent on men, many of these females get adapted to their condition and do not struggle to further their education because already, they are fully occupied with home care, child bearing and caring, and other problems associated with marriage. As a result, they are exposed to the undervaluing of the girl child by their parents, poor esteem on the females which may last for a lifetime, poverty, early marriage, sexual exploitation and other threats to their well-being.

World Bank Report (2001:3), discussing the need of equality of both men and women, notes that gender equality is

... a core development issue-a development objective in its own right. It strengthens countries abilities to grow, to reduce poverty, and to govern effectively. Promoting gender equality is thus an important part of a development strategy that seeks to enable all people-women and men alike to escape poverty and improve their standard of living...

Already "it is obvious that gender inequality in education and other aspects of life is a world-wide issue which is believed to have affected world overall development of the globe." However, the reaction of many Igbo parents to female education has changed positively. The present trend in Igbo land is that the number of Igbo females in school is greater than that of males. This is because in Igbo land, mostly Abia and Anambra States, male children prefer going into business in order to make quick money to going to school. This is so because of the poor salary that was offered to government



workers in those days and the poor economic situation of the educated in Nigeria then. Now that the immediate past president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo (May 29 1999 to 2007), changed the salaries of the educated Nigerian workers for better, Igbo males are back in school. Even the old and young business men and women, those who already have established businesses, those who have acquired the knowledge of some trades and vocations and who have been practising in their various fields, are now back in school. The Igbo males and females are now completely aware of the importance of education. Meanwhile the low level of female education in Igbo land still remains because some missed education at an early age and cannot go back to school now that it is too late for them. In support of this fact, UNESCO /UNICEF (1995:13-35) show that the literacy rate of women in many African countries is extremely low. They comment that

The average illiteracy rate for African women in 1995 was estimated at 62 percent while that of men was 41 percent... about 870 million girls have no access to primary education; 350 million women are illiterate while 100 million children and adults do not complete their basic schooling.

Nevertheless, the Nigerian government has been making efforts to meet the target of 'Education for All' by 2015. No matter the efforts the Nigerian government puts up, the fact remains that many Igbo female adult illiterates are not prepared to go back to school now. It is easier for the secondary school dropouts among them to pass through the N.T.I (National Teachers Institute) which prepares them for Teachers Grade 11 certificate and further up to the higher institutions than for the primary school dropouts and those who never entered the four walls of the primary school to go back to the regular and formal primary schools. This is because so many of them are currently faced with the responsibility of fending for their children rather than for themselves. Another fact is that so many are shy to go back to the primary school and be in the same class with small children at their age.

Although the Igbo now have experienced the need to educate their female children, many of them still have the fear that educating females in higher institutions will make them imbibe much foreign culture. They believe that such acquisition of knowledge would make the females grow wild and eventually be unmarriageable. Okeke (1989) and King (1996) draw attention to some of the myths and negative

stereotypical arguments that are used to discourage female education both in the past and at present as follows:

- Educated women make bad wives and are not respectful to their husbands,
- Educated women are irreligious and do not encourage their children to be religious.
- Educated women do not dress up to reflect their culture.
- Educated women are unruly and bossy.
- Educated women cause psychological instability in homes.
- Educated women tend to be morally corrupt and promiscuous.

Most of the myths raised above are false depending on individual educated woman and their various backgrounds, belief and upbringing. However, Igbo parents and Igbo society, at large, believe such myths. They find no justification for providing girls and boys equal access to education. Even now that many parents have changed their attitudes towards female education, they do so because of the financial reward that comes into the family if the girl is fortunate to secure a job after her education.

Apart from the factors mentioned above, another problem that militates against Igbo women education is early marriage (Egbue 2003:71). He (Egbue) observes that early marriage deprives the women the opportunities attached to education and negates current developmental view. He suggests that optimum education for all children is necessary for their well-being and exposes them to the adequate condition of socio-economic development.

Furthermore, on the issue above, Azikiwe (1999:4-8) laments that an Igbo school girl is also the family's housemaid. While the males of the family are culturally excluded from family domestic chores, the females combine both the family domestic chores with their school work. This, in effect, results in the poor performance of some of these females in school. Igbo males are viewed in that society as mini-gods who should be served by the females. They do not participate in domestic chores because to the Igbo, domestic activities are exclusively reserved for females.

### 2.1.3 Igbo Women and Literary Writing

Chukwukere (2000:1) and Onuegbu (2005:31-43) agree that the domain of literary writing in Igbo has been with the males for several decades until now that few Igbo female writers are emerging. They lament that the macho-domination of literary

writing in Igbo language studies paved way for the dishonourable image of the female in Igbo literature. One may not blame Igbo women much for not being able to write. Writing needs financial backing, high concentration, private quiet time extensive and intensive, reading in order to gather experience in writing. All these requirements are lacking in the lives of many married and educated Igbo women. Those who can write among them may not be able to publish because of lack of funds. This is because their little incomes are traditional possessions of their husbands. This is to satisfy the Igbo worldview that a married Igbo woman according to Onuegbu (2003:326), is referred to as "onye aka nwe" (somebody's possession), and "aku di ya" (her husband's wealth). If a man marries a woman, he possesses all her belongings and, in fact, she becomes part of the man's wealth. How then can a woman acquire enough money for publication when her husband is her immediate 'Central Bank' who quickly collects her life earnings and is reluctant to release some of it for the woman's advancement? Adebayo (1996:37) vividly captures the condition of the African women thus:

Every African woman who writes must have killed the angel in the 'House' several times over as well as overcome many prejudices in a society where the women is supposed to be seen and not be heard... in... traditional set-up of Nigeria and Africa in general ...women are more burdened with humdrum of daily life than men. And therefore, it takes extra effort on the part of the female to write.

On the issue of the inability of Igbo women to write, especially literary texts, Onuegbu (2005: 31-34) notes that

...The first Igbo female novelist wrote her work in 1979. Her name is Julie Onwuchekwa while her novel is *Chinagorom* (1979). She also wrote the first Igbo poetry in the same year 1979. The title of the poetry text being *Akpaala Okwu* (1979)... the first female... writer in Igbo drama called *Obioma Mogboḡu*... her work called *Adaaku*... appeared in a gap of ten years from the first literary text of an Igbo female, ... which was in 1989...Igbo female writers are still being counted in tens while the Igbo male writers are counted in hundreds....

It is true that Julie Onwuchekwa is the first Igbo literary female novelist and poet but a correction to the above assertions of Onuegbu is that *Obioma Mogboḡu* is not the first Igbo playwright. She is the second in the list and her work *Adaaku* is also second in the list of plays. The first Igbo female playwright is Nonye Gina Nsoani and her

work written in 1986 is titled *Ebule Gbasoo Onye kpu Aturu*. Nonye Gina died shortly after her youth service in 1993. She was a part-time teacher at Command Day Secondary School Ikeja Military Cantonment, Lagos before her death. Her work is not part of those selected for this study because it does not focus on the females.

Actually, male Igbo literary authors outnumber the female ones in several hundreds. The few known Igbo indigenous female writers are listed sequentially below:

YEAR	TITLE	PLAYWRIGHT
1979	<i>Chinaagorom</i>	by Julie Onwuchekwa.
1979	<i>Akpa ala Okwu</i>	by Julie Onwuchekwa
1985	<i>Abu Umụ Praimari</i>	by Catherine O. Acholonu
1986	<i>Ebule Gbasoo Onye Kpu Aturu</i>	by Nonye Gina Nsoani
1988	<i>Mmadu bu Iyagba</i>	by Priscilla Nkeiruka Okafor.
1989	<i>Adaaku</i>	by Obioma Mogbogu
1991	<i>Ome Ihe Jide Ofo</i>	by Gabriella Ihuarugo Nwozuzu
1996	<i>Ekenegwurugwu</i>	by Martina Chinelo Onuegbu et al
1998	<i>Ajo-Obi</i>	by Gabriella Ihuarugo Nwozuzu
2000	<i>Ndu Di Na Nti</i>	by Mary Ukamaka Chijioke
2001	<i>Oku Nwanne na Utara Nti Ndi ozo</i>	by Patience Chituru Ifejika
2001	<i>Olisa Amaka</i>	by Regina Obakhena.
2002	<i>Ihe onye metere</i>	by Anthonia Nkechinyere Okedjadi
2003	<i>Ijeuwa</i>	by Anthonia Nkechinyere Okedjadi
2006	<i>Makuachukwu</i>	by Christian Nkiru Kammelu

One point to note here is that Igbo women are waking up to pick up their pens. Also, majority of the few women who have written literary texts are yet to portray the Igbo female in the right perspective. They have not presented the Igbo female positively in their writing nor have they exposed the females' various insubordinate and marginalised experiences in their works. In fact, their writings are not based on feminist intentions.

Acholonu (1994:38), in her argument on the poor image of the female in Nigerian literature, refers to it as "the dishonourable image of the female" which is a marked feature in oral and written literary traditions. Most of the oral literary performers as well as contemporary Nigerian novelists are men and they tend to boost their ego through their works. Acholonu concludes that the end result of the male dominance over the female in Nigerian literature is "the inferiorised image of the female" and the fact that "while the male image prospers in our novels, the female image deteriorates" (Acholonu 1994:38). She explains further that in many African literary texts, one is struck by the constant depiction of the female as "a whore, a scorn or a butt... "A woman who is highly endowed with noble qualities ... is easily turned into an accused victim of a powerful man or a merciless and ruthless Pagan deity". Acholonu suggests that Nigerian literature should mirror the contemporary Nigerian society where women have been granted equal educational and job opportunities. The evolving and changing status of Nigerian women should also definitely be a crucial societal phenomenon, which should be reflected prominently on the pages of Nigerian literature. Ezeigbo (1994:55), referring to the present imbalances in the depiction of male and female in African literature whereby the male is superior while the female is inferior calls the African literary writer "the phallic authors." She observes that African literature castigates women and relegates them to the background as if female inferiority has always existed from the time of creation and the theory has been affirmed by traditional, Christian and Islamic myths through which these writers have been indoctrinated. Larson (1971:149) laments that "In early West African novel, the female characters play almost no significant part, if they are present; they are mere objects performing a function."

On this same issue, Chukwuma (1994:215) adds that female characters in African fiction

is a Docile lacklustre human being, the quiet member of a household, content only to bear children, unfulfilled if she does not and handicapped if she bears only

daughters. In the home she was not part of the decision-making both as a daughter, wife and mother even when the decisions affected her directly. [Docility and complete subsumation of will was demanded and enacted from her...

Chukwukere (2001) is also of the opinion that

In Igbo fictional writings, women are at their best, shallow minded, the property and inheritance of men, docile and complacent, and at their worst, vile, treacherous, an unnecessary impediment to a man's "legitimate" searches and endeavour towards higher values.

Larson and Chukwuṃa are very much correct in their observations. Some Igbo writers transfer the traditional voicelessness accorded women in Igbo society to literature. Great attention is focused on the activities of male characters while the female characters are only mentioned to fulfill a function as a wife, mother, or concubine. However, through her work, using a formalistic analytical method, Chukwukere (2000:1) opines that a reader sees "a female writers attack on Igbo institutions of family and marriage which are perceived as asphyxiating to a total emancipation of women, albeit the modern woman." She observes further that feminism has "failed to make an impact in Igbo written literature". She is fast in counting her chickens before the eggs are hatched. This is because, like we have commented earlier on, the use of feminism in the study of Igbo literature is still like a flower bud yet to break and blossom. The end result is not yet known but we are sure that at least feminism in Igbo literature will create a new Igbo woman in better circumstances because of its ability to create a great awareness and mass consciousness about women matters in Igbo society.

The foregoing are some of the opinions of the earlier macho-writers about Igbo women. Some of the plays to be studied in this work disprove these images. They include *ihunanya* by Oḍinaka Azubuike and *Obidiya* by Enyinna Akoma. There are also few Igbo novels that present good images of Igbo women.<sup>2</sup> However, it should be pointed out that it is not only in Igbo literature that women's image has been negatively portrayed. In Yoruba literature, Ogunsina (1976, 1982, 1984, 1990, Oyesakin (1982, 1982b, 1984) and Ilesanmi (1991) have all shown that the image of the woman in Yoruba oral literature such as Ifa literary corpus, Ijala and proverbs, are also largely negative.

#### 2.1.4 Igbo Women and Marriage

Marriage, according to Gough (1975), exists as a socially recognised, durable, although not necessarily life-long relationship between individual men and women. It is a legal union of a man and a woman to become husband and wife for the purpose of companionship, love, reproduction, social satisfaction, bond or unity between two different families or communities. Schaefer (1986) adds that "marriage is consummated for promotion of kinship solidarity." Marriage could be contracted through a religious ordinance or court, or a traditional marriage. In some cases, some couples engage in the three forms of marriage while some adopt one or two of the forms.

The marriage institution in Igbo land is viewed as a very important one in the life of typical Igbo people. Adebayo (1996:45) describes marriage in her discussion of the situation of African women in African traditional context, as "a means of self-definition for women." In Igbo society, unmarried ladies regret their lives and strive hard to get married because to be unmarried in Igbo land means to be stigmatised, unrecognised, insulted, disrespected and overlooked. To be married then means acquisition of identity as the wife of Mr., Doctor, Engineer, Pastor or Chief "so so so". To be married also means assurance of care from a man and a disposal of freedom and acceptance of enslavement as all aspects of the woman's freedom are reshaped to suit the husband's.

Despite the horror that Igbo women face in marriage, marriage is the most greatly desired state of being for most Igbo young girls and other girls from other parts of Africa. In the olden days and even until now, there is nothing that bestows as much status and social worth on a woman as marriage. In fact, her worth lies in marriage as the female's worth in such a society is predicted on male interests. Marriage in Igbo society is a fulfilling act, which is very necessary as the result is procreation. A fruitful marriage bestows honour, recognition and identity on Igbo females. In most cases, the female's name is abandoned for an identity, which identifies her as "*mama...or nne... and nwunye...*" (The mother of ...and the wife of...). This was why Chukwuma (1994:80) stresses that "The beauty of a woman is to be married, but the ultimate aim of marriage is procreation. It behoves a woman to have a child in marriage because motherhood is her greatest fulfilment and her assurance at old age." The Igbo marry compulsorily for the fear of their care in old age. Igbo men and women always look forward to marriage as it is often rewarded

with procreation and to them; procreation is a sure security for well-lived old age. This is because they believe that, according to Amadiume (1987:80), "... after you look after the child, the child will look after you". The Igbo also believe that any man or woman who is of marriageable age and he or she is not married must be an irresponsible man or girl (*ofeke*). They have a view that "*nwaanyi dika fulawa na-achake n'utu ma Chanwu na mgbede*" (That women are like flowers that blossom in the morning and shrink and die off in the evening)" This similar proverb means that women's life is very fragile. They look so succulent and attractive at younger age and old and haggard at later age. For this reason, many Igbo parents want their children to get married at young age when men still admire them rather than at old age when they will no longer be attractive. The Igbo have a saying that "...*agboghọ zacha anye muru, o zawa onye na-alu? Agboghọ mejuru, o tinye ike na ntu*" (A lady first is addressed as whose daughter is this and later she is addressed as whose wife? When a female reaches full maturity, she deeps her buttocks into ashes, meaning that she ends up in the kitchen where she encounters ashes as the family cook). This proverb is common in Igbo land to confirm the compulsoriness of marriage to Igbo women and the fact that no matter their level of wealth, education, or political position, their highest achievement is to be cooks in the kitchen where they will encounter ashes. Ashes, because the local kitchen only uses local pot stand and firewood which after burning gives way to ashes.

In marriage, the Igbo woman leaves her father's house to that of her husband's. This is why in J.C. Maduekwe's *Uru Nwa*, women are called "*onye mba ozo*" pg. 5 (somebody who belongs to another town) while the males are called "*onye agbataobi anyi*" pg 5 (our neighbour). In doing so, she abandons all her parents' property for her male siblings except for the marriage gifts, which her parents would give her. The Igbo believe that "*oke nwaanyi bu na be di ya*" (A woman only has her share in her husband's home). This means that women should not inherit property from their father's house but in their husband's house. In the husband's house, she surrenders all her life possessions to her husband. The submission of women's income and property to their husband's is to fulfil the Igbo culture which states that "*nwaanyi bu aku di ya*" (a woman is her husband's possession or wealth) because a woman's wealth belongs to her husband not her ("*aku nwaayi kpara bu nke di ya*"). A woman only has access to her husband's possessions if she has a male child for him. If not, when her husband dies, his brothers inherit all his property including his wife. Where



the man has no brothers, she loses them to any male closest to her husband who is traced through their ancestral family tree.

Her permanent occupancy of the man's house also lies in whether she has a male child for the man or not. Without a male child, an Igbo woman is empty in marriage and her position as a wife is quite shaky as the husband might decide to throw her out or remarry at anytime. In Igbo society, a male child is needed for the continuation of a family tree. Therefore, every Igbo wife struggles to have at least one male child for her husband. A woman who does not have a male child is regarded as a barren. Ahudiya, in Maduekwe's *Uru Nwa*, comments that though she has two female children and no male child for her husband, that her occupancy of Wogu's house as his wife is still very doubtful. She says "*Nwanyị imuta nwa nwoke bu ya ideba aha ya na nkume na-adi ndudugandu*" p 13 (For a woman to bear a baby boy in this world means to register her name on a stone that lasts forever) meaning that her ability to bear a son gives her a permanent occupancy of her husband's home for ever.

If a married woman bears only female children, her position remains the same as that of a barren because she will have no share in her husband's property. It is so because female children are not allowed by tradition to inherit their father's property. This is why families that produce female issues are regarded as "families without a future" (Nweke 2003:148). For the obvious reasons of inheritance, headship and maintenance of family names, many families that lack male children have experienced disunity, anarchy, and confusion. The wives in such homes are denied some of their rights. As a barren, her case is worsened. Women who are married but have no children are stigmatised as women who are either possessed by the witchcraft spirit (*amusu*) or the water spirit (*mamiwota* or *mmoụ mmiri*). Some are said to be possessed of the *ogbanje* spirit (changeling). Even when there has been tests conducted which confirm the impotency of a male partner in a marriage, the Igbo society never accepts such tests, rather they blame it all on the wife of the sterile man.

A married Igbo woman has a cultural responsibility as her husband's property to always do things that pleases her owner (her husband). Practically, the change in a girl newly married is displayed on her dressing. She now graduates from tying single wrappers as a single girl to tying double wrappers all in the bid to make sure that she does not expose her body to another man. On top of the two wrappers, she puts on a blouse. She does not dress carelessly and does not dress to attract any more. She dresses according to what her husband can afford and what he wants her to wear. She

now moves with only the friends accepted by her husband. Her activities are closely monitored and controlled by her husband and members of his family. Her life pattern now rotates around the dos and the don'ts of her husband and members of her husband's family.

Some of her activities that are regulated include her restrictions from visiting her home. Some Igbo men refuse their wives access to interactions with their (wife's) relatives especially the rich men who happen to marry their wives from poor families. Some of them make sure that their wives do not cater for their parents because they would not want their wealth to be transferred to their in-laws. In this case, their wives movements are kept under close monitoring. Some also do not allow their wives freedom of association. Some do not allow their wives to join any women group or other social associations. Such men do not want their wives to move closely to women who are exposed so that their wives would remain ever naive, obedient and subordinate to them. It is because of the reasons above and many more that Adebayo (1996:45) opines that "the institution of marriage has been and still remains the greatest enslaving factor in West African Women's experience".

The Pre-literate and the modern Igbo society are marked for its clear definition of sex roles in the family. The man is the head of the family (Murdock 1949 Young and Wilmott 1957, Parsons 1959, Morgan 1975, and 1996, Ogbalu 1981, and Kirby et al 1997:25). A man's status or role as a male is sacred and supreme (Acholonu 1994:38). No man or woman questions his controlling roles in his own home, not even his father, though, he can advise him. The female on the other hand, is comparatively subordinated to an inferior secondary position. This is why there is an Igbo saying that "*o haghiri nwoke na nwaanyi ka nwaanyi ahala, o ga-anoriri n'okpuru nwoke*" (Men and women are never equal, no matter the height or class of a woman; she must be under a man). She takes orders from the man without complaint to the extent that men's domineering influence over the female is institutionalised to assure continuity from generation to generation. Any one who frowns at the supreme nature of Igbo men is condemned as one whom instead of perpetuating '*Omenaala*' (culture) is propagating '*Omeneelu*' (abomination or sacrilege). Meanwhile, though a husband exercises such numerous powers over his wife, she has no control over her husband's life and movements. Rich 1976:78, Russell 1996:205, Hartman (1997:103), Opara (1999:153) and Nnonyelu (2003:51) call a society like that of Igbo land a patriarchal society. Such a society is noted for male dominance, which is not due to

the superior physical strength or any special intellectual powers but are due to the biological constitution of women. They remarked that "the crucial elements of patriarchy are heterosexual marriage, female childbearing, home work, and women's economic dependence on men..." It is mainly the dependent nature of women and child bearing in patriarchal societies that enchain women to sub-servient status in marriage. According to Firestone (1971) and Mitchel (1973), frequent pregnancy and continuous caring for infants by women in marriage, make such women dependent on males for material provision as they find themselves incapacitated during pregnancy and child raising.

It is for reasons as above that De-Beaviour (1976) remarks that marriage incites man to capricious imperialism with the temptation to dominate the wife being the most universal and most irresistible characteristic. He also asserts that marriage promotes tyranny because it surrenders the child to its mother and as well surrenders the wife to her husband. Marriage then to Igbo women is like Duncker (1992:266) describes it as "giving way, giving up and giving in." Any Igbo woman who does not give way to her husband's decision and those of his relatives or give up her plans for life for her marriage to go on or give in to her husband's domination is in fact unmarriageable. She is soon thrown out of marriage as *nwoke nwaanyi*, *nwaanyi na-achi di ya* (man woman, a woman who controls her husband). Already, such characteristics are enough stigmas to attract hatred from the society to the woman. This is why marriage in Igbo land is seen as a major constraint on the full self-realisation of Igbo women. For the same reason too, Breen (1990:42) in her description of marriage as it applies to all women, opines that "the woman becomes the annexation of her husband and her career, if she has any, gets annihilated." Onuegbu (2003a:4) stresses that marriage, to both the Igbo illiterate and literate women, is "a sort of imprisonment both spiritually and physically," Frank (1984:14) also opines, "Slavery is ....the inherent condition of African women." The Igbo married women whether educated or uneducated are like Ramatoulaye in Ba (1980:5) who

Sacrifices her possessions as gifts to her family in-laws, and worse still, beyond her possessions she gives up her personality, her dignity becoming a thing in the service of the man who has married her, his grandfather, his grandmother, his father, his mother, his brother, his sister, his uncle, his aunt, his male and female cousins, and his friends. Her behaviour is conditioned. (Ba 1980:5).

An Igbo girl's behaviour change as soon as she is married to the behaviour of "nwaanyi alu alu" (married woman). Other common Igbo sayings that portray the expectations of the society on a married Igbo woman are: "Kpaa agwa ka nwaanyi" (behave like a woman), "Kwuo okwu ka nwaanyi" (talk like a woman), *noro ala ka nwaanyi* (sit down like a woman), "Aka enwerela ya" Aka ji ya" (She is owned by somebody meaning that she is married). All these sayings reflect the expectations of a married Igbo woman. She is expected to be voiceless, quiet, very easy, non-complaining or aggressive and non-challenging in marriage. She should not exhibit any bravery in her speeches and should not talk carelessly.

Onuegbu (2005: 31-43) comments that traditionally, Igbo married women's share of domestic work in the family is highly excessive compared to those of men. Igbo women both traditional and modern are overloaded with great family responsibilities. While describing the enormosity of the Igbo women's domestic burden, Onuegbu (2003a:64) explicates that Igbo women

...carry much burden on the domestic level. They bear children, rear children, cook for the family, clean, and sweep the home, the compound, and even the market and village squares, they wash clothing for their husbands, children, and themselves, and they nurse their husbands and children. They also participate in farm work. Some add white-collar jobs and other jobs to these functions. All these daily routine duties do not allow the Igbo women enough time to actualize themselves or fully be self-fulfilled.

The Igbo married women's domestic burden is also likened to those borne by Kiki a young heroine in Mkhomza (1988:6-7) whose sufferings are referred to as the jeopardy of the over burdened women as follows:

On their heads they carry heavy burdens of firewood, and clay pot... on their backs they carry babies and their front carries the load of man in procreation their hearts heavy with burdens of sorrow. All these are because their worth is measured in terms of the number of burdens they can carry. Even beasts have an easier task (Mkhomza 1988: 6 -7) .

The women are used as beasts of burden may be because beasts of burden like donkeys and camels are non-existent in Igbo society. A male yam farmer after harvesting his yam packs up to thirty or more tubers of yam into a basket and his wife carries the basket home. On the other hand, the man who may be her husband or her

father follows her behind carrying only two tubers of yam tied together and probably a machet. In the rural areas, it is mainly women and young males that go to fetch firewood and water. In the same setting, women carry palm wine, yam tubers, cassava, vegetable to the market for sale. With these entire problems, Dangarembga (1988:16) noting a similar situation in the life of Zimbabwean women, highlights that

This business of womanhood is a heavy burden. How could it not be? Aren't we the ones that bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that... when there are sacrifices to be made (p. 16).

The life of typical Igbo married women is full of sacrifices. She rarely has time for serious economic, educational, social, political, and academic engagements (Onuegbu 2005:31-43). Those who are engaged in any gainful employment, educational career, or private business find it difficult to give enough attention to their jobs. They certainly must satisfy the needs of both their immediate nuclear families and those of their extended families; taking care of in-laws especially father and mother in-laws. This is why the Igbo say that "*Ofu onye adighi alu nwaanyi*" (A wife does not belong to only one person). This means that a woman is married to satisfy the needs of her husband's people and not her husband, alone and that the husband's relatives should also care for her when the need arises). Currently, with educational and economic emancipation, many modern Igbo women now transcend this chain of captivity in marriage. There are now some married Igbo women who occupy important positions in the Nigerian society. See Feminism in Nigerian Society and Feminism in Igbo society in this chapter.

#### 2.1.5 **Igbo Women: Early and Forceful Marriage**

Egbue (2003:17) is of the opinion that about 20% of Nigerian girls, including Igbo girls, marry early, before the age of 18 years. Legally, in most societies, adulthood begins at between 18 and 21 years, when a girl or a boy is deemed mature and responsible for his or her actions. When a girl gets married before 18 years, the marriage is regarded as early marriage, irrespective of the age of the spouse. In Igbo society of today, as a result of traditional practices, parents, especially those in the lower income groups, still see early marriage as a "viable alternative to the education of their girl children" (Ndulue 1995:51-59). Early marriage is a social problem identified mainly among the Hausa, Tiv and the Igbo of Nigeria, to mention a few. It

has been a problem that has bothered social scientists as well as those in the medical field for decades. According to Fathalla (1994:260), early marriage has adverse effects not only on the quality of life of the young girl involved, but also on those infants born to them. In Igbo land, just like Egbue (2003:91) observes, many African male spouses are usually many years older than their female spouses. He observes too that, in Igbo land, a spouse of an average sixteen-year-old bride would usually be within the age range of between thirty and thirty-five years, if the marriage is the first one for both of the spouses. He adds that a girl who is below eighteen years is quite often married as second or third or tenth wife to a "wealthy", and at times, "semi wealthy" man of between the ages of forty to sixty years. In some cases, some of the girls to be married are forced by their parents to marry spouses of the parents' choice due to some selfish reasons. An example of such a marriage, as depicted in the Igbo home video, is Ola.....*the morning sun* by Nwafor Anayo (2005).

Some parents who give out their tender daughters for marriage do it out of greed, need, or poverty. In some cases, like in a town called Umulumgbe, in Udi North Local Government Area of Enugu State, these daughters are exchanged for money which their parents borrowed from rich people. Again, early marriage could be as a result of an old Igbo traditional practice, which is called '*Ido Oku nwa*' (betrothal of a newly born baby girl to a male child). It is also a type of forced marriage.

Whichever way, the disadvantages of early marriage to the girl child are numerous. They include, among other things, the female child's inability to express her views and opinions because she is afraid of addressing an elderly husband, imposition of sex on the girl who may be inexperienced, lack of maternal experiences, which, most often, endanger the lives of their children, stunted growth of mothers due to early child bearing. According to Tinker *et al* (1994:4-6), women who marry early, suffer vesico vaginal fistula (VVF) a vaginary organ malady associated with early female sexual activity. Such women also have less aspiration for their lives because they feel they are too old to go back to school after the years they have spent in marriage. As a result, they remain inexperienced and timid. These qualities make them to be relegated to the lower socio-economic ladder. Their children also have less aspiration in life because their mothers have not much to offer them as regards life and how to achieve success in life (Ainsworth 1995:3-5). According to Chukwudebelu and Ozumba (1987:368) and Phoenix (1994:218), girls who marry

early tend to be more economically dependent on the already poor male breadwinners or rich men who may have many wives and children to attend to and may not have enough for their care. Furthermore, such girls who marry early lose their chances of furthering their education while married because they tend to bear more children and care for them (Ainsworth 1995:3-5).

Another disadvantage of early marriage is increased population. According to experts, the reproductive organs of such girls are still tender and very active. This enables them to reproduce easily. Girls in a country like Nigeria with a recent estimated population growth rate of 2.54 million (Egbue 2003:76) need not be required to marry early and have children before the age of 21 years. As a matter of fact, according to Evans (1979:218), mothers are supposed to be "indisputable adults" who are aware of birth control measures and who can take proper care of the training and general care of their babies without exposing themselves and their babies to health hazards. Graham-Smith (1996:260) is of the opinion that children born to teenage mothers in early marriage, especially mothers less than 18 years, experience considerable excess mortality before the age of five. This means that, just like many more children are born in such marriages, many more die but at least a great number of them survive infant mortality (Egbue 2003:76-78).

The above discussion leads us to a case in the Mbaize Local Government Area of Imo State and some parts of Enugu State (Ngwo) where women who give birth to up to ten or more children are being celebrated by the performance of a traditional rite called *Igbu Ewu Ukwu* (a traditional ceremony to thank God for granting a woman numerous children). This ceremony is celebrated whether the parents have actually cared for the children and trained them to be responsible individuals or not. All that interests the people involved is the number of children born. Women of such parts of Igbo society strive to live up to the expectation. Some of them die in the process while very few are lucky to get up to the number of children required in good health. A fact about these women is that they are non-literate and poor but they procreate prolifically. Some of them are involved in unbooked maternity cases because they do not know the importance of antenatal care. Some who are aware do not have the financial means to attend clinics. As a result of their ignorance and lack of funds, they die during or before labour. Chukwudebelu and Ozumba (1987:368) attribute unbooked maternity cases and its attendant high patient mortality to illiteracy and poor economic status.

Early marriage, as we could see, is one of the strongest manifestations of the denial of human rights to Igbo women even in this modern society. It is deadly and relegates women to a servile position in life. It is also one of the major causes of the wife beating, and some divorce cases in Igbo land (Egbue 2003:274). In this same society too, a similar case of early marriage is the marriage of morally loose girl children who happen to be impregnated by unknown men who may be about the ages of 50 and above and who are either childless in their first marriage or lack male child. An example is dramatised in *Indecent Desire* (a home video) between Ụkachi and an old man who asks for her hand in marriage so that he can father her unborn baby whom her husband's people reject. The Igbo people do this so that the unborn child will be given a descent treatment and will not be a bastard without a paternal home. Such females sometimes suffer greatly in life. Some are infected with venereal diseases, while the education and hope for a better future of some are hampered. In many cases, because such male spouses are really old men, they die early in the marriage leaving their wives and children to fend for themselves in the midst of polygamy and the accompanying hatred and struggle which translates to the survival of the fittest.

#### 2.1.6 Prohibitions and Gender Role-Stereotypes in Igbo Land

In Igbo society, the code of conduct appropriate for each sphere is defined and each individual is expected to abide by it. For instance, according to Schuler *et al* (1998) "patriarchy demands that any articulation of the central problem of male power that confronts women should remain invisible and unreal." In Igbo society, men are expected to be educated, rich, aggressive, providing, independent, hard working, controlling, rational and assertive. On the other hand, females are expected to be weak, submissive to men, dependent on men, obedient to men, passive, emotional, caring, voiceless, experienced domestically, reproductive and unexposed to some aspects of life experience that will emancipate them or empower them. In this society, gender roles are stereotyped such that from childhood, Igbo male and female children are given a stereotyped training to imbibe these societal expectations. According to Undengwu (2000:3), the Igbo females are indoctrinated.

From birth she is conditioned and shaped to fill and fit the concept of femininity...Femininity becomes synonymous with passivity, apathy, docility unassertiveness, physical



weakness, fragility, subservience, inferiority, dependence, un-expressiveness, and obscurity e.t.c

A good woman in Igbo society must possess all the qualities above or she faces condemnation and rejection. She must abide by them sheepishly even when they are contrary to her nature; she may even be aware that the characteristics attributed to her are false. She is afraid to assert her right in the society. She then bears her cross silently well in order to avoid persecution. This humiliating condition remains engraved as a permanent and God-given burden in the minds of Igbo women. It is stamped with indelible ink in their psyche through so many social agents and any contrary move against their stereotyped life is frowned at by men and even women like themselves. They would normally comment that "*O bughj ka nne nne anyi na nna nna anyi, si eme ya, aru!*" (It is not the way our mothers and our fore-fathers did it, abomination). This is why Bem, in his discussion of the nature of human beings in the American culture, laments that in the American culture,

... We are socialized in such a way that it becomes difficult for us to imagine a woman going out to work as a truck driver or a custodian while her husband stays at home taking care of the kids, mending socks and cleaning the house (1970:51).

The Igbo society is more like the American society discussed above. For a man to carry out duties contrary to those listed above attracts a societal stigma. For instance, it is not normal for an Igbo man to do domestic chores like sweeping the house, washing clothes, cooking, fetching water from the stream or fetching fire wood. It is also not normal for a woman to oppose her husband's ideas or commands whether they are right or wrong. Besides, she is not expected to lead where men are present, whether the men are responsible or not.

Alonge (1998:3-4), a renowned Catholic Bishop, commenting on the gender inequality experienced by Nigerian women, observes that the criteria for the division of labour between the sexes in Nigerian society and consequently the feminine role seem arbitrarily based "on local customs and traditions, rather than on differences between men and women in terms of physical or mental capacities." He explains that men and women are biologically different though they are not mutually exclusive alternatives but are "combinations of traits unevenly distributed among individuals of other sex." These claims are right because, in Igbo land, there are a lot of activities and food items that women are traditionally prohibited to do and eat, respectively.

There are so many activities too that men are not expected to do. The reasons behind such prohibitions are not based on the women's physical incapability of carrying out such activities or that such food items are harmful to women but because the Igbo societal customs and traditions have prohibited women from such activities due to some erroneous superstitious beliefs. For instance, women are not to tap wine, climb cola-nut trees, smite or beat traditional drums, cut palm nuts, or, in some parts of Igbo land, be chief priestesses and priestesses of oracles and deities.

Agelong observations prove that both sexes can do well in the activities and professions that they are culturally prohibited from partaking in. For instance, widows of these days can perfectly harvest their late husbands' cola-nuts in the absence of male helpers, but this was an abomination some years past. There are many good male cooks these days. In fact, a man won the National Maggi Cooking Competition of 2003, but the Igbo tradition dictates that cooking is a reserve for women. On the other hand, the Igbo believe that women should not eat snake, because snake is a poisonous animal, which can make the teeth of the eater to be poisonous too. It is because women fight a lot and bite one another during fighting, that they are prohibited from eating snakes so that they would not transfer the snake poison, which could have been stored up in their teeth after eating snake to other people when fighting. Now that only men eat snake, some of such men have fought people and bitten them and did not transfer any snake poison to their victims.

Women are also prohibited from eating bat and grass-cutter, because of the assumption that women are child bearers. To the Igbo, a pregnant woman who eats a bat might bear a child as ugly as a bat (a bat is a symbol of ugliness in Igbo society). Again, since the grass-cutter has prolonged labour, it is believed that a pregnant woman who eats a grass-cutter will certainly have prolonged labour. These assumptions have no scientific backing. Some pregnant women have eaten grass-cutters and never had any prolonged labour.

All these are prohibitions, which are man made, gender stereotyping, which are mostly due to superstitious beliefs of the Igbo, the domineering nature of Igbo males and the subservient nature they ascribe to Igbo females. Some of such prohibitions at times too have been found to be aimed at protecting the Igbo females, which according to the Igbo world-view, are the weaker sex. It is for reasons like this that Wykoff (1977:174-195), Leacock (1978), Zanden (1990:233-243), and Polk (1994:431), agree that women subjection is made and imposed by society not as a

result of innate efficiencies in women physiological or psychological make-up. These gender constraints have existed and operated for a very long duration. As Oakley (1974:20-25) observes, "Some of them have become entrenched in societies as normal, being deeply embedded in culture." Egbue (2003:70) also opines that such subjugate conditions of women have since generated allied societal structures which over time have emerged to support and sustain them. It is a difficult task currently to persuade Igbo women to do most of the things that culture demands that they abhor whether science has proved them negatively or not. Therefore, the dismantling of these entrenched patterns and practices according to Egbue, requires well-planned and sustained action.

Alonge (1998:3-4) also highlights the effects of gender stereotyping and prohibitions on Nigerian women. He claims that, despite the French Revolution of 1889, which emphasises liberty and equality of human rights, coupled with the Industrial Revolution, which liberated women and children and made it possible for them to work in factories and be exposed to good education and specialised training which are great liberators of women, it is still much more difficult for Nigerian women than for men to

reach high-level positions.... the rights of women have not been recognized, as they should have been in our society. Arguments of culture, traditional heritage, and religion have often been evoked to deny women a life of dignity. (p4).

In Nigeria, and Africa in general, as a child grows, he or she is trained and indoctrinated to live up to the societal expectation, which is gender stereotyped (Richards 1992:14). When a woman is seen to be highly elevated in the society in any field not typical of women in Igbo society, such a woman is stigmatised and looked down upon.

In Igbo society, women are not expected to outshine their husbands. They are expected to be dependent on their husbands and their children. Chukwuma (1994:24) cites some songs which depict Igbo worldview of womanhood, including the following:

*Di m elekwala m anya ego  
Elekwala m anya ego  
O nwa wu ihe m biara imu  
Elekwala Anya ego*

My husband does not expect money  
from me.

I have come to give birth to children  
Do not expect money from me.

As a result of this belief, the Igbo women of old did not deem it necessary to seek for their own means of livelihood. The highest job they did was to assist their husbands in subsistent farming. They relied solely on what their husbands and children could provide for them. This is why one of their natal songs goes this way:

<i>O burọ ma nwa</i>		<i>If not for children's sake</i>
<i>Onye ga-enye m</i>	<i>(chorus)</i>	<i>Who will give me</i>
<i>O burọ ma nwa</i>		<i>If not for children's sake</i>
<i>Onye ga-enye m</i>	<i>(chorus)</i>	<i>Who will give me</i>
<i>Ukwu jioji!</i>		<i>George wrapper!</i>
<i>Onye ga-enye m</i>	<i>(chorus)</i>	<i>Who will give me</i>
<i>Ichafu isi!</i>		<i>Headgear!</i>
<i>Onye ga-enye m</i>	<i>(chorus)</i>	<i>Who will give me</i>
<i>Iyeri nti!</i>		<i>Earring!</i>
<i>Onye ga-enye m</i>	<i>(chorus)</i>	<i>Who will give me</i>
<i>Okporoko!</i>		<i>Stockfish</i>
<i>Onye ga-enye m</i>	<i>(chorus)</i>	<i>Who will give me</i>
<i>Akpa raisi!</i>		<i>Bag of rice!</i>
<i>Onye ga-enye m</i>	<i>(chorus)</i>	<i>Who will give me</i>

To a typical traditional Igbo woman of years past, there was no need for them to look for jobs outside their homes. Even at present, many of them are exposed by the hard Nigerian economy to help their husband's by looking for a better livelihood in many fields of labour. In the olden days, they were all dependent on their husbands for their upkeep, especially as they bore children for them. To them, the ability to bear children gives them access to the good things of life: good feeding, good dressing and general happiness. This is why every Igbo mother makes sure that her husband buys her a new headgear, blouse, wrapper, wristwatch, and shoes, after the birth of each baby. A man may not have bought his wife any new thing for years but he must fulfil this obligation any time his wife bears a new baby. For this reason, Igbo women strive to bear more children, because, to the Igbo people, "Mma nwaanyi bu nwa" (the beauty of a woman is her ability to bear children). As they bear more children, they are confined more to the home, as they would have to take care of the children born while their husbands cater for them according to their capability.

As a result of the prestige Igbo men gain from the high dependency of their wives on them, some of them especially the illiterates and semi-illiterates make sure that their wives are forever depending on them financially. Moreover, the Igbo culture agrees that “*nwaanyi lelie di ya ike akpoo ya nku*” (If a woman disrespects or neglects her husband, her buttocks will dry up meaning that she will lack the care and body maintenance from her husband). Some Igbo men therefore ensure that their wives:

- (i) are not richer than they are;
- (ii) are involved in a better job than they do (except few who have shown understanding ) and
- (iii) do not earn much money that will empower them financially.

Following the above cultural barriers to women financial empowerment, one discovers that many Igbo women are living in abject poverty while those who earn a living are not giving a full opportunity to utilise their hard-earned money as they wish. This is why the Igbo say that “*ego nwaanyi, dika ogbenje e jighi ya aba uru* (women’s money is like a changeling, it never can solve any problem).

These days, the situation has changed. Some women who have experienced the hardship of obeying Igbo cultural rules especially as it regards financial matters and marriage have broken the rule. The result of this is that many Igbo women are now richer than their husbands, some even provide for their husbands and children. Some Igbo men, due to the changing economy of Nigeria and the general development and civilisation in the Nigerian nation, now allow their wives freedom to be self-actualised. This is why Nigerians, especially the Igbo people can now boast of women like Prof. Dora Akunyili as the Former Director-General, National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the current Minister of Information and Communications, a woman that will ever remain in the history of Nigeria for the important roles she played in the eradication of fake drugs in Nigeria, Dr. Okonjo-Iweala (Former Minister of Finance, Former External Affairs Minister and a Managing Director, World Bank), Mrs. Chinwe Obaji ( Former Minister of Education), Dr. Obiagili Ezekwesili (Director General Budget Control and Due Process and the World Bank Vice Chairman Representing Africa), Dr. Kema Chikwe (Former Minister of Aviation), Prof. Ebere Maduewesi (Executive Director, National Educational Research and Development Centre) and Dr. Okoli (The Chairman/Chief Executive, Emzor Pharmaceutical Company). Women of such status are very few in Igbo land. This is because Igbo women are highly culturally subjugated. If not for this,

more Igbo women would have been highly placed in Nigeria as many Igbo women are intelligent and hard working.

Ezeh (2003:94) argues that ethnographic accounts arising from participant observation of Igbo communities, whether conducted by foreign or indigenous scholars, female or male researchers, report equitable gender relations of the kind that are not common in other societies known to anthropologists. He (2003:94) observes that some ethnographers found a system that was structured in favour of women. More recent ethnographers continue to confirm equitability of gender relations, which outside other social relations is also illustrated in the structure of the Igbo language. He illustrates the equitability of Igbo men and women by the fact that the Igbo language does not differentiate between the pronouns 'he' and 'she'. It is always *O* or *o* for both male and female, depending on the Igbo language vowel harmony rule. At this juncture, if one must agree that there is gender equality in the Igbo societal structure, one may want to ask Ezeh and his fellow ethnographers the following questions: Why is it that Igbo women cannot rule in Igbo society? Why have women no equal access to landed property in Igbo land with men? Why do the Igbo believe that "*ala nwaanyi, na-achi, ala ahụ emebiela*" (any land being ruled by a woman is already ruined). Why are women generally not allowed into the Igbo secret societies like the *Okonko*? (Nwaubani 1986: 51-59). Why women are not allowed into the *Odo* and *Omabe* masquerade societies? Why are there no female chief priestesses, kings, and traditional chiefs, *ozọ* and *nze* title holders?

Also in support of Ezeh's opinion above are some ethnographers, which include Green (1947), Meek (1957), Leith-Ross (1965:6), Uchendu (1965), Ottenberg (1965:1-39), Ottenberg (1968:105-106), Lewis (1969:102), Lampher (1971), Lord Lugard cited in Nsugbe (1974), Amadiume (1987), and Ezeh (2003: 96), who opine that Igbo women, of all women in the world, have gender equitability. Leith-Ross (1965:6) further adds that Igbo women are ambitious, courageous, self-reliant, hardworking and independent. These ethnographers agree that Igbo women affect and contribute to important decision-making affecting the Igbo society. The observations of the above researchers may be right in those days, as their works are dated from 1940's to early 1970's. This could be verified from Lord Lugard's observation in the early 1930's where he was worried about the acculturation that was beginning to erode those Igbo autochthonous practices as a result of contact with Christianity and European rule. Lugard was very observant to have referred to the Igbo who were then

converted to Christianity as "Europeanised Africans" in 1938. This means that if according to ethnographic reports of the early Igbo, Igbo women were not subjugated, then the problem of Igbo women of these days may have been as a result of "a syncretic admixture of Christian European practices and some veneer of Igbo culture" (Ezeh 2003:96). In some remote Igbo communities, males are still seen harking firewood, pounding cassava and yam for their wives unlike the case in many urban towns in Igbo land. It seems civilisation; Christianity and education have really torn a greater part of Igbo culture apart. It has actually worsened the unequal sharing of roles among men and women that, these days, women bear more responsibilities in the home than men. The present situation of women in Nigeria, contributed to the present nursery rhyme in Nigeria, which goes this way:

Willy, Willy, Willy, Willy, star  
Mummy in the kitchen cooking rice  
Daddy in the parlour watching film  
Children in the garden playing football  
A goal....  
(A Nursery Rhyme used in Nigeria).

The modern Igbo men are worse than the traditional Igbo men of the pre-literate Igbo society. The Igbo of the pre-literate period observed the shared roles tenaciously, especially with respect to the care and protection of their wives and children. Those pre-literate years according to Acholonu (1994:38), had shared stereotyped roles; the status of the man, the head of the family, was sacred and supreme but he kept his obligations as the father of a home. These days men's domineering influence over the female is institutionalised and is threatening the female's image that is completely subjugated to an insubordinate status of subservience.

As we could see from the works of Folasade (2000), Nwankwo (2000) and Okunna (2000), it is obvious that there is hope for Igbo women. Economically, the Igbo women of today are better than what they were decades ago, though so many of them in the rural areas are yet to be emancipated. Majority of them are their husband's assistants in subsistent farming, so many are petty traders, hawkers, business women, shop attendants in their husbands shops, white-collar job workers, owners of food canteens and mini-restaurants, and manageresses of hotels or catering services. Many of them are also seamstresses and hairdressers.

### 2.1.7 Violence Against Igbo Women

Violence against women is an age-long phenomenon, which is described by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China Platform for Action (1995:73) as

Any act of gender – based violence, that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering of women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

Robey (2000), giving a world population report on violence against women, asserts that

Around the world at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Most often the abuser is a member of her own family. Increasingly, gender-based violence is recognized as a major public health concern and a violation of human rights.

Violence against women, as explained above, is the most pervasive yet least recognised human rights abuse in the world. For some years now, women advocacy groups around the world have organised various movements to curb violence against women and the recent one being the call for gender equality and poverty amelioration. Violence against women has long been a global menace and has been one of the major constraints to the world's general development (Carrillo 1992). It is an established fact that women have been globally oppressed literarily, educationally, politically, economically, socially, religiously, culturally, maritally, sexually, and physically, depending on the culture and the religion of the part of the world in question (Bem 1970:51, Artsenuwa 1995, Crowell and Burgess 1996, Heise, 1996, and 1998; Schular et al 1998, and Okoye 1999). Kaufman rightly opines that “the No 1 killer of women between the ages of 16 and 40 is violence....” (Andrews and Udoh 2005:1). According to Alonge (1998:3-4, Igube Restituta 2000:511-532; Chukwuma, and Osarenren 2001, Okey et al 2006:294-304; Ekanem and Tambi 2006:305-318, Akinbulumo 2006:395, Aliiyu and Onabajo 2006:500-509), African women, including the Igbo women, experience many types of violence both from the patriarchal culture and man, who is the major initiator. According to the *World Book Record*, much of the third world women are considered “as effectively property and have no legal rights in practice, millions of women undergo female circumcision, a form of genital



mutilation". (<http://wyw2.worldbook.com/features/whw/htm/whm010.html>). The above descriptions by the World Book Record of the third world women appropriately fits the case of Nigerian women in general, and Igbo women, in particular.

Alonge (1998:4) and Tehemba (2005) observe that African women are victims of many kinds of violence even in the "twentieth century." Igbo women are not left out in the patriarchal subjugation of women and such oppressions are portrayed in some Igbo literature and other fields of life. Nigerian women still experience violence which includes the following forms of suppressions

Economic, social and political discriminations, sexual harassment, rape, wife murder, polygamy, widowhood traditions, sexual assault, female infanticide, female circumcision, inheritance unfavourable to women, slave labour, assault and wife battering, non-recognition in political matters and ownership of property  
(Alonge, 1998:4).

In Igbo land, male youths can harass female youths sexually or even rape them and go scot-free. The Igbo culture has none or very loose, punitive measures for such offence. Rather, they see it as an achievement for the males who, by so doing, prove their manhood. This is why in some higher institutions in Igbo land, male students, male lecturers and even other male workers harass female students sexually and go unpunished. Instead, the females are blamed for making themselves loose before men. In a typical Igbo society, widows face several sexual harassments from their male admirers and their husbands siblings, who impose themselves on such women based on the Igbo traditional law of inheritance. Most often, such men, when rejected, pose a threat to the woman's life and her children's. An example is that portrayed in the film *Dangerous Oracle* by Emex Movies. In this film, Chinasa, a widow is wooed by Uzodike, her husband's brother, Solomon (the women charmer) and Titus (the church catechist). She rejects all the men. Her son Chidubem scares these men from coming to her mother. Titus, in the bid to kill Chidubem, kills Nnamdi, Chidubem's younger brother, by planting poison on their doorsteps. Another example is the maltreatment and torture meted out to the widow in the Igbo home video *The cross I bear* by Okenwa (2006). The widow and her children are driven out of their home because her father-in-law erroneously suspects that she killed his son (her husband) through witchcraft. The community members erroneously accuse her daughter of being responsible for the death of her fiancé. They force her to take an oath in a shrine to

declare her innocence. Still not satisfied, they burn the thatched house built by the widow and her children. The widow eventually dies after falling sick because there is no money to care for her health. Her children are thrown to the street where they are tortured by the wickedness of man.

In a situation whereby an unmarried lady is impregnated by her male lover in Igbo society, in many cases, such males deny them and refuse to take up responsibilities for the ladies and the unborn babies. In cases like this, the Igbo society turns against the lady only. She is stigmatised as an irresponsible and immoral person, a child whom the mother did not give a proper training, and a spoilt child. They disgrace her publicly. In some cases, children sing satirical songs following her anywhere she goes. Adults make indirect negative comments about her and her mother who is blamed for not having played her role as a good mother by giving her a good upbringing. On the other hand, the same society is less concerned about the male responsible for her pregnancy. Even when people know, nobody bothers to query his actions. Rather rumours may just carry the name of the male responsible for a pregnancy. In most cases, the males concerned deny such girls. A practice which is quite humiliating and embarrassing is that which the people of Umulumbe, under Udi North Local Government Area of Enugu State refer to as '*Isa amu*' (the washing of a man's male organ). In this case, the male culprit agrees that he is responsible for the pregnancy but he declares his intentions not to either marry the lady or assume ownership of the unborn baby. Culture demands that such a male culprit should wash off his private parts with a little token of money that can not even feed the pregnant lady during the period of her pregnancy.

Another general practice of the Igbo which forms part of Alonge's discussion is the problems associated with unwanted pregnancy. In most cases, the male culprit pays off the parents of the girl with just a little token of money. The parents now give the pregnant lady in question to marriage, in many cases forcefully, to an old man whose wife has either died or was not able to bear him a male child or only bore him female children or may not have born him any issue. Such men are always in their fifties, sixties or more while the ladies are always inexperienced teenagers. A fact noteworthy here is that many of these unmarried pregnant ladies, having been aware of the probable humiliation awaiting them if people should know that they are pregnant, decide to abort the pregnancies. In most cases, they die in the process. Some of such ladies, who survived the trauma of abortion, remain barren for life because

maybe their wombs have been ruptured or are completely removed during the abortion. Some of such ladies too are lucky and are free from any negative aftermath. The few who decide to bear the babies and the associated pains have children who are not acceptable to the society. This is because they are seen and referred to as bastards even at old age in Igbo society and this stigma is passed on to their children and their generations to come. Unmarried ladies who bear children in their fathers' houses out of immorality find it difficult to get married later in life because men see them as second-hand women who are already defiled. During the period of pregnancy, their parents who feel that such daughters have dragged their family names in the mud abandon them. They are not properly clothed at least with enough maternity gowns. One would see them wear tight fitted gowns, skirts, and blouses instead of flowing gowns, which would accommodate the pregnancy.

This practice in Igbo land is quite unlike the Yoruba culture whereby a boy impregnates a girl and he is forced to marry her or bear responsibility over the child after birth or the child after growing to a certain age, is forcefully taken to the father and he is fully accepted as a member of his father's family. Again, Yoruba girls are not stigmatised like Igbo girls. This gives them the boldness to use pregnancy as a means of trapping their males into marrying them. When a man impregnates a Yoruba girl and rejects her, her parents accept her and help her out of the difficult situation. They encourage her to bear the child rather than abort it. This Yoruba attitude at least saves the lives of many young Yoruba ladies who could have died of abortion. It also saves the lives of innocent children who could have been aborted.

Another form of oppression which has engulfed the lives of some Igbo women discussed by Alonge (1998:4) is the act of wife murder and polygamy. Some Igbo men are ritualists. They believe in making money through diabolic means and through some ritual sacrifices. In many cases, the women are the ones to be sacrificed either as wives, girl friends/ female lovers, concubines or as daughters. In Igbo land, nobody and no law, queries such deaths. Even when people are aware of the course of the death, they frown at it but take no serious action against the culprit except for the relatives of the women who may not achieve much, as they may not have reasonable facts with which to make a legal case for justice. In the same society, when a man dies a natural death, the wife/wives is/are blamed for his death. The *Ụmụada* and her husband's siblings torture her whether she is innocent or guilty of his death. (Remember the case of Dr. Uche Azikiwe during the demise of Nnamdi Azikiwe

which formed interesting stories on the pages of Nigeria newspapers over her resistance of widowhood practices imposed on her by Nnamdi's family-daughters).

Kamla (1992:13-15) comments on the nature of women; citing Aristotle, she stresses that women are "mutilated male, someone who does not have a soul and who is biologically inferior." This is why, to Aristotle, "the courage of man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying." Igbo, a patriarchal society, allows males a lot of freedom, which the females can never, in the least, taste. A married man may marry several other wives and still practise concubinage but his wife is seen as having committed an abomination when she is involved in love with another man. Any married woman caught in the shameful act is punished severely by her husband, her fellow women (*ndi inyom*), and the daughters of her husband's family (*umuada*). Even the society itself denounces her actions, and she is called names such as *Ononadiachodi* (a married woman who indulges in adultery), and they stigmatise her. Some of the punitive measures meted out on a *Ononadiachodi* include stripping her naked publicly, sending her back to her parents, killing her or making her mad through a diabolic means. Meanwhile, a man who is caught in the act of love making with another woman goes free of any punishment except that rumour carries the story or the woman's husband may fight the man caught with his wife or attack him diabolically. The society keeps silent on the adulterer's action.

Generally, the relationship between male and female Igbo is like the females are created to serve the males or they are made for the usage of men. A vivid picture of this relationship is that expressed by Mc Robbie (1990:52) who states it thus

My brother doesn't do a thing in the house. He makes a mess and I clear it up after him, he doesn't even make his bed. He waits for my mum to make it when she gets back from her work.

If the Igbo female manages to rise above the level of servitude, the Igbo society concludes that she got there by "bottom power" (prostitution). The philosophy behind the relationship between Igbo males and females is well expounded in the *North American Reference Encyclopedia of Women's Liberation* (1972:93, 44). It states that there is a social imbalance between men and women and it is amplified thus:

... women have ... been taught from childhood... that they are inherently inferior... that they are more childish, emotional and irresponsible than men, that they are of lower intelligence... Need protection... Are happiest in

routine, undemanding jobs...Lack ambition and executive ability... men lead, women follow. Men order, women obey... so deeply ingrained is the doctrine of male domination, or...female subordination that it is much more unusual to question the basis of women's legal, political, and social inferiority than it is to accept inferior status as a fact and way of life.

The Igbo female, having been compressed and indoctrinated to accept the misinformation that, she is inferior to the male willfully welcomes the fact. The man commands her and she obeys. Her failure to obey attracts battering. This is why some husbands or male lovers batter their wives both in the days of old and now. This is a sexual evil, which has come to stay in Africa. At a conference of Catholic women at Ibadan Ecclesiastical Province, in September 1998, a woman asked that any woman who has never in one time been slapped by her husband should stand up. Out of about one thousand women that attended the conference, no woman stood up. This means that all the women had been slapped one time or the other by their husbands. This is a good example of a common violence against women which shows the domineering power of men and the subordination of women in patriarchal societies. In Igbo society, a man picks up a younger girl as a wife and moulds her up in fear to suit his way of life, whether he is responsible or irresponsible. Added to this is the cultural norm which controls her life and keeps her within boundaries. According to Akindojutimi and Ajileye (1996:55), the three religions-Christianity, Islam, and traditional worship, teach the uncleanness, the servility, and subordination of womanhood. The Igbo culture states clearly that "*O haghiri nwoke na nwaanyi?*" (men and women are never equal). If a woman demands for more than the culture allows her, she is termed a rebel (*nwaanyi chaka akwu* – a woman that is too wise), *nwaanyi nwoke* (a manly woman) and *nwaanyi amamihe* (Mr know it all). With all these unnecessary enchainment of women, one then understands why The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) lists the following facts about African women, which Igbo women are part of

- (i) Women were strictly dependent on men as tradition obliged women to respect, obey, and submit to their husbands.
- (ii) The women are in culture considered minors who are incapable of initiating any legal action of their own right.
- (iii) Adultery was seen as wrong, which could only be committed by the woman. Most adultery

taboos where they existed were in respect of women suspects...(Eze 2003:116,)

Nweke (2003:148) goes further to claim that some of the obnoxious practices of societies like that of the Igbo include "female circumcision, maltreatment of widows..." He adds that female circumcision has led to the death of some women while hordes of them who are still breathing are made to be less productive. Female circumcision is no more in vogue in Igbo society. Only very few rural people still practise it but the maltreatment of women, widows and widowhood practices are still very much in practice. Widowhood practices in Igbo land are very intimidating and suppressive. The daughters of the families of the women whose husbands have died punish them as if they were instrumental to their husbands' death. They are made to leave their hair tattered, cut their hair, go bare-footed, stretch their voices and cry so loudly that people miles away would hear their cries. A woman who is noted to be stubborn and troublesome may be told to go to the stream alone at odd hours to fetch water severally. At times, they pour the water so fetched on the ground and ask her to go back. Some widows are asked to sleep on bare floor without a mat or foam. All these practices are hazardous to the health of women whom nature has made to be very fragile. Besides such widows are, in most cases, mainly aging mothers.

Nevertheless, in this same Igbo culture where women are tortured at the demise of their husbands, Igbo men do not mourn their wives seriously. Some even, during the burial of their wives, bring in another woman into their matrimonial bed. Some get married to a younger lady after six months of unserious mourning and the Igbo culture does not query them, neither do the people (Ụmụada or the society) confront them. Acholonu (1999:96) summarises the oppressive situations of the Igbo female from childhood to adulthood as follows:

In the Igbo society, women are generally harassed and put under serious perennial and endless pressure and stress.... A society that seems ill-prepared to appreciate the female worth and capabilities, outside her biological functions of...bearing and rearing children, preferably a clan of sons. Who would perpetuate the family name to eternity... the average woman's life is fraught with violence right from the cradle to the grave.... The girl child is invariably undervalued and many a time is denied proper health care and formal education... On early maturity, the young woman is pressurized into marriage with a man who sometimes may be as old as her father.... In marriage...the young woman... struggles to cater for the husband faces the problems of a hostile mother-in-law. Her problem becomes compounded if her

husband should die before her. As a widow she is not only accused of causing the man's death, but also subjected to a whole gamut of obnoxious widowhood rites aimed at making her die, disinherit her.... drive her out of her marital home.

Acholonu's assertions are a summary of the subjugate circumstances of Igbo women. Their oppressive situations start from infancy and graduates to the female's spinsterhood and later to the stage of a married woman.

In Nigeria today, the place of women have been changing gradually but not too far from what it used to be few years back. Although more women now work in the formal sectors of the economy and are effectively combining their traditional roles with their new roles in the formal economy, the society still evaluates them on the basis of their traditional roles as mothers and house keepers. This is why Eze (2003:116) argues that "the low and inferior status of women is the product of culture." Friedl (1975) adds that the place of women in the Nigerian society is a clear-cut reflection of the sexual division of labour and male dominance prevalent in all known human societies. Eze (2003:116) opines that in spite of the changing role of women in modern society, this cultural attitude of female subordination has remained and not much has changed, especially in the realm of customary law as it affects the right of women to property.

#### 2.1.8 **The law, Igbo Women and Property Ownership**

Discussing the property rights of women in Nigeria, Eze (2003:115) agrees that

With only a few exceptions, descent patterns in most Nigerian traditional societies are patrilineal; residence is patrilocal while authority structure within the family is patriarchal. These reflect male dominance... customary laws are the greatest impediment to women's property rights in Nigeria. Most aspects of the customary laws of Nigerian communities are not comfortable with the fact of women inheritance and are in dire need of change in the light of present-day realities.

In Igbo land generally, ownership of property is patrilineal. Nweke (2003:146) and Onuegbu (1997:16) observe that Igbo women are excluded from patrimony. Inheritance of a diseased father's property especially landed property, belongs to the male children while the female siblings only inherit wrappers and cooking utensils left by their diseased mother. It is only in places like Ohafia of Abia

State, Afikpo of Ebonyi State and Yoko of Cross River State that descent is bilineal (both patrilineal and matrilineal). It is only among them that women are highly acknowledged for the purposes of inheritance. They were able to solve the problem which so many people in many communities in Igbo land die for. That is the problem of so many sons struggling to inherit a narrow strip of land from one father. There, those who could not get land from their father's side may get same from their mother's family.

In Igbo society, the married woman according to Eze (2003:119), could acquire property both as a spinster and as a married woman. What she acquires as a spinster is taken over by her parents and siblings when she gets married. The wealth she acquires during marriage traditionally belongs to her and her husband but finally it is reverted to her husband and his relations if she dies before her husband. In this same culture, the widow of a deceased husband has no right of inheritance of her husband's landed property and even other properties except the miscellaneous ones unless she has male children for the deceased husband. If she has only female children for her husband or she is barren, all her husband's property is taken away from her by her husband's male siblings. In some cases, if the woman has no good records in the family, she may eventually be driven out of the family, at times, with her female children or even tender male children who have not grown up to the age of challenging their uncles.

Even as it is now with the achievement made by women in the pursuit of their rights, the customary laws in Igbo land impede women's property rights. Eze (2003:122) regrets that even the Wills Act of 1837 and the Estate Laws 1959 sections 49(1) and sections 2(1) which protect women in terms of property inheritance are reformed by some states and local governments' authorities to tally with their customary law. He refers to the Nigerian constitution of 1999 sections 42 and 43 as the constitution that has come to advertently or inadvertently curb the customary laws that discriminate against the rights of women to property. This is why some human rights activists argue that sections 42 and 43 of the constitution are aimed at eliminating customary practices that discriminate against the rights of women to property. This view is the position taken by the Court of Appeal, in the Nigerian Week Law Report over the case of *Mojekwu V. Ejikeme* (NWLR, 1997).

In any case, the injustice done to Igbo women by depriving them the right of ownership of property is still very strong and has rendered, especially some widows,



homeless, hopeless and poverty stricken. Some have died trying to fight for their property rights or to protect some property from the encroachment of some heartless brothers-in-laws. Some have also lost their God-given children while battling over property with their children. The situation is hopeless because even some of the educated men, who are expected to understand the condition of such widows, are worse in their treatment of the widows, because of the poor economy of Nigeria.

## 2.2 Igbo Women, Politics, Leadership and Power Relations

Many African countries have most often documented their day-to-day activities, culture, beliefs, moral, and every important aspect of their lives through narratives, songs and poems. According to Akorede (2005:82), the oral histories of Benin Republic, the *Kikuyu* of Kenya, and the *Ashanti*, and the *Akan*-speaking people of modern-day Ghana show that the non-literate African women occupied very important positions in the political and economic administrations of their different societies. Kolawole (1997:43) also asserts that "there is a catalogue of African women rulers and leaders who have charted their people's history in a remarkable way while the marks left by collective group actions remain indelible". Although the politics, administration and governance in many African countries are male-dominated, some nations deemed it wise to include women as part of their political administrators. An example is the *Akans* of the old *Ashanti* Empire. The Kingdom was made up of eleven Chiefdoms under the supreme control of the *Ashantehene* "who held traditional sway over about one million people" (Fortes 1950:9 and Boateng 1960:29). The Chiefdom of *Ashanti* kingdom was known as *Aman*. Each *Aman* was placed under the leadership of two paramount Chiefs, a male and a female. The male Chief is called the *Amanhene* while the female Chief is called the *Amanhemaa* (the queen mother). Other women involved in the Ashanti kingdom are the *Abapanyim*. They maintained the harmony of the kingdom and served as members of the judicial system (Manoukin 1950:39, Fortes 1950:267, Busia 1954:19, and Sarpong 1977:1457-1478,).

The Yoruba of Nigeria is another group of Africans that recognise the potential of the female. In the old Oyo-Empire, the *Oba* (King) was supreme but was checked by the *Oyo-mesi* led by the *Basorun*, the Prime Minister. Akorede (2005:84) asserts that "Princes and princesses had definite roles to play in the running of their father's domain." Other people who also assisted the king in the course of his

governance were women. Some of these women were chiefs who were recognised heads of wards in their communities like notable male Chiefs (Johnson 1921:8, 64, Akorede 2005:84.). Still on the Yoruba, records are available on women who became *Obas* (Kings) among the Ife: *Ọba Luwa* and *Ọba Debooye* (Akinjogbin 1992:258). Others are the Ijesa, and Ekiti of Yoruba in Nigeria.

Other Yoruba women leadership positions are *Iya Ọba* (*Yeye Ọba*), *Iyalode*, *Iyaloja* (Akorede 2005:87). Johnson (1921:59-65) also records some notable woman Chief in the old *Ọyọ* Empire direct subjects of whom were the kings of Iseyin, Iwo and Ogbomosh. The *Iya* mode of the *Ọyọ* Empire is called *Baba* (father) because of the masculine nature of her political powers as the priestess in charge of *Bara* (the burial site or masoleum of dead *Ọyọ* kings). The king looked upon her as his father. Ogunsakin (1976:56) discusses the political powers of a woman high chief in Ondo kingdom over the *Ọba* of Ondo. Her title is called *Ọlọbun* or *Lobun* of Sora. At the demise of the *Ọba*, she takes over the leadership of the land. It is after her death that another *Ọba* could be coronated. There were other powerful priestesses in the administration of pre-colonial Yoruba: *Iye Leori* (Priestess of the god of fate). The *Ọba* respected and feared her because he believed that his destiny was in her hands. Another leader was *Iya Lemo* who was very active in Ifa worship, which was practised by male-dominated cult members. She was also the head of the *Babalawos* (Ifa Priests). Others were *Iya Naso*, *Iya Monari* and *Iya firi – iku*, who were also the leaders of *Sango* (the god of thunder) worship. The *Iya Monari*'s major assignment was to strangle any erring *Sango* worshipper. All feared her because she was regarded as a hard woman.

In Igbo society, succession, which is patrilineal and informed by the principle of primogeniture, like it is in Yoruba land, had no instances where women could, and did ascend the throne in their community. Succession to the throne is only the right of the males especially, the first son of the family (Nwogugu 1996). In fact; it is an abomination for a woman to rule a man in Igbo land. Igbo women only enjoy little leadership authority over their fellow women and children not as individual leaders but as members of some traditional associations. Even as a princess, an Igbo woman has no authority. Oral narratives only recorded the nature of marriage accorded to the princesses. No record is made of their leadership powers. A lot more stories recounted their love adventures with men particularly the men who offer their lives in wrestling in order to win their love. Although the Igbo princesses enjoyed the

company of male bodyguards and female servants, they did not, in any way, contribute to the political or administrative running of their fathers' kingdoms. Rather, in most cases, they were penalised brutally by refusing commands from their fathers that are unacceptable to them.

The Igbo king's wife (the queen) could advise the king privately on certain crucial administrative matters, but she did not have any authority in the leadership of the kingdom. She could not refute the king's orders and her position as the king's wife depends on whether she is able to bear the king a son, and her level of servitude to the king. The kings of the olden days never married only one wife. So it was so easy for them to discard any of the wives and remarry younger women. The Igbo queen, the king's wife/wives, and the princess or princesses only enjoyed the glamour and respect of being affiliated to the king. The princesses were relegated to the kitchen or their own private apartments except when their attentions were needed. They dared not show their faces when the king and his cabinet members were meeting unless they were invited to explain some issues. The king's wives could not interact with him freely. Woe to any of the wives who disobeyed him or challenged his decisions. A loved king's wife could only convince him to carry out an action through well planned and careful conviction based on the king's love for her.

The situation in Igbo society is not the same as it is in some Yoruba towns like Akure in Ondo State. There, a king dies and kingship is transferred to his daughter called a regent. Such a thing is forbidden in Igbo land. This is why Igbo men strive to bear even if it is a male child so that if the man is from a royal family, he will have a male child to hand over to. If he is not a king, he will still hand over the headship of his family to his first son. The absence of a male child to a king means that the ability of his family (nuclear family) to retain the kingship ends with his reign. Even if he has female children, they can only be adorned as princesses but they cannot reign; the king's wife too cannot reign. The reason behind this is that females are believed to be the weaker sex.

However, Okonjo (1996:47) has a documentation which states that in pre-colonial Delta Igbo of Nigeria,

...the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria had a dual-sex, political system, which recognises two monarchs a male Obi and a female Omu who ruled from thrones, has separate cabinets and has complementary functions. While the Obi was in theory "the acknowledged head of the whole community and was in practice concerned with the male section of the community, the female

Omu, in theory was the acknowledged mother of the whole community and in practice was charged with concern for the female section.

Okonjo's story may be correct. After all, in Yoruba society in some parts of Ondo State, in Ondo town in particular, such dual sex political leadership exists. In this town, the king (male) is called the *Ọba* while the female leader is called the *Lobun*. Whereas the *Ọba* oversees the activity of every member of the town, the *Lobun* oversees some miscellaneous cases related to women. This practice is not common in all parts of Yoruba land just like it is not practicable in core Igbo land. The pattern Okonjo discusses is not an indigenous core Igbo culture. It may have been a borrowed culture from Benin to which history traces the descent of the Western Igbo, where the Delta Igbo belong. The only town in Igbo land where female leadership is given serious attention is called Unubi in Anambra state. The female leaders are spiritual leaders called *Ojikwaani*. They maintain the spiritual state of the community. All members of the community obey them and keep to their directives especially on matters pertaining to the maintenance of peace and sanctity in the community. Apart from Omu, there is no other documentation to really certify any other individual formal leadership in Igbo land. Even none of the Igbo texts that discusses Igbo leadership has any record of such.

The Igbo traditional leadership authority bestowed on the female is the group leadership of some autochthonous women associations called the *Ụmụada* association and the *Otu ndi inyom*, which has metamorphosed into the present home and abroad women meetings (see discussions on this below). A woman can also enjoy leadership authority as a female husband to another woman she married for her husband. According to Okafor (1999: 59), "Indigenous structure of women power...female husbandship... in addition to empowering women also functions in the maintenance of the patriarchal superstructure." A notable point here is that women husbands are women though they exercise authority over their wives. Women husbands are also given subordinate position in the society just like their other fellow women.

Politically, Igbo women are yet to find their feet on a firm stand. Many of them who are interested in politics are discouraged by either their husbands or their husbands' relatives or by their own relatives who feel that such women with political ambitions are breaking the Igbo cultural rules which confine women to their homes and their kitchens. Most often, such women are stifled at the initial stage of their

attempts by their male political opponents who go for their lives. The few who have triumphed to a certain level are not comfortable because their male colleagues or subordinates are like thorns in their flesh. An example is the squabble between the Ideato North Local Government Chairman Chief (Hon.) Eudora Igwe and some of her ward chairmen. Another example is that of the Nigerian woman Senator (Iyabo) who was slapped by her male colleague publicly. Though both senators involved in the episode were not Igbo people, slapping of females is a habit of some irresponsible Igbo / Nigerian men.

Woman traditional leadership over man is an impossible task. Igbo men uphold women leadership as an abomination because the Igbo believe that "*ala nwaanyi na-achi, alaa ahụ emebiwo*" (any land being ruled by a woman is already a ruined land). The assumption based on this proverb is very wrong because there are countries, not even small communities that have been perfectly ruled by women either as presidents or as prime ministers. The list of those who attained the level of president include: Corazon Aquino of the Philippines, Ertha Pascal-Trounlot of Haiti, Isabel Peron of Argentina, Lidia Geiler of Bolivia, Violeta Chamorio of Iceland, Mary Robinson of Ireland, Chandrike Bandaranaike Kumaratungo of Sri Lanka and Dr. Allen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.

Women who reached the level of Prime Minister include: Golda Meir of Israel, Indira Ghandi of India, Hanna Suchocker of Poland, Edith Cresson of France, Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo of Portugal, Agatha Uwiligiyimana of Rwanda, Kazimiera Danute-Prunskiene of Lithuania, Milka Planic of Yugoslavia, Kim Campbell of Canada, Ciriaco De Mita of Italy, Einar Gerhardsen of Norway, Eugenia Charles of Dominican Republic, Tansu Cillenn of Turkey, Benazir Bhutto of Bangladesh, and Siramavobandaran Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka.

We are yet to have a woman president in Nigeria. The governors who felt slighted at the sight of female deputies did not allow the female deputy governors in Nigeria function effectively. At the ministerial level in Nigeria, only few women have served. Some of them are Mrs. Kuforoji Olubi, Professor Miriam Ikejiani Clarke, Mrs. A. Adogu, Dr. Kema Chikwe, Mrs. Chinwe Obaji, Dr. Ngozi Okonji Iweala, Dr. Ezekwesili and Professor Dora Akinyili (the present Minister of Information and Communication and Former Director-General of NAFDAC).

The few women who have tasted politics in Nigeria are not failures (Ubaakaeze (2000); and Ebeze 2003:178). See examples of such women in this chapter

under Feminism and the Nigerian women experience. Thanks to Mrs. Flora Nwakuche, Mrs. Janet Mokelu and Mrs. Oyibe Odinamadu. They contributed towards the awakening of Igbo women to their political rights. According to Ubaakaeze (2000), the impact of Nigerian women in development had been felt ever before the accelerated and intensified struggle for gender equality. For the present recognition accorded Nigerian women in Nigerian politics, we must not fail to commend the activities of the following women: Mrs. Mariam Babangida, Mrs. Mariam Abacha, Mrs. Abubakar, Late Dr. Stella Obasanjo, and Mrs. Titi Abubakar. These women, in one way or the other, brought Nigerian women to the limelight in terms of politics.

### 2.2.1 Traditional Women Leadership in Igbo Land

Presently, the common forms of women leadership present in Igbo land are the *Umụada*, *Otu Ndị inyom* (home and abroad), and the Christian Women Associations commonly called the Christian Mothers. These different women groups are theoretically recognised as leaders but are also practically leaders of their fellow women and leaders under the leadership of their male counterparts. These women leadership groups are discussed as follows:

#### 2.2.1.1 Umụada

The little authority possessed by women is invested on certain women group generally called *Umụada* in the Igbo language or *Umumgboto* (in Owerri dialect) or *Umụokpu* (in Anambra dialect). *Umụada*, means the daughters of a kindred, family or community. *Ogbalu* (1979:94) describes *Umụada* as “*Umụ nwaanyi a muru n’obodo, ha wee lwa di n’obodo ahu ma o bu n’ obodo ozọ*” (women born into a community who are married to the community or another community). The daughters of the same community who are of age but are not yet married also fall into the *Umụada/Umụokpu* or *Umumgboto* group. Ikeanyibe (1997:20) defines *Umụada* as “daughters of the paternal kindred or extended families.”

Anugwom (2003:37) opines that the *Umụada / Umụokpu* refers to the married daughters association which is “an Umbrella solidarity union of all married daughters of a particular community.” However, he notes that membership is not extended to unmarried daughters of the community and daughters from other communities married to the community. In Orlu area of Imo State, unmarried daughters are expected to join the male *Umunna* (male kindred association). In Mbano area of Imo

State, unmarried but aging daughters (especially those expected not to get married again) are permitted to belong to the *Ụmụada* group. In some parts of Enugu and Anambra States of Igbo land respectively, as soon as a child is born a female child, she automatically becomes a member of the *Ụmụada* association. This means that in these communities, unmarried daughters are allowed to be members of the association. The *Ụmụada* association generally in Igbo land has an enviable history of peace and honesty binding them. Their leadership is headed by elected officers from their midst. They pay monthly contributions and have monthly meetings as to keep the association going on smoothly.

Ikeanyibe (1997: 20) comments, “*Ụmụada* is a power to reckon with in Igbo land”. The *Ụmụada* is the highest feminine authority in Igbo land. Men born in a community, their wives and children usually avoid getting involved in any case that would attract the *Ụmụada*. Ogbalu (1979:95) buttresses the point when he says “*Ndị nwoke na – asopuru hã nke ukwu...*” (*The men respect them greatly*) Kammelu, and Onuegbu et’al (2002; 162) also supports the notion that “*Ụmụokpu nwere nnukwu ike n’ebe a muru ha: Ha na- enwekwa ugwu na nsopuru*” (*Ụmụokpu or Ụmụada has great authority in the community where they are born. They are accorded respect and honour*). Some male respondents in a research carried out by Augwom (2003: 37) commented as follows:

“the *Ụmụada* are tough on the truth. Once they become involved in any matter, all liars flee. If *Ụmụada* comes in, trouble goes. The truth emerges at the sight of the *Ụmụada*”.

The functions of the *Ụmụada* association could be itemised as follows: The *Ụmụada* play prominent roles in maintaining peace in their communities. As a result of their reputation for upholding the truth and standing on the side of Justice, they invariably play the part of final arbiters in situations of conflict or disagreement in the communities. They also settle different cases. They help in the development of their communities by creating awareness in their people based on what they gather from the communities where they are married to. They torture men who maltreat their wives, women who maltreat their husbands and children who maltreat or disrespect their parents. Finally, they mercilessly punish any bad woman in their community who has a nasty behaviour or contributes to her husband’s death. A typical example of what the *Ụmụada* can do is displayed in an Igbo home video *Living Dead* by Emmalex pictures (2007). The story is about the barbaric maltreatment and torture of a

daughter-inlaw over the death of her husband (a living but dead drunk) whom some of her in-laws erroneously believe that she is instrumental to his death.

The *Umuada* can also restore peace between warring villages or towns. When there is a clash between two villages, for instance, villages 'A' and 'B' are involved in strife, the women born in 'A' but married in 'B' would meet the women born in 'B' but married in 'A'. The two groups of women would form a peace making front. They would march out to the war-front carrying green leaves especially the newly sprouts of palm fronds (*Omu*), singing appropriate songs that preach the evils of war and the benefits of peace and oneness. At the sight of them, the combatants must surely separate and cease fire because they would not want to destroy their own daughters in anger as this according to Adiele Afigbo (1981: 158) would mean "an abomination against the Earth Goddess Ala."

Apart from the above, the *Umuada* are also harbingers of development in their communities: they encourage their brothers into involvement in development projects that they witness in their husbands communities and which they feel will be beneficial to their brothers and their communities in general. They also contribute financially to some developmental projects as well as run credit and contributory schemes for members. In the olden days in some towns, they perform sacred rituals and rites of passage for their fellow sisters who were newly married. According to Arinze (1992) the *Umuada* perform religious, political as well as social functions, which are all geared towards communal improvement. Okonjo (1996) cited in Okeibunor (1995), also contributes that *Umuada* is a union with significant socio-political relevance geared towards achieving desirable objective.

The *Umuada* in carrying out their expected functions as mentioned above make use of sanctions and punishments meted out to erring brothers, wives or children. They could impose fines on monetary or non-monetary (domestic animals) forms or scold or mildly isolate offending members. In some serious cases, they can burn or destroy the house of a stubborn man who has refused to obey their instructions, or even banish him from their community or refuse to participate in his burial to serve as a deterrent to others. They can excommunicate or suspend an erring member, refuse to attend her burial or fine her children heavily before they perform some traditional rites after her demise. They can send a recalcitrant wife packing without her husband's permission.



However, the *Umuada* has been criticised as being too harsh on the wives of their brothers. They also intervene unnecessarily in domestic affairs especially when it involves a wife who does not agree with them in domestic matters. Nevertheless, as true as it is that the *Umuada* / *Umukpu* / *Umungbotu* have such enormous authority, their power has limitations as they are also subjected to the male *Umunna* (sons of the same kindred in the same communities). These brothers of theirs check their excesses. Although the male authority supercedes that of the *Umuada*, at times, the *Umuada* can take laws into their hands thereby ignoring the male *Umunna*'s decision especially when they are sure that their own decisions would be the only source of peace and tranquility as regards the case at hand.

#### 2.2.1.2 Otu Ndi Inyom

Another women group that has some level of authority invested in them is the group popularly called the *Otu ndi inyom*. Ogbalu (1981: 102) refers to it as "*Otu Inyom or ndi inyom di*" (*married women association*). Kammelu and Onuegbu et'al (2002: 165) calls it "*Otu ndi inyom*" (*married women association*). In Imo State, they are called *Otu umunwaanyi a na-alu alu* (Association of married women). It is an association made up of women married unto men who belong to kindred. They are led by a woman called *Nne umunwaanyi*. This type of association is known by different names chosen by the members for instance, we have the '*Aladimma* women group' of *Umudim*, *Umunkwo* and *Umonyeukwu* autonomous communities all in Imo State. There is also the *Oganihu* women group of *Umulumgbe* in Enugu State and the *Owazurumee* women's association of *Umowa Orlu* Imo State. Their names are often associated with peace, progress, and love which denotes the basis of their various objectives.

However, this type of gathering of married women into a particular community or kindred (*otu ndi inyom*) is of long origin in Southeastern Nigeria. According to Ofondu (1997), it was more or less a kindred meeting. These meetings revolved around some little equitable contribution at pre-determined intervals. They served twin purposes of integration and identity for women married into a particular clan or kindred. According to Anugwom (2003; 35), this association is the mark of almost all communities in the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria. It is an arm of leadership, which its original purpose was mainly for the maintenance of law and order in the community. They are merely interested in the areas of health, sanitation,

peace and progress, and the economic empowerment of members. Unlike the *Umuada*, majority of these women are not born in the community though some are. Their powers are not to be compared to that of the *Umuada*. In fact, they are subject to the *Umuada* and their husbands who form the *Umunna*. Their authority is not as absolute as that of the *Umuada*. They often take orders from the male *Umunna* who are their husbands. As regards this, Ogbalu (1981: 102) asserts that

*Umu nwanyi na- etiri onwe ha iwu ga na -achi ha ma n'ezi na ulo ha, be di ha, n'umunna na n'obodo, kama iwu niile ndi a di n'okpuru umu nwoke. N'iti iwu metutara umu nwanyi dum di n' obodo, ndi isi umu nwanyi na- ejekwuru umu nwoke nweta ike na nkwado n'aka ha. Umu nwoke nwekwara ike igwa umu nwanyi ebe ha ga- ejedebe n'ochichi nke ha.*

(Women make laws that guide them in their homes, in their marital homes, their kindred and town, but all these laws are under their men. In making laws that guide all the women in a town/ community, the women receive their authority and support from their men. Their men can give them limitations to their authority)

*Otu inyom / iyom* cannot act without the support of their husbands. The women's decision in their meetings can be over-ruled by those of their husbands. It is obvious that married women association is not as powerful as that of the *Umuada*. Although their leaders enjoy some authority over their members, their affairs are indirectly managed by the male *Umunna*. In every community in Igbo land, their married women form strong union, which has both home and abroad branches. The abroad branches in many towns go home at least once a year or so to say, and meet with their home branches. In their meetings, they iron out their problems as wives, mothers, as members of a community. They make suggestions and contributions towards the development of their communities. This union makes them to know each other very well. Every married woman to a community must join this union. The eldest married woman introduces a new member from their immediate family. Some of the rules which the *Otu inyom* strictly follow are that their members must not steal, gossip, fight, disobey their husbands, and refuse to prepare food for their husbands, commit murder, and quarrel with a fellow member and so on.

### Home and Abroad Women Association

It is a modern form of *Otu ndi inyom* association. Women home and abroad meeting is what Anugwom (2003:32) describes as "autochthonous associations." They are associations that are based on geographical scope of membership or on religious or denominational groups as we have already discussed above (Little, 1971, Ottenberg 1955). They are very restrictive (Blau and Scott 1963) and have been recognized as possessing great potentials for the transformation of the rural areas as well as its inhabitants just like the *Umada* does. This type of association came into existence in recent times as a result of urbanisation and the present economic pursuit of women and men. Male youths are drifted from their communities to the urban areas. As they get married, they take along with them their wives leaving just old women and men in their various communities. Many widows and few young women whose husband's economic activities are based in the locality at home also form part of the community members. With time, the women and the men discover that they have lost constant interactions with their people at home and that is not helping issues as developmental activities in the communities are neglected. The idea of home and abroad meetings came up to ensure that a period in a year is carved out for all the women married to a community to meet and discuss issues concerning themselves and the communities. August is usually chosen generally as a suitable month for such meetings. This is because August is seen as the period lying between the cessation of one farming season and the onset of the dry season. It is seen as a convenient month for convening such meetings because of the anticipated August break in rainfall and the general slacking of farm work. The Catholic Church first initiated the idea of home and abroad Catholic women meeting because they felt it was a good period to prepare the women both home and abroad for the annual thanksgiving and bazaar activities. Later on the meeting began to gain popularity and proved very effective that the Anglican members of various Igbo communities encouraged it. To an extent, many communal married women's associations (*Otu ndi inyom*) adopted the method, and even the Anglican Church also introduced it in their various church branches in Igbo land. This type of meeting is presently generally accepted in Igbo land and it is popularly called August meeting. In some communities it is called 'Mass Return' or 'General Return' respectively. It is convened in a way that after the church meetings, the married women meetings commence or vice versa.

In any case, the August meeting still remains an association of *Otu ndi inyom*, which could be communally based or church based. The *otu ndi inyom* August meeting of home and abroad members are aimed at the development and the maintenance of peace in the community while the *otu ndi inyom* of the church otherwise termed Christian Mothers Association is aimed at the development of the various churches in the communities where they belong.

Some of their developmental projects include: building health centers, and other social amenities, the provision of security of life and property and the issuance of reliable loans to members (the Christian Women Association does not practice this). Other developmental activities, which they do, are thrift systems, which are used to encourage the members to participate in commercial activities that will increase their income. They also save members the shame of their inability to provide enough chairs, plates, spoons, cups, canopies and big cooking utensils for large cooking for big occasions like weddings, traditional marriages, burials and funeral services by using the money of the association to buy them. They later dispose them off to interested members on rental basis. The income so made from such rentals, are also channelled towards other developmental projects.

In the contemporary Igbo society, the married women group 'otu inyom' now has three groups:

- (I) The married women group that belongs to one ancestor *umunna* which also has a home branch for those based at home and the 'abroad' group for those that reside outside the community.
- (II) The married women group for those who are married to the town. It includes the women married to every *umunna* in the community. It is a body that bring all the married women in a community together. Their leadership consists of representatives from the different women groups of different "*Umunna*" in the community. It is a general body of the women in the same community. It also has a home and abroad branch. In many towns in Imo State, like in Umudim and Umuonyeukwu communities in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State, it is called the *Aladimma* Association. In Enugu State, it is called General Women Return Meeting or Mass return.
- (III) The married women group for those who belong to one church or one denomination. The priests, pastors and church leaders at the different churches control their activities and make sure that they are modelled after their

respective church doctrines. These associations are constituted to make the women live up to the church expectation morally, spiritually, socially, politically and culturally. They also help immensely towards the development of their respective churches. The women leaders of the church take orders from the male leaders of the church and the church spiritual leaders and the special leaders of the church. The authority of the women is maximally exercised on their fellow women members and are curbed or monitored by the male leaders of the church and their spiritual male leaders.

But group (i) and (ii) maximise their authority on issues concerning their fellow women members but take orders from their male husbands who also have their own association through which they monitor the activities of their women, children and other aspects of their communal lives and activities.

### 2.2.2. The Igbo Matriarchs

Not much is known about the Igbo matriarchs. The only known but silent one is the *omu* queen mother of the Delta Igbo (Ikeokwu 2006:57). According to him, "she exercises a lot of matriarchal power to date in her domain." Amadiume (1987) while discussing the Igbo matriarchs, states that in traditional Igbo land, women have the final say in every thing that matters. Amadiume's assertion here is arguable because when serious decisions are taken in Igbo land, women are not invited. The men (both young and old) meet, make decisions and communicate such through the town criers or the various fathers (Nna) of each family (Ezinaufo). She (Amadiume) is also of the opinion that, in traditional Igbo land, there was a time when, instead of the practice at present, women exercised direct authority without reference to men. The confusion brought about by this ethnographic research is diverse, as there is no part of Igbo land at present where such women exist or where such practice could be attested to. Again, the oral literature of Igbo land which has some factual documentation of the Igbo past life has no such records. Rather, there are many oral facts and practical findings that negate her assertions. Her findings bring some questions to mind. If actually she is right, why is there no record of any Igbo female past leader like we have the story of old Obi of Onitsha and Onyeameneke of Eke in Udi local Government Area of Enugu State? Why do the Igbo still say that "*ala nwaanyi na-achi, ala ahụ aruola*"? (Any land where a woman leads, the land is destroyed) The Igbo are noted for their

attachment to traditionally inherited power and they transfer and preserve this from generation to generation.

Recognisable women power or authority in Igbo land is communalistic and not individualistic. Individual women who want to subvert patriarchy or change unfavourable situations around them or the cruelty of Igbo cultural norms on them either decide to lose their lives in the battle of struggle, or suffer whatever trouble their actions may attract to them. Those who oppose their actions may be either their fellow female folk who have been indoctrinated to stereotyped life and who are already used to their subordinate positions, or from the male folk who can never stand their domineering positions or see the cultural heritage transferred to them by their ancestors destroyed. They can go to any length to stop such a woman from her further destruction of the culture but when the protest is in form of a mob action, everybody, both male and female, gives way. For instance, the Okigwe Women Riot of 1925 and the Aba Women Riot of 1929 were possible because they were all mob actions see Isichie (1976:151-129). There was also the Nsude Women Riot against the former Governor of Enugu State (Governor Chimarooke Nnamani, 1999-2007 regime) who wanted to forcefully take over the women's farmland without due consultations and compensations. The women came out en masse and interrupted the bulldozing work already going on in the farmland as directed by His Excellency Governor Chimarooke Nnamani. The Governor had no choice other than to stop the work and settle amicably with the women.

### 2.2.3 Igbo Heroines (*Amazonians*)

Generally speaking, Igbo women do not participate in direct warfare, which according to Igbo culture is classified as "*Ogu egbe na mma*" (*war that involves gun and machetes*) (Afigbo 1981: 158). In successive wars, women stayed at a safe distance behind the men and ensured that the men had plenty supply of stones and short sticks for use as missiles. They help in evacuating the dead and wounded after the men had dragged the victims away from the war front.

Olaudah Equiano was the first to write that there were Igbo Amazonian warriors in traditional Igbo warfare. Jones cited in Afigbo (1981), notes that in Isuamah, owing to the scarcity of men in the area, women were recruited in warfare. In Ohaffia part of Igboland, there were two Igbo women noted for their great strength and bravery as warriors (Azonye, 1981:57). They nevertheless showed immense love

to their husbands. One of them was **Nne Mgbaafọ** who married a man named Uduma. See Nnabuihe, (1996:101 – 102) under feminist critics of Igbo literature in this chapter.

Azuonye (1981:57) also records the story of another woman of such heroic valour. Her name is **Ịnyan Ọlụgụ**. She was married to a coward who refused to go to battle and preferred to be with women blowing the flute, which earned him the name *Itentaogbulọpịa* (he who is famous for fluting). In the Igbo tradition of the Ọhaffia, if a man is a coward (a man who has not fought any war before) he and members of his family: wife/wives and children would be subjected to a series of insult called *iri ji ujo* in Ọhaffia. Such insults include the man's agemates seizing his property, striping his wife/wives naked publicly or disallowing him and members of his family freedom. Such insulting actions were meted out to him in order to force him to act and remove the shame of cowardice from his shoulders.

Ịnyan Ọlụgụ could no longer bear the insult and packed out every food item in their house so that they were not within the reach of her husband. He was ashamed to go to others and beg for food, as a coward that he was. Ịnyan promised to give him food if only he could go into the forest invaded by enemies to cut palm fruits for her. Out of hunger and the fact that it was the only way through which his wife would give him food, he succumbed to her request. As he was climbing the palm tree, the Ibiobio's attacked him. Ịnyan shot and killed four Ibiobios, cut their heads and gave them to her husband. She went home and blew the gong in praise of her husband before their people. Her husband was honest enough to confess to the people that the praise should go to his wife not him. The people praised the wife and gave her a praise name *Ogbuotuwjidiya* (she that kills and gives some to her husband).

### 2.3 **Black Feminism and White Feminism**

Feminism, as we could see from our previous discussions in chapter one, was started by white women (Americans and Europeans) who felt that women were suppressed politically, socially, educationally, economically and so on. They fought for the liberation of women. As they were mainly white women, their form of feminism is called white feminism. Again, it is called white feminism because it is practised by whites. The white feminists involved were struggling against sexism, classism, and other segregational oppressions meted out to them by their white male counterparts.

White feminism only addressed the needs of white women, which is white women consciousness only. White feminism is described as an ideology that "smacks of rebellion, fearlessness, political awareness of sexism and an unpardonable drive for equality between the two sexes" (Ogunyemi 1988:64). It failed to address racism or colour consciousness, which black women needed. Again, it did not put into consideration the needs and issues which were relevant for the survival of women in different cultural contexts. The white feminists did not need to fight for the liberation of their men because their men were already liberated. They were offered jobs and were allowed their rights as human beings fully.

However, the black American men who were discriminated against were not allowed their basic human rights. They were not offered jobs because the white American men felt that if they were economically liberated, they would rub shoulders with them in offices. As a result, it was only black American women that were offered only menial jobs, like cleaning jobs, cooking and so on (Gilkes 1980, Dill 1983). This made the black American women better placed than their husbands. They were able to find their way among the American white women-feminists who also discriminated against them regarding them as people of lower class who were only privileged to be in their midst because they allowed them (Faucault 1972). They overshadowed the black American women in their feminist activities and did not consider the black women's peculiar problems, which involved liberation of their husbands and children and struggle against the oppression of black women by men both white and black and their fellow women who were white. They wanted their husbands to be offered jobs in order to increase their family income and help them generally by providing a better future for themselves; their husbands and their children. As a result of all the oppressions of the black by the whites, both the black women and their men formed a front against the whites. This is called Black Feminism. Black feminism, therefore, means, according to Tierney (1991:42), "an active commitment to struggle against the multiple and simultaneous oppression" experienced by black men and women. It is a joint struggle of both black men and women's oppression and domination over them.

Black African female critics contend that though all women worldwide are oppressed, so also are all coloured people of the world, especially the black, the African Americans in particular. One form of such suppressions is racism, which Adeleke, (1996:24), describes as "a notorious system that denies blacks their human



rights and dignity". In racist countries, blacks are humiliated and deprived of their rights. Blacks are segregated against in so many spheres of life (Gilkes 1980). According to Hooks (1984:3), "Racism abounds in the writings of white feminists, reinforcing white supremacy and negating the possibility that women will bond politically across ethnic and racial boundaries."

This implies that the black and white feminists, though they fight sexism together, were not bound together. White women have not been able to condescend from their upper class position because, to them, the black women are inferior to them as far as the American society is concerned (Martineau 1937, 1938). This superiority and inferiority complexes on both sides of the women, respectively led to lack of unity and mutual love and understanding among the two colours of women. Noting the type of disharmony that existed between these two groups, Hooks (1984:11) avers that

The condescension they (white women) directed at black women was one of the means they employed to remind us that the women's movement was "theirs" that we were able to participate because they allowed it, even encouraged it, after all we were needed to legitimise the process. They did not see us as equals. They did not treat us as equals.

Not only did the white feminists disregard and humiliate the black feminists, they also strongly resented and repelled genuine opinions and criticisms of "black" feminists (Hooks 1984:11). Ogunyemi (1991:271) confirms the grievance of the blacks in the following words:

Not only are we collectively at the bottom of the occupational ladder, but also our overall social status is lower than that of any other group. Occupying such a position, we bear the brunt of sexist, racist and classist oppression.

As a result of such grievances of the black race, evolved the following campaign techniques against racism, sexism and classism evolved: revolt, petitions, armed attacks, economic boycott, demonstrations, riots, court actions, the vote alliances and Black Nationalism (Essed, 1991:12). It was because of the above situations of the blacks that the black women felt that the liberation of black men and women should be their topmost goal. To them, their "main oppressor is a class society" (Huggings, 1991:3). The black women now insisted that their own emancipation cannot be separated from the emancipation of their men. To them, "their liberation" depends on

the liberation of the race and the improvement of the life of the black community (Bell, 1987:23/40 Huggings 1991:3). With this notion, the black women now assumed a joint struggle with black men against white domination (<http://www.debunker.com/patriarchy.html>). The black women, although already fighting sexism, now co-operated with their men in fighting racism and classism (<http://www.users.bigpond.com/sarcasmo/femo.html>); and (<http://jkalb.org/book/view/2>). Their major weapon of operation was by writing. Bell (1987:242) notes some of the signs and structures they often employed in their moves to include.

- (a) Motifs of interlocking racist, sexist and classist oppression.
- (b) Black female protagonist
- (c) Spiritual Journeys from victimisation to the realisation of personal autonomy or creativity.
- (d) A centrality of female bonding or networking.
- (e) A sharp focus on personal relationships in the family and community.
- (f) Deeper, detailed exploration and validation of the epistemological power of the emotions.
- (g) Iconography of women's clothing and
- (h) Black female language (Bell 1987: 242).

With the serious awareness created by women's writings, the preoccupations of black feminism became a thing of serious consideration both in literature, politics and in social life. Since the black women's emancipation, they have been so active in black communities that there have been several benevolent associations and mutual aid societies and organisations that have been formed, including literary societies. It is for the same purpose of black women's emancipation that Alice Walker introduced the term "womanism," which originated from the term "womanist" (Tierney, 1991:389).

### 2.3.1 Womanism

In a continuous struggle and search for a suitable black feminism that is away from racist, sexist and classist white oppressions, a female African American novelist, essayist and poet, Alice Walker, introduced the term 'womanist' in the 1970s (Tierney 1991:389, Adeleke 1996:28). In 1973, in an interview she granted John O' Brien, she explained her preoccupations as a black female writer, which led her to the coming of this new feminist terminology as follows:

I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of black women... For me the black women are the most fascinating creations in the world.

(Walker, 1984: xi).

She was fighting racism, she was also fighting sexism. These are indicated in her comments above. Her people, as stated above, may refer to her fellow black African-Americans who are both male and female who had undergone racial, social and political oppression in the United States. She made this explicit in her first two novels: *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) and *Meridian* (1976). Secondly, "her people," as used in her comments above will include Africans also. This could be deciphered from her other novels: *The colour purple, the temple of my familiar* and her other novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. The last is completely devoted to an African problem called "clitoridectomy" (Adeleke, 1996:30). The geographical and social boundaries of her work, as we can see, go beyond the United States, to include Africa. This is why her theory is generally accepted in Africa. Walker herself defines a womanist in the following ways:

- A black feminist or feminist of colour...usually refers to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or wilful behaviour ...Acting grown up ...Responsible. In charge Serious.
- A woman who loves other women, sexually and / or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility... and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and / or none sexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditional Universalist...
- Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the folk. Loves her. Regardless.
- Womanist is to feminist as purple to Lavender (Walker 1984: xi-xii).

The features of womanism, as depicted from Walker's clarifications above, creates the awareness that black people should not be looked down on; that they should be seen as wilful, responsible and serious-minded people; that women's sex should not be a factor in any relationship with men; that they should be seen as humans created so and should not be segregated against because of their sex. Again, that women should be given freedom to love nature and realise themselves without

restrictions (Larslett & Arat 1995, Hine 1995). Ogunyemi (1988:5) defines womanism as follows:

Womanism is black centred, it is accommodationist. It believes in the freedom and independence of women, like feminism but unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black women and black men and black children, and will see to it that men will change from their sexist stand. This ideological position explains why women writers do not end their plots with feminist victories.

Here, it is clear that a womanist accommodates black men, black women, and black children. She loves them and wants them and gradually makes the men change from oppressing the women. Umeh (1988:265) explains the theory of womanism further by her assertion that

“Whereas feminist plots end with the separation of the man and woman... Womanist novels are committed to the survival and unity of males and females.” Feminist novels end up with separatism while the black womanist novels tolerate and gradually pull out of black men’s domination in love. It goes beyond the husband and wife or male and female situations but includes the fact that women should love their children and care for their children and appreciate all other creations of nature (Ogunyemi 1985). It believes that man and woman have complementary roles or relationship. So it is a position of compromise between the sexes. The African women have passed through a chain of oppression under patriarchal system. Such oppressions are, according to Ogini (1996:17), “three centuries of slave trade and one century of colonialism including neo-colonialism.” The white women only experienced inequality and deprivation of education, job and property while the black women experience cultural problems like arranged marriage, polygamy and sexist Islamic and Christian tenets. This is why Opara (1987:44), claims that one of African women’s problem is “tabula rasa” (an assumption that she is incapable of potential creativity). She differentiates between the problems of both the white and black women thus: “A Victorian age house-wife complains of boredom, while her African counterpart is burdened with a double-day and works like a slave on the farm besides producing children, cooking, and doing the housework.” Opara’s declaration above is true because black women have the responsibility of doing most of the house chores, taking care of their men’s feeding and dressing and those of the children coupled with their official jobs, if any.

This shows that womanism is a feminist theory of colour but it, involves other women, women's strength and women's culture. "It is the totality of feminine self expression, self retrieval, and self assertion in positive cultural ways" (Kolawole 1997: 24). The idea of culture added to womanism brought the view that "womanism originated from African American and Caribbean cultures" (Davies and Fido, 1990:265). Davies opinion here could be right because it could have been as a result of the cultural background of Alice Walker, an African-American that she even began to develop the idea of womanism. This may be the reason behind Ogunyemi's definition of womanism as

a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the idea of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom. It concerns itself as much with the black sexual power tussles as with the whole power structure that subjugates blacks (Ogunyemi 1991:72).

To her, womanism is all about people that have black origin, who live black life and have a good idea of the woman's capabilities, her care for others and her love for struggling for the survival of both sexes in the society. Womanism celebrates women's strength as a pillar that brings black men to recognise and compromise for harmonious co-existence of both they and their females. It is a theory that reminds men that, without women's full involvement in the system, man is incomplete in action as well as in achievement. For years now, womanism has gained much currency among writers especially female writers who feel that men are very important in their lives just like nature has made it. It has undergone so many modifications that local, cultural and psychological considerations have been implied in the definition and use of womanism. A literary critic, Bell Hooks' view of womanism is that which

Puts a premium on reconstructing new communities of black people (of whatever gender, sexual orientations and class) and progressives (of whatever race) regulated by thoroughly decolonized visions, analyses and practices (Hooks 1991:61).

Hooks incorporates non-blacks as long as such peoples' psyche is decolonised and they are prepared to aid blacks in achieving their aims. She emphasises peaceful co-existence among people despite their colour or gender differences. Womanism has also transcended geographical boundaries. Black feminists now broaden or narrow the womanist vision according to their geographical area as their circumstances permit it

(Collins 1990). For instance, a Caribbean poetess Nancy Morejon describes the type of womanism practised in the Caribbean as "Something related to our society and to our history. We cannot import certain patterns of these (feminist) movements from Western Europe or developed countries, because we are underdeveloped countries" (Morejon, 1990:265). She believes that the Caribbean approaches to the adoption of womanism puts into consideration their history and their societal demands and the fact that the Caribbean is not yet developed. They can only practise womanism as far as their level of development allows them.

Womanists disagree with the radical feminists on their negative offshoot and on their move about the dissolution of the marriage institution. For the womanist, marriage is an important institution for survival and continuity. Womanism recognises the centrality of the family in the women's struggle against exploitation. They consider the family unit and the society as very important. Womanists emphasise female bonding and strongly reject inter-gender conflict. Kolawole (1997:24) claims that womanism concerns itself with "the black sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates black." The Womanists dwell on the inhuman treatment and exploitation to which black women have been so subjected both in reality and in literature. It is anti individualistic because it addresses issues that affect the welfare of the society. A womanist writer is not expected to be a chronicler of a doomed past but a prophetic creator who is sensitive enough to project into the future and use the instrument of literature to build lasting consciousness and awareness.

### 2.3.2 African Feminism or African Womanism:

Womanism, though a generally accepted feminist theory by both American and African blacks, does not completely address the needs of the indigenous African women. For this reason, African women continued in search of a feminist theory suitable to their cultural, geographical and educational situations as third world countries. Feminism as a movement that originated from the West, first came into focus in Africa in the 1960s following the wave of Human Rights Movement in the United States of America (Acholonu, 1995:80). According to Alonge (1998:3), in 1981, the Organisation of African Unity introduced the Human Rights Movement to African nations and they fully endorsed and adopted it in all African member countries. (See articles 1 – 68 in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Right).

This charter further empowered women, both politicians and academics in the pursuit of an African feminism. They were later engineered further in 1985 by the United Nations Conference in Nairobi, which resulted in the United Nations involvement in women development in Africa. It was there that a new radical feminism emerged. African women activists, writers and critics took up the struggle for African women liberation to a peak (Ogunyemi 1996, Ogundipe 1987). These women inaugurated the African Women's Movement that was fully backed by the United Nations. It was then that African women began to see that they needed a type of feminism, which includes something more than the aims of womanism. The United Nations officials (all Westerners) formulated the women's movement philosophy. Acholonu (1995:81) comments on the philosophy thus:

For women, equality means realisation of rights that have been denied as a result of cultural, institutional, behavioural and attitudinal discrimination". African women now realised the need for a type of feminism, which is peculiar to the African women due to their cultural, attitudinal, institutional, and behavioural circumstances. As a result, African feminism emerged with a little diversion from womanism though it includes all the aims of womanism.

African women's philosophy is to struggle to realise the rights that have been denied them due to some cultural and institutional reasons. Their aims were, according to Acholonu (1995:81), to achieve equality at home and at work, equality of the sexes, and equality in the sharing of domestic duties. They also proposed that there should be economic remuneration for women's housework and childbearing task. They put into consideration some cultural traits of Africans. Perhaps a more acceptable definition of African feminism to the Igbo would be the one given by Davies and Graves (1986:9), which sees African feminism as that:

Which recognises a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European American exploitation? It is not antagonistic to African men but it challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation, which differ from the generalised oppression of the African peoples.

African feminism differs from white feminism because it is not based on attacking African males. Radically, it is accommodating like womanism too. It is not only about defining the negative experiences of women. It is about the unique and positive experiences of African women, for to be an African woman is to be

accommodating at work, at home and in the wider society. African feminism is not a stigmatised and narcissist feminism, which cannot see beyond itself and project into a larger society.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1984a & 1984b); Uko (1996:12) and Nweke (2003) observe that an African woman functions as a mother, wife and co-wife whose psyche is affected by the impact of colonial domination, male chauvinism, polygamy, dependence on the males, and inferiority complex. African women are greatly dominated by their males; they are voiceless and are over used by their men. Uko explains the aspects of exploitation, domination and oppression of African women. They are "a sexual aid, a wet nurse and a nurse maid ... for his children, a cook, steward, and a general house keeper, a listening post, an economic and general consultant, a field hand and a punch ball" (Uko 1996:5). Feminism has gone a long way to establish the presence of women in politics, governance, and education and in different fields of the economy. More are yet to be done by African feminists in these sectors of life for them to actually practicalise their objectives as a movement and transcend oppressive cultural norms of the African society.

Another point noteworthy about African feminism is the fact that it is very diversified. Instead of the African feminists and critics to dwell on a particular movement, they engage themselves in the formation of various conceptual movements. Now, African feminism has these various facets: Femalism, African womanism, Motherism, Sisterhood, Daughterhood, and Stiwanism (Mathiasson 1974, Okonjo-Ogunyemi 1985, Acholonu 1995, Ogundipe-Leslie 1995). Some African feminists, who by their writings are strong feminists, even deny being feminists because of the stigma the African patriarchal society attaches to women whom they believe want to overshadow their men. All these unsteady and personalised conceptual African feminist movement retard the full achievement of the movement. This is because instead of joining hands together like the white feminists to liberate themselves from the shackles imposed on them by the African cultures, men and their various regional peculiarities; they now chase the shadow of their major objectives. As a result of this situation of African feminism, Nnolim (1994:258) comments that the African feminists who are female writers live in "a house divided." This is true because, instead of adopting the various views proposed by the African feminists as solutions to the oppressions addressed by African feminism, they continue to create divergent views and movements. It is necessary that African feminists remember that



“divided we fall but united we stand”. An important aspect of the various feminist theories emerging in Africa is that they all address the issue of the subjugation of women in African patriarchal society. All the above facets of feminism in Africa could be seen as various solutions towards the liberation and empowerment of African women. Whether the proponents of these various forms like it or not, they are all feminists because they are fighting the course of women. Feminism forms the pivot on which all the African facets or theories of feminism rotate.

A feminist is a feminist, whether with a “small ‘f’ or with ‘a big F’” (Oriaku, 1996). Any claim, propaganda, revolt, theory or movement either in writing or through politics aimed towards gender equality, liberation or emancipation of women, is rooted in feminism and cannot be separated from it after all. Feminist movements started with the liberation of women, to grant them equal rights with men. Any feminist, who denies being one, denies that women are subjugated in African society and has no basis for raising any argument or proposal for the liberation of women. Similarly, anybody who contributes to fighting the course of women for empowerment is a feminist, whether as a womanist, femalist, stiwanist, sisterhoodist, motherhoodist, and daughterhoodist. African feminists should join hands in pushing the course of women further rather than shying away from the burden already placed on them. After all, the earlier feminists were greatly stigmatised but now other women enjoy the fruits of their labour and they are now great models for modern women.

### 2.3.3 **Africana Womanism**

Amongst the black women also arose a group that challenges some of the womanist/black feminist views (Mogu, 1999:17). They stressed the necessity of having an Afrocentric standpoint for the African-American women. One of the issues of disagreement was based on Walker’s (1984: xi – xii) description of a womanist as a woman who loves other women. This view is a disguised approval of lesbianism (Echols 1990). They also alleged that black feminists are only slightly different from mainstream feminists’ agenda. As a result, Black activists like Cleonora Hudson-Weems, dissociate themselves from black feminism. Their reason for such action is that lesbianism is a mode of conduct that is completely strange to African women (Kolawole 1997, Eboh 1998:333 & 1999). Another reason behind the African women’s rejection of black feminism is their belief that the Black feminist agenda is not all that different from mainstream feminism which does not discuss the third

world African women's problem. According to Hudson-Weems (1993), Black feminism follows the path of Western feminism. She argues that the conflict of purpose and approach among these women movements gave rise to the various offshoots of the womanist movement which Africana womanism happens to be one of.

According to Hudson-Weems, African womanism shares similar views with her black feminist counterparts, especially as it concerns the identification of the experiences of the early women's movement in the struggle of black women against injustice, racial discrimination, sexist exploitation and classiest oppression. It is a theory which addresses the concerns of the African-American and the African woman. According to the proponents of this theory, it is a distinct ideology, which is not subvertive, disruptive or divisive, like white feminism. Africana womanism promotes and advocates co-existence of the female and the male. It stresses that the political emancipation of the woman cannot be achieved without the total emancipation of the whole black race. It focuses on the integration and the unification of all blacks of African descent (Stephens *et al* 2002:465). The advocates of this theory are of the opinion that the unity of the black woman and man will promote the liberation of both sexes from white oppression. Africana Womanism also emphasizes the need for sisterhood where all women will see one another as sisters, fight against oppressive system and bond together for the uplift of womanhood.

Hudson-Weems (1998:2) asserts that women of African descent who claim to be feminists do so because of the absence of a more "suitable existing framework" to really articulate their peculiar realities. To her, African women should "properly name herself and her movement-Africana womanist and Africana womanism." She describes Africana womanism as

An ideology created and designed for all women of African descent grounded in experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African woman. It entirely addresses the dynamics of the conflict between mainstream feminist, the black feminist, and the Africana women (24)

African womanism accused Black feminists of over-concentrating on issues that affect Black Americans. It also accepts the women centred ideologies to see women free from all manners of oppression, suppression and exploitation.

## 2.4 Feminism and the Nigerian Women Experience

In Nigeria, the oppression of women differs according to the various ethnic groups. Some women, like Edo and Yoruba women, are more liberated than Nigerian women from other ethnic groups in Nigeria. This is why they were able to raise great women like Queen Idia of Benin, Emotan of Benin; and Moremi of Ile-Ife, Madam Tinubu, and Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-kuti, respectively. Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Mary Slessor from Calabar, also belong to this group of women because of their earlier exposure to Western culture and belief. As the Nigerian Muslim women battle with their religion and the Muslim culture, the Nigerian Christian women battle with their societal obnoxious culture and their men whom patriarchy has made the dominant specie. A common experience which Nigerian women share is the oppression of the female folk by the male folk.

There are no records of Nigerian women's indigenous feminist activities before the early nineteenth century. This could be explained by the fact that then Nigerians were still in the dark. They were mainly illiterates who only recorded their past history through oral literature. It is for this reason that Akorede (2005:62 – 63) records that African women's mobilisation and struggle is older than many scholars acknowledge. She believes there must have been several unrecorded African women's rejection and subjugation and moves for empowerment.

The first recorded women's protest against colonial exploitations of women in Nigeria was that of the Okigwe women's protest in 1925 which prolonged to the Aba women's riot of 1929 (Odim & Mba 1948: 12; Isichei 1976:151 – 159; and Ikeanyi 1997:12). The Women's World War II also is dated 1929. They were all protests against administrative exploitations of women. For instance, women aimed the Aba women's riot at curbing the payment of taxes and the sexual and financial exploitations of the women by the Igbo Warrant Chiefs introduced by the British colonial masters.

The second protest against the British colonial administration over payment of taxes by women was in 1940. The Lagos Market Women Association, under the leadership of Alimotu Pelewura, embarked on that protest (Odim and Mba 1948:12). They successfully initiated a campaign against payment of taxes by women in Lagos. Odim and Mba (1948:12) report that the women also protested against the war time policies of the control of food and supplies distribution. The above women's activities were later followed by the political activities of Oyinkan Abayomi. She was a

member of the Nationalist Nigerian Youth Movement led by E. Ikoli, S. Akinsanya, H.O. Davies, N. Azikiwe, and O. Awojowo in the 1930s and the 1940s. She led the women's wing of the movement and later on, she formed the elitist, conservative and exclusively women's political party called the Nigerian Women's Party (NWP) in the 1940s.

Another Nigerian woman of record also emerged in the name of Funmilayo Ransome-kuti. She was the first Nigerian woman nationalist to be sent as a delegate to Britain to the Secretary of State, to launch a protest against the newly established Richards Constitution which the nationalists argued had a poor representation of Nigerians and was targeted towards a divide-and-rule British policy. In 1947, under the leadership of a new governor, Sir John Macpherson, there was a call for a regional and all-Nigeria constitutional conference to discuss a new constitution. Funmilayo Ransome-kuti was the only woman representative at the Western Regional Conference in Ibadan. It was during the conference that Nigerians agreed on a Federal rather than unitary system of government (Odim & Mba, 1948:13).

Another example of feminist political activism in Nigeria is also that of Mrs Ransome Kuti with about 20 thousand women, who saw to the dethronement of Oba Ademola II and his being banished from Egba land (Odim & Mba, 1997:63-95). Further-more, in the struggle for independence in 1959, Nigerian women formed some formal political parties. These parties were the women's wing of the then three main political parties in Nigeria: National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC) which had its base in the Eastern Region, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) with its base in Northern Nigeria, and the Action Group, with its base in the West (Ubaakeze 2001, Ebeze 2003:178, and Akorede 2005:8). It was during this period, in 1959, that Igbo and Yoruba women acquired the right to vote and be voted for (World Book 2004: <http://www.ipu.org/iss-e/women.htm>). While some other records say it was in 1958 (Ubaakeze 2001; Ebeze 2003:178; and Akorede, 2005:8). The explanation to this difference in dates may be probably that Nigeria made an official announcement in 1958 on women franchise but officially formalised it in 1959. Soon after that, Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti launched a campaign for women's franchise in the North and the right for women to participate in politics. Under her leadership, women from the southern part of Nigeria opposed the stance of party leaders in the North that Muslim women should not take part in politics and developmental activities on religious grounds. From her inspiration, two women

organisations were formed in the North as women's wings of the NPC and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) based in Kano area. The campaign for Northern women franchise took a long time of debates and disagreements but, finally in 1978, they were given the right to vote and be voted for.

Other examples are those of the same Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, who for their well-known participation in colonial politics, were made to participate in the constitutional conference in London. Other Nigerian female politicians who continued to protest women marginalisation were Mrs. Oyikan Morenike and Mrs. Kofoworolu Pratt. Mrs. Kofoworolu Pratt became the first Yoruba woman to hold a cabinet post as Commissioner for Health under the Johnson Administration in Lagos State. Other women of importance who participated in the awakening of Nigerian women to their political rights were Mrs Flora Nwakuche, Mrs Janet Mokelu and Mrs. Oyibe Odinammadu all from the southeastern part of Nigeria (Ebeze, 2003:178).

Other women in the mainstream Nigerian politics who championed the course of women and also opened the eyes of many Nigerian women to fight for their human rights are Mrs Mariam Babangida, during whose regime with her husband, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida (rtd), there was zeal for the uplift of the condition of Nigerian women and the government revisited and implemented some of the policies on women in the Federal Government National Policy on Women and Development. Her interest informed the establishment of the National Commission for Women Decree, 1989. This decree has the following stipulations in the sections mentioned below:

- |         |      |   |
|---------|------|---|
| Section | (a): | To promote the welfare of women in general.   |
| Section | (b): | To promote the full utilization of women in the development of human resources and to bring about their acceptance as full participants in every phase of national development with equal rights and corresponding obligations. |
| Section | (g): | To formulate and propagate moral value within the family units and the public generally and to establish programmes with institutions and organizations to indicate moral education in women and children.                      |
| Section | (h): | To work towards elimination of social and cultural practices tending to discriminate against and dehumanize womanhood (UNICEF 2001).  |

Mrs Mariam Babangida is also credited with the formation of Better Life for Rural Women Programme in 1987. This political programme was aimed at improving the lives for women as the name implies. The Nigerian government and some non-

governmental organisations (NGOs) are responding seriously to the demands of this policy and the resultant decree especially in the later years of that administration. The non governmental organisations in particular are another arm of the Nigerian feminist political movement, which is now penetrating gradually into the lives of Nigerian women through their activities of these NGOs. Mrs Mariam Abacha, during the first quarter of 1994, launched the "Family Support Programme. That programme was a political one aimed at ameliorating the poverty level of women and individual families. Following this was the programme introduced by Hon. Justice (Dr.) Fati Lami Abubakar (the wife of General Abdul Salami Abubakar who took over office from General Abacha as the Head of State of Nigeria). She introduced and became the Chairman of Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) Nigeria. Her programme focused on solutions to women's problems and their rights.

Currently, Late Dr. Stella Obasanjo had so many feminist political activities in her agenda as the then first lady of Nigeria. Some of which were: The Family Economic and Advancement Programme, Childcare Trust, and making sure that women were equally represented in the public and administrative offices. Her deputy in office, Mrs. Titi Abubakar has her own programme, which is aimed at curbing child trafficking and female prostitution in Nigeria. All these programmes and activities of women are political in nature though may not be very conspicuous like other political activities of men.

#### 2.4.1 **Feminism in Igbo Society**

Feminism as ideological protest was present in Igbo traditional society though unnoticed as such. Igbo women have traditional avenues of launching, their protests against some issues in the society which they considered unfavourable to them. These avenues included individual protests which was very deadly because it could earn the woman involved her life, being thrown into the evil forest, banishment, or she could be sold into slavery. Other forms of traditional feminism the Igbo practised and still practise are that of communal protest, mob action by women group or association protests. This was the form of feminism practised by Igbo women to change situations around them before and after colonisation and even now. Some people who came to Igbo land during the period of colonisation mistook this to mean that Igbo women had equal or greater authority than their men especially when the case of the *Ụmụada* is in focus. Some of such men who noted the level of authority enjoyed by Igbo women

and the equality of gender relations among the Igbo males and the female are Leith-Ross (1939, 1965). Green (1947), Ottenberg (1965), Meek (1957), Ottenberg (1968) and Lewis (1969:102), Leith-Ross's (1965:6), cited Lord Lugard, Nigeria's First Governor General as writing on 20 August 1938 regarding the Igbo woman: "She claims full equality with the opposite sex and would seem indeed to be the dominant partner." Leith-Ross (1965) used the words "Ambitious, courageous, self-reliant, hardworking and independent" to describe Igbo women. She Leith-Ross notes that women must contribute to decision-making affecting the Igbo society. In the primer of anthropology written by Lewis (1969:102), he took examples from all parts of the world and gender relations among the Igbo were cited for its equitability. Here in Nigeria, Uchendu (1965) and Nsugbe (1974) have some reasons to agree that gender relations in Igbo land are equitable.

The assumptions on equitability of gender in Igbo society are based on the fact that decisions binding on women that do not favour them are normally and traditionally rejected through communal women revolt, protest, or group demonstrations. The Igbo normally pay attention to such groups because they could be destructive and no single person would be punished for any atrocity committed by such a group action. Such protest group was the mask through which women used to effect changes in Igbo society. They also used such group power to control the activities of their male folk or those of their leaders.

Notable and recognised examples of women communal protest movement in Igbo land which could be seen as the first written or documented feminist movement in Igbo society are those of the Okigwe women, which began in 1925 (Isichei 1976:151). The women then, could no longer stomach the suppressive, intimidating and corruptive nature of the colonial administration and their black representatives, especially the Warrant Chiefs who exploited them materially, sexually, and financially. Some women in Okigwe started to launch agitation against the administration. The movement swept through much of Igbo land east of the Niger, following the same pattern. The pattern, according to Isichei is that

A band of women would appear before the house of a warrant chief, symbolically sweep his compound, and deliver a message through a song and dance. They would then demand money, and ask that he should send the message further.

The demands made by the women were basically classified into three: for social reform, for a return to the customs of the past which had been badly bastardised, and for what could be called an extension of women's rights. Some of their demands were feminist in tone: men should not plant cassava but leave it for women as, according to Igbo culture, cassava has been a reservation for women while yam is for men. Another demand was that men should not go to the market but women should. Though this movement was not very successful, it engineered a very successful women protest movement that can never be forgotten in the history of Nigeria. This was the Aba women riot of 1929, called "*Ogu umunwanyị*"-women's war (Isichei 1976:151-159, Ikeanyibe 1997:12). This riot emanated from a scuffle which ensued between a woman Nwanyeruwa, and a school master deligated by a warrant chief. The warrant chief too was deligated by a young British officer in the Oloko Bende division of Igbo land who then wanted to check the accuracy of local population returns. As both parties disagreed, Nwanyeruwa, already unhappy because of her son's wife's death and the general colonial master's oppression of the Igbo, quickly ran to a church women meeting going on around her house. The church women already expecting an avenue to explode and fight it out with the colonial masters and their agents moved out en masse in an indignant protest. The whole warfare then turned out to be a protest against women taxation which rumour carried that the colonial masters were about to introduce. Again, they protested against the extortion of the warrant chiefs. Later on, the protest escalated into a total rejection of the whole colonial presence. In the end, so many people lost their lives but they succeeded. They made the colonial masters change their mode of administration and the idea of women paying tax never materialised till today, except for women working in the civil service.

One might wonder why it was the women that were bold enough to fight a war, which the men could have fought. The answer lies in Isichei (1976:155) who opines that "the women seem to have had a strange confidence in their invulnerability. They compared themselves with the vultures in the market, which no one ever harms." Obviously, the women relied on the Igbo cultural belief that one who kills a woman has killed a nation; they believed, that women should not be killed even during war. A fact which the Aba women failed to remember was that the British were not Igbo people and might not have agreed with that idea. This was why the colonial masters then killed so many of the rioters without any regrets which no Igbo



would have done, except accidentally, no matter how serious a war is. Another reason why Igbo men do not fight against women in a mob action or as protest group is that one may, while fighting the group, kill his own relation: sister, wife or daughter. This is because, in Igbo society, women are bound by their associational decisions, once one is a member of a group, whatever the group decides to do is binding on all the members and whatever they agree upon must be executed. This may be why the writers cited above, especially the white ones, believed that there was an equal power relation among both sexes in Igbo land. They tended to focus on the activities of women group more than the subjugation and suppressions the Igbo women as individuals are exposed to by their culture due to patriarchy.

Feminism as a Western political ideology has attracted much attention in Igbo land, with mixed feelings. The increased emancipation of women educationally, socially, politically and religiously and its positive contribution towards the development of the Nigerian nation as a whole has influenced some educated Igbo men and women to welcome it. However, some educated and uneducated masses in Igbo society frown at Western feminism because they feel that feminism has come to destroy the Igbo people's culture.

One of the major reasons some Igbo men reject feminism is the fact that feminism may disempower men and reduce them to a subordinate position. To such men, it is an abomination for the status of women to change from what it used to be in the days of their forefathers. To some typical Igbo men and women, anything that subverts the stereotype laid down by their forefathers is an abomination and should never be acceptable to them. Some lazy women who are lucky to have rich and caring husbands believe that a woman's servile and subordinate position is natural and acceptable. Such women exclude themselves from certain spheres of social or political activities on account of self-imposed scale of preferences given the realities of their biological circumstances. Those women who choose to decide otherwise in this society are highly stigmatised. Some others including some educated women, feel that in Igbo society, roles are perfectly stereotyped leaving the less attractive and energy-sapping jobs for men, and so there should be no need for women emancipation when the women are not in any way oppressed by their men. Such women have come to live with the oppressions they encounter in their various homes and the society at large because they have been groomed in the culture to see such oppressions as normal life and a cross that they must happily carry due to their gender. Women

feminists who try to persuade such people against such beliefs are seen as societal deviants, prostitutes, and 'male women' who want to subvert nature.

Some educated Igbo men who are highly embittered by the feminist pursuit of women include: Chinweizu (1990:11), Nnolim (1994:248), Ezeh (2000b: 38-61) and Nnonyelu (2003). They argue that evidences that there has never been gender discrimination against women in traditional Igbo land abounds. Ezeh (2000b: 38-61) argues that examples of such evidence are reflected in the Igbo language. He uses some linguistic evidences to buttress his point. He states that, unlike in some European languages pronoun is gender-neutral in the Igbo language. For instance, the word "mmadu" (human being) refers to humans both male and female. In the same way, the pronoun *o/o* could refer to "he" or "she." depending on the vowel harmony rule of the Igbo language. Nnonyelu (2003:45) challenges the taking-for-granted assumptions on feminism and women liberation, noting that Igbo women do not need feminism because they are not marginalised in any way. He demonstrates that "contrary to popular notions, women are not underdogs, but are even in "charge". Nnonyelu buttresses his point by saying that men's lives are spent in their endeavour to satisfy women either as mothers, wives, girlfriends, or concubines. He states that some men in Igbo land refer to their wives as "*onye m na -agbali odigbo*" (She that I serve, or she that I labour for). He believes that

The fact that men's overall activities revolve around the satisfaction of women -mother, girlfriend, bride, or wife is an eloquent testimony that women are not bereft of power, but are custodians of power themselves. Female power is not only supreme in human society. It is ubiquitous (2003; 49).

Chinweizu (1990:11) also avers that the life cycle of man from birth to death may be divided into three contiguous phases of female power which dominates him: mother power, girlfriend power and wife power. Chinweizu agrees that women are able to get whatever they desire "be it riches, or thrones, or the head of John the Baptist, or routine exemption from hardships and risks which their men folk are obliged to endure" (Chinweizu 1990:11).

Chinweizu goes further to explain that some Igbo females use the kitchen as a control centre where they control men with hunger strategy. Another centre for women control raised by him is both the traditional and Western marriage which most

men spend their lives earnings upon. To the Igbo woman, marriage becomes a thing of celebration whereby the primary objectives are:

- (a) To keep the husband productive of enough wealth, status, power, fame, and so on as well as satisfy the wife's own ambitions and
- (b) To keep him from running away, however harrowingly she exploits him. Women, over the years, have shown the highest sense of professionalism in husband management. Patriarchal order may not only be paradoxical but also illusory.

These male scholars who quarrel with the theory of feminism and its ideologies may not be wrong outright. It is true that Igbo culture has role division of labour which accredits the tough and risky roles to men but these men forgot that in the same way, Igbo women have their own roles which may be more energy-sapping and time-consuming, and more of brain racking exercises. An important aspect of this role sharing hinges on the fact that men have all the freedom to act or not act but the women do not have such freedom of choice. They are under obligation by culture to act appropriately in order not to attract some beating, stigmatisation, or other punishment either from men or from both men and women of the society. Again, these men failed to think of the burden being borne by especially working class women of the present Igbo society. These women play the traditional role of men in providing for their families by working either in the public or private spheres of life to make ends meet. They act as mothers, family nurses, cleaners, house attendants, and wives to their husbands. On the contrary, responsible modern men only fend for their families, excluding all the roles played by women.

Apart from the above male scholars that disagree with feminist intentions and moves, it is also disheartening to know that many non-literate Igbo women and men too object to the feminist movement seeing it as trying to destroy traditional gender roles. They agree that divorce; single parenthood and non-traditional gender roles brought by Western feminism advocates are harmful to children and the family at large. Some of them believe that feminism in Igbo land may breed a fundamentally unworkable self-destructive and stagnant society. Many of the educated feminists shy away from being openly tagged feminists while some, like Buchi Emecheta in her interview with Marie Umeh argues that she is a feminist with a small "f" (Kolawole, 1997). It is even more agonising that some educated Igbo women who claim to be feminist critics argue that Igbo women are not suppressed by their culture because of

the care that culture demands that a man should provide for his wife and children. This role of men so much eclipsed their memory that they overlook the fact that Igbo women need to be empowered, educationally (because so many Igbo women were deprived of education initially and this has left Igbo society full of non-literate female adults) economically, politically and socially. They could not think of the following deprivations which Igbo women experience: wives in their husbands' homes depending on the success of their biological function as mothers most especially mothers of males / male, lack of property ownership, victims of widowhood practices and more.

As we can see from the foregoing, the Igbo culture has been a great barrier to the emancipation of Igbo women. The culture influences greatly the Igbo view of life, their belief system, their expectations and prejudices. All these affect their ideas of what is wrong and what is proper in terms of feminism. The Igbo believe that a male imbecile is still better than a female genius. The above reason explains why many male and female Igbo frown at feminism if not for the little awareness that is being created through the concerted efforts of the government, some women non-governmental organisations, the media and some female politicians. People are afraid of being stigmatised and tagged culture breakers, *nwaanyi chaka akwu* (I too know women), frustrated women, women who are fighting nature and so forth.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that feminism in Igbo society is moving forward gradually. The pace is very slow because many females are yet to realise why it should be accepted wholeheartedly for a total change of the Igbo society. The men are afraid because they feel that it may in the end deprive them of their patriarchal rights, power, their natural, cultural and Igbo religious prestigious position as first-class Igbo citizens with great freedom. The women who have been culturally inhibited cannot yet believe that it is their right to be liberated from patriarchal enslavement. Some even believe that it is an abomination for women to be given equal right, equal opportunities and total emancipation. They see it as a distortion of nature and the will of God Almighty.

Furthermore, despite the attitude of many Igbo towards the objectives of Western feminist philosophy, some women activists, women politicians and professional women have received feminism, whether as womanism or African feminism with open hands. One of such outstanding personalities is Mrs. Eunice Ukamaka Egwu, wife of the former Ebonyi State Governor. In the interview granted

her by Mr. John Agha on *Widowhood Practices* on the first of December, 2004 during an N.T.A programme titled Morning Periscope, she used her office to create awareness among Igbo women and made many Igbo women to come out of their shells and embrace feminism. She has among other things, established a family law centre headed by a female lawyer in Ebonyi State. About five hundred and fifty one (551) women- related cases, especially widowhood cases, have already been handled by this centre and the centre has a mobile department which goes to various fields in the state to settle cases involving women without much protocol. Her foundation builds houses for widows, has some adult education projects for female uneducated adults, offers jobs to widows and gives widows financial support to start petty trading.

In Anambra State too, a widow and a chief magistrate in the state judiciary system Oby Nwankwo, champions the course of widows and helps to create awareness among women in Anambra State. She in the interview granted her by Mr. John Agha in the same Morning Periscope N.T.A. Enugu, confessed that she refused to scrape her hair as one of the widowhood practices in their town. According to her, their community believed that women who refuse to scrape their hair in mourning for their late husbands die before a year after the man's death. In her case, she did not observe this oppressive custom and has not died many years after then. Currently, the Imo State Governor's wife and that of Enugu State have borrowed a leaf from the Ebonyi State Governor's wife. They are all involved in the promotion of women's course, especially that of the down trodden females and widows.

The status of Igbo women has in the past years improved. Now there are many Igbo educated women. Few of them are professors; and medical doctors. Many of them have also obtained their various master degree certificates, many first-degree holders while some are undergraduates. There are, however, still some Igbo females who are non-literates and primary and secondary school dropouts.

In terms of tradition, education, Christianity and feminism have re-shaped so many aspects of Igbo tradition but there are still core-traditions that would need very radical feminist movements to change. For instance, it was an abomination to install females as chiefs, but, these days, there are Igbo female chiefs. The most difficult task is the possibility of women leadership as kings or regents. There is also the problem of creating mass awareness campaign to make all classes of Igbo women see the need for the feminist struggle. This is because some Igbo women do not accept feminism yet. Such women need to be persuaded on why women should fight oppressive

culture. Another difficult task is the possibility of making Igbo women who are in core decision-making organs in the government of Igbo land to continue to struggle for the full emancipation of Igbo women from the dominating shackles of patriarchal bondage. There is hope for Igbo women's total emancipation in the near future. This is because, according to Stark (1987:33), culture is "the complex way of living that humans have developed, that they pass on from one generation to the next." It is clear that culture is society made; so, it is dynamic. It can change to adapt new ideas, knowledge, truths, beliefs, and concepts. Igbo culture cannot be allowed to remain static, unprogressive, and repressive to the women-folk. Any culture that ceases to grow and change for better loses its relevance and usefulness to the people and it is as good as dead. Igbo culture is culture in transition, like any other culture; it must be made to dance to the tune of the demands of those who own it. It must be made to observe the needs of about half of the population that practise it (that is women). This must be done in order to purge all human practices that deny women their rights as full citizens of Igbo land and Nigeria as a country. In other words, the theory of feminism is necessary in Igbo society to erase all harmful traditional beliefs, practices, and taboos that militate against women.

Igbo feminism should put into consideration some of the objectives of feminism that the Igbo man will find hard to swallow. Care should be taken to persuade the society to accept the new changes in the cultural belief. Some of these areas are royal leadership, equality of man and woman at home, equality of sexes, equality in the sharing of domestic duties, equality of man and woman in the sharing and the ownership of landed property, patrimony, matrilineage practices and some negative Igbo worldview of women, which are captured in the expression: '*Ala nwanayi bu eze ala ahụ alaluola*' (A land where a woman is the king is already a ruined land or a destroyed land). They believe that '*ala nwanayi na-achi, otule na-abu ha aja aja*' (Any land under the leadership of a woman, the citizens are exposed to hardship). Again, it is their saying that '*ihe o sokwara nwanayi buru o ga-anoriri n'okpuru nwoke*' (no matter the class of a woman, she must be under the control of a man). Another saying which, attaches supremacy to the man over the woman is '*ugwu nwanayi bu di*' (a woman's dignity lies on her ability to have a husband). The Igbo strongly believe that '*Nwa nwanayi zuru, ndu ya na-ada mmarukwo*' (Any child trained by a woman lives a life of had-I-known meaning that he always lives a life full of regrets).

The above sayings summarise, to some extent, the value of women in Igbo society. They are seen as bad and wicked leaders, weaklings who must be dependent on men for survival and people who cannot survive without the presence of men in their lives. They also believe that any man who is not careful with women would be killed so soon. That is why they say that "*nwoke nwaanyi egbughi na-adi ogologo ndu*" (A man who avoids death at the hand of a woman, lives long). This goes to support their reason for interpreting the word '*nwaanyi*' (woman) to mean "*nwa nyiri anyi*" (an impossible child) meaning that women are a difficult class of human beings that men should be very careful in dealing with, as they are quite impossible. The above views of the Igbo society against Igbo women are some of the ideas that feminism in Igbo society will help to change.

#### 2.4.2 Sociology of Literature and Feminism

Here, we shall consider the sociological perspective of literature in relation to feminist literary theory. According to Arohunmolase (1997:42), "literature is about the experience of man and his conception of life in any given society." For instance, Igbo literature is about the experience of the Igbo people and their conception of life in Igbo society. Sociology, on the other hand, according to Kirby et al (1997:1), means the science of society which studies human behaviour. The word sociology is split into two parts: "socio" meaning "the study of society" (Kirby et al 1997:1) while "ology" means "a science." According to Margaret Thatcher, a former Prime Minister of Great Britain, society means "individuals and their families" (Kingdom, 1992:11). She says this because, to her, it is the family that makes up the society. Studying individuals and their families means studying the society. In other words, sociology means the scientific study of individuals and their families. It is a distinct social study which emerged in the nineteenth century as result of two broad sets of changes in the human society which occurred in the eighteenth century: changes in the way people lived, most notably seen in the industrial revolution and the French Revolution. Following this was the changes in the way people thought about the world, particularly in the rise of the set of ideas known as the Enlightenment age (Kirby et al 1997:12).

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) is most famous for actually inventing the term sociology and for promoting it as the main element in his positive philosophy (Comte 1877, Orig. Pub. 1830:2). He argues that sociological theory sees society as

the construction of individuals and studies it by considering how those individuals interact together to make and remake society. To Spencer (1874 & 1896), sociological theory studies society as being regulated merely by the mutual self-interest of individuals and all that is needed is exchange and trade between individuals. He advocates that it is through individual freedom that society would be stabilised (Kirby 1997:13). It is on this idea of how the society could be stabilised that a link between feminism, sociology, and literature is based. Each of this trio has individual objectives for the society. In fact, feminism is like a product of sociology, which tackles or revolts against some social and economic odds stacked against women. It is like a branch of sociology that studies, analyses, and revolts against unequal distribution of power between men and women in patriarchal societies. Feminists refer to this power differentiation as

- (1) Subordination, which refers to the manner in which patriarchal social structures inevitably, produces unequal interpersonal relations between men and women.
- (2) Oppression, which refers to the manner in which women experience sexism, a process of unfounded social discrimination whereby men claim authority over women.
- (3) Exploitation, a term borrowed from Marxism to refer to the manner in which men appropriate women's skills and labour without rewarding them (Humm 1992: 200).

According to Humm (1992: 200), a patriarchal society is "... crucial to contemporary feminism because feminism needed a term by which the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations, which affect women, could be expressed." In other words, inasmuch as sociology and literature are interested in human societies, feminism is concerned with how women are treated in patriarchal societies. Another important link between sociology, feminism and literature is that all of them are interested in studying individual behaviour for the purpose of change in human intellect, welfare and in many other areas of human interaction.

Sociology highlights the distinguishing elements that make people appear as a group within a group. It studies the observable and exhibited behaviours of people as they manifest in human interactions in society. According to Onyeonoru (1994:54-58), the word sociology is used by Auguste Comte to describe the scientific study of patterns of group behaviour in the society in order to identify the norm and the deviation in patterns of human behaviour. This leads the study of patterns of behaviour to rest on the framework of the social action theory. This theory examines



the reasons for human action from the point of view of the different groups involved. The action theory determines why each group takes particular courses of action and exhibit particular attitudes and behaviours. The relationship between sociology and literature lies in their interest in people's behaviour and interaction in the society. Welleck and Warren (1952:94 - 95) describe literature as "... a social institution, using as its media, language, a social creation." Literature represents the life of human beings in a society. It raises some social questions as regarding the culture of a people, their customs, standards, styles, symbols and myths. Literary artists use literature as a social force through which they reflect the life of their societies. They, like sociologists, are interested in people and society. Through literature, literary artists reflect the realities of the society and, through them; life may be reproduced for better or may be moulded. According to Arohunmolase (1997:42), through literature, "people in a society may be taught to pattern their lives as seen in the struggle by fictional characters to free themselves from oppression." Through literature, people's lives can be exposed to others. Their mistakes and corrections of such mistakes help to mould others who read about them. People can transcend oppressions around them through the knowledge they gained from literature. These functions of literature can be summed up in the statements of Anpe (1990:63) who observes that literary art is always in the service of the people in its society as an agent of entertainment and change. Another point added by Anpe (1990:63) is that literature functions as an agent of education. In fact, it could be explained further as a vital instrument for articulating and interpreting the realities and aspirations of a society.

Having noted the above points, Plekhanov (1957:11), Adraine Roscoe (1977:30), and Irele (1971:1) among several others, opine that literature is a work of deep imagination and creativity and that, unlike history, it creates factual reality in creative form. Anpe calls literature "a mirror of the reality that exists in the society" (1990:63). Some critics disagree with Anpe because they feel that literature is an imagination of the real society; it does not give exact information like a good mirror. Literature does not develop from a vacuum, rather, it is, like Ngugi (1972:48) observes, shaped and conditioned by the social realities of life and reflects an imaginative portrayal of real life. Eagleton (1983:6) emphasises that literature is "the living situation of men and women in its rich variousness." Palmer (1979:2) adds that "It evolves out of a people's historical and cultural experiences". Igbo literature, for example, evolves from Igbo people's history and culture.

All the above definitions point to the fact that literature indirectly portrays the intricate relationship that exists among people in a fictional mode. It is for this reason, that Zerrafa (1976; 11) avers that the essence of a literary work lies in "the connection between the real and the imaginary." Nevertheless, it is noteworthy here that no matter how a literary work brings its actions to reality, it gives room to what new literary critics call "*the intentional fallacy*" (Wimsatt 1968:193-225, Wimsatt (Jr.) and Beardsley 1954:2-8, Polletta 1973: 194-206, Fokkema and Kunne Ibsch 1977: 88, and Slaughter 1980). This means the author's mind or intentions and the way he felt for creating a work of art. It refers also to what inspired the author to write a literary work. These facts about the author may be difficult to determine from the text of the author.

Society whether in literature or in sociology, is made up of people, institutions, and relationships. It refers to a group of people that are united by common culture, values, belief system and institution. These values and beliefs are sometimes exclusive to a particular group or groups within a larger and differentiated unit.

Like sociology, literature is deeply concerned with man's interaction, human behaviour, and the relationships among people as they come together within a society. These could be in form of family, marriage, kinship, religion, politics, economy, law and education. These institutions also help in moulding the lives of the people in the society. The product of these variables in the environment and society are men and women. The society and the environment influences on men and women could be manifested in both overt and covert behaviours. These behaviours, in turn, result in a network of relationships among human beings with different background, culture and religious beliefs.

Apart from the above factors, sex, economic status and age equally differentiate society. Otite and Ogiowo (1979:67) observe that "society as a concept does not lend itself to a single and acceptable definition. One outstanding fact is that the different definitions all have a meeting point. They agree that society is all about people, institutions and relationships. For instance, Otite and Ogiowo (1979:41) describe society as

A group of people... a unit consisting of institutions and culture, which are exclusive to a group of people. A network of relationships... all three definitions refer to two

basic and interrelated issues... human beings of all ages and of both sexes live in groups and share the same culture.

This means that society which is made up of men and women, who are differentiated by sex, is a heterogeneous entity. It is made up of males and females that are also differentiated by age; there are babies, children, adolescents and adults. Society is therefore a stratum of units, segments, and classes.

Literature as a mirror of the society reflects the strata of units, segments and classes found in a society. A lot of Igbo literary texts reflect typical class differentiation in typical Igbo society. An example of literary text that depicts such class differentiation is Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). In this novel, the class differentiation among traditional Igbo people is portrayed. Men are classified according to their age group (through the age grade system). Acquisition of Chieftancy titles, the number of yam barns, wives and children and acquisitions of domestic animals are indexes of differentiation. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo, the protagonist, points out that being a man biologically does not completely make a man belong to the class of real men. He may belong to the class of the 'generic man' to which women are generally grouped. In *Things Fall Apart*, a man who has not achieved much financially and socially is not a complete man in the social setting; rather, he is a sub-man, 'Nwoke Nwaanyi' as the Igbo may call it.

The foregoing explanations above show that literature shows the societal or class differentiation found in real life. Roberts (1997:14) in a related study, classifies women into different sub-divisions; she also describes the various sub-divisions as social types. Her classifications are based on women in relation to others around her. She then describes women in three groups. The first group comprises the under listed:

1. Women with husband but no child (ren).
2. Women with children but no husbands.
3. Women with dead husbands.
4. Educated career mothers and wives.
5. Educated full-time wives and mothers.

The second group refers to women brought together by blood relationships like cousin, sister, niece, aunt and grandmother. The third group emphasises women in marriage relationships: mother-in-law, sister-in-law.

Women in the society also could be talked about in spatial dimension as in neighbour relationship: co-workers, business neighbours or partners. The interactions of the various classes of women in various dimensions, with men and the Igbo

cultural environment in a patriarchal society have resulted in the different images women have in Igbo society. The image of women portrayed in Igbo literature automatically becomes the mirror of what Igbo society feel about Igbo women and the actual manifestations of these women's behaviour in that society.

#### 2.4.3 Literature and Feminism

Literature is defined as a creative writing of recognised artistic value or any written or spoken material, but the term most often refers to creative works ([www.cogscriprinceton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn](http://www.cogscriprinceton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn)). Literature includes poetry, drama, fiction and many kinds of non-fiction writings, as well as oral, dramatic, and broadcast compositions not necessarily preserved in a written format, such as films and television programmes ([www.galegroup.com/free](http://www.galegroup.com/free)). Literature is a vital instrument for articulating and interpreting the realities and aspirations of a society. As a result, it becomes a vital instrument in the development of any nation and a great source of revolutionary propaganda and social change. Adewoye (1988); Nnolim (1992); Ogunjinmi (1994:51-56) and Akorede (2005) have discussed, at great length, the importance of literature from these perspectives. Anpe (1990:63) also describes literary art as a dynamic social force. Literature is used to develop human knowledge. The development of human knowledge leads to the promotion of the welfare of humans and the development of human environment that is human society. One method literature adopts in the achievement of the above goals is awakening people's consciousness.

Literature is linked to society because it reflects social life in its entire ramifications and it could be decoded through an understanding of the society from which it emanates. This is because literature is produced by the society. Literature is an imaginative portrayal of societal life because according to Eagleton (1983:16), "literature reflects the living situation of men and women in its rich variousness." In effect, one sees literature as society-based which according to Palmer (1979:2), develops out of "a people's historical and cultural experience." This is why it becomes obvious that the essence, quality, distinctness and relevance of a literary work "lie in the connection between the real and the imaginary" (Zerrafa 1976:11). The link between literature and reality in a work of art is very necessary, as it is the only way it can be useful to the society, maybe for reformatory purposes, as

propaganda or for a better social change. This was the opinion of Mwa (1950: 66 – 67) when he claims that

Artist and writers of high promise must go into the midst of the masses of workers, peasants and soldier ... into the passionate struggle, which is the proper way to observe, learn, all brilliant patterns of life and struggle and all the raw materials of art and literature before they go into writing.

It is on the pivot of society that literature and feminism are linked up. They are all societal and socially generated. Feminism is a movement against the subordinate position of women as a result of their interaction with men in a society-based and culturally patriarchal environment. The various theories of feminism which give way to the various feminist movements are based on the social interaction of men and women in their various societies. One of the major tools adopted by many feminists was essay writing. This way, many feminists are known as such due to their written publications, which may not be pure literary art but conveys a societal problem and a move for revolution. Even many of the feminist theories were adaptations of some historical and sociological works of great thinkers who studied their societies and thought of the way to achieve social changes for the betterment of humanity. One of such feminist thinkers is Mary Wollstonecraft (1792/1975) who wrote the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Another is Betty Friedan's (1963/1983) who wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, the book that stimulated the revival of the American women's movement in the mid-1960 (Anderson 1997). Others are the works of Alice Walker who wrote *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), *The Colour Purple* (1973), *Meridan* (1976), *The Search for our Mother's Gardens Womanist Prose* (1984) and *Breaking Bread* (1981). It is through her works that the idea of womanism was introduced and other feminists borrowed the term from her.

Another obvious fact about literature and feminism is that they are both culturally based. Literature draws its imagination from the people's culture, especially the cultural environment of the author, his cultural understanding of life and the interaction of man and woman in the society. In the same way, feminism recognises the patterns of gender relations, as they exist in various cultures of the world.

In this study, examining some literary plays like those chosen for this work will enhance our knowledge of Igbo culture, the interaction between Igbo women and their men and the resultant effect of this relationship on women. This is because Igbo literature emanates from Igbo society through the various writers and has mirrored

that society. Therefore studying the situation of Igbo women in literature will provide a good ground for us to find answers to some feminist questions, such as those of Rich (1976). He/she asks the following questions: "what is life like for women?" Why is there so much violence against women? And why do women clean the offices and men manage them?" Such criticism raised from literature will create a new awareness of the situation of women in society and history. They can form the basis of new feminist theories and can create new questions and new issues for further investigations in the feminist movement.

Literature also has the advantage of mass publicity, which is another indispensable tool in feminism. Imagine the revolution created by the works of earlier feminists that till today people make references to them. Women such as Mary Wollstencraft, Alice Walker and others like Simeon De-Beauvoir who wrote *The second sex* (1952).

#### 2.4.4 Deficit, Dominance and Difference Theories of Gender

In this section, we consider three theories of gender which are based on language and gender. They are the deficit, dominance and difference theories of gender (Lakoff 1975, Talbot 1998:130, Otto 1922:24 and Crawford 1995). We shall discuss these three but overlapping theories one after the other.

##### 2.4.4.1 The Deficit Framework

This framework is of the opinion that "women are disadvantaged as language users" (Talbot: 1998:130). This theory is characterised by Lakoff's (1975) hypothesis that "there is a distinct women's language characterised by excessive politeness, lack of confidence and eagerness to please. Spender (1985) supports this hypothesis with his assertion that "language is man made." According to these scholars, men made language and, as a result, have imbued men's language with vigour, imagination and creativity. Otto (1922:246) maintains that a language "becomes languid and insipid." The deficit theory, which is in line with the hypothesis made by the above scholars, argues that women's language is deficit of the authority, vigour, imagination and creativity in men's language. Lakoff (1975), comparing the language used by men and that used by women, suggests that there is a distinct language which refers to "both language used by women, and language used about women." It is a result of the deficitness of women's language to men's that Spender (1985) reiterates that "the

amount of women's talk is not measured against men's but against silence". The theory is of the opinion that women's language is inferior to men's language and deficient (Bergvall, Bing, and Fred 1996:1). In other words, the language men use is the norm which women do not match in meaning, and that woman's language deviates from an implicit male norm. It states that woman's language lack power and authority.

#### 2.4.4.2 **The Dominance Framework**

This framework observes language patterns to be interpreted as manifestations of a patriarchal social order. It interprets asymmetries in the language used by men and women as enactments of male patriarchal privilege (West and Fishman 1978, 1983, DeFrancisco 1991, Spender 1985, 1992). The proponents of this theory believe that the powerfulness of male speech hinges around some socio-cultural practices of stereotyped roles which both male and female individuals are exposed to from early childhood. Secondly, scientists have proved that men, due to their high testosterone levels which make them aggressive always, have a dominant feature and dominate the female. In support of the issue of male hormone effect, Andrea Dworkin an American Feminist (1979:515) asserts that "violence is male and the male is the penis." Fishman (1998) believes that in the conversational division of labour, women are found to work hard to keep conversations going with their husbands and when the husbands want to speak, they do so with power or authority. She observes that "just as there is an unequal division of labour in the workplace on sexual grounds, so the 'labour' in private conversations is divided unequally." Whereas men's speech are problem-solving, report, lecturing, show public status, oppositional and independent, women's speech in conversations show sympathy, rapport, private connection, support, intimacy, smaller vocabulary, intensifying adverbs, volume without substance. The theory views women's speech as channelled towards their stereotype roles as nurtures, celebration of motherly qualities. It could be used to support the traditional, conversational idealisation of womanhood.

Male speech shows male power and privilege. Men are said to enjoy a sense of entitlement to act entirely on their own and to make unilateral decisions. This is a form of social empowerment which women do not enjoy and which has so much affected their speech that they are more or less restrictive. In essence, the theory declares that men dominate women in language.

The problem with the dominance theory is linked with the last sentence above. Is it all men that dominate women in language? This issue raises doubts about the monolithic perception of patriarchy as argued above. How about in situations where women are more empowered than the men? In what institutions, situations and genres do male dominate women? These are some questions that beg for answers.

#### 2.4.4.3 **The Difference Framework**

The difference gender theory is based on the fact that the differences found in male and female language are offshoots of gender-specific cultures. It states that "the difference model depends on a two-culture account of male and female socialisation" (Gumperz 1982). The theory is a product of the works of Gumperz and his associates on cross-cultural miscommunication. It asserts that as people are growing up, women and men spend their time in sub-cultures with different social organisations. Children learn the rules of friendly interaction from their peers, not from adults. They grow up in gender-specific cultures. It is offered as an alternative to the dominance model as an explanation for patterns of language use. With the difference theory, behaviour previously perceived as men's efforts to dominate women in interaction is reinterpreted "as a 'cross-culture' phenomenon, a result of mismatches in what men and women expect interaction to be like (Talbot 1998:131). The difference theory is therefore postulated to explain misunderstandings between women and men.

One outstanding fact as noted in Talbot (1998:132) and Cameron (1995a, 1996:11,132,146) is that the difference and dominance models can be used together, so that they complement one another. Men and women are socialised into male-female sub-cultures. Patriarchal social relations affect men and women differently and in men's favour. The difference model has prevailed both in the academic world and in the wider culture. This does not present ethical and practical difficulty in the course of research, unlike the dominance model.

#### 2.4.4.4 **Feminism, Deficit, Dominance and Difference Theories and Literature**

Dominance and difference frameworks represent particular moments in feminism. Dominance framework was introduced during the period of feminist outrage of bearing witness to oppression in all aspects of women's lives; Difference framework was introduced during the period of feminist celebration, reclaiming and revaluing women's distinctive cultural traditions (Cameron 1996:41). These



theoretical frameworks were adopted to study the status and value accorded to the woman through the language used on women and the language women use.

It therefore becomes necessary to discuss language and gender especially as they relate to the female because language reflects society. Literature has its roots in the society, and feminism is also society focused. Literature portrays an imagination of the reality in society, just like social divisions on gender grounds are reflected in patterns of language use. The link between feminism, the deficit, dominance and difference theories in the study of literature is that they are all based on the improvement of society and the humans that make it up. The feminists' interest in language lies in the part it plays alongside other social practices and institutions, in reflecting, creating and denaturalising gender divisions in society.

#### 2.4.5 Marxism and Feminism

Marxism is a theory adopted in the critical analysis of history, society, revolution, and economics and latter literature. It was adopted as a social theory from the written work of Marx 1818-1883 and Engels 1820-1895 (1968:1-30). Many literary theorists built their theories on these works. Their writings did not develop systematically but were disorganised. However, they convincingly claim that class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie would definitely lead to the overthrow of capitalism and this would eventually result in a social progressive change.

Marx's and Engel's analysis of women oppression which links Marxism and feminism together is drawn from their writing on the family, especially Engels essay: *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the state* published in 1884, after Marx's death. Engels avers that production and reproduction are the determining factors of history. He sees family relations as derived from the economic mode of production. Both of them describe the family under capitalism as a microcosm of the society's larger class relations; so, particularly in bourgeois families, the wife is the proletariat. Engels (1884/1972:137) claims that, in the great majority of cases today, at least in the possessing classes, the husband is obliged to earn a living and support his family. This gives him a position of supremacy in the family without any legal ties and privileges. The husband, because he has economic power within the family, is the bourgeois. They argue that household work done by women is under the private service in advanced capitalism and it loses the public character. Similarly, they see

women's household chores as unpaid economic services to man and the society as a whole.

Marxism and feminism are related because they are all theories of change. They all agree that women are oppressed in the society and, so need to liberate themselves from the shackles of capitalism and patriarchy respectively. Whereas Marxism links up women oppression to capitalism and property possession by men and agrees that the men enslave women and that women should take up a class struggle for liberation, feminism is a revolt against women's oppression. In this case, Marxism is the eye opener to feminist to identify the mode of women oppression by men. It exposes feminists for the area of attack, which is the family. Feminism, using Marxism ideology, will consider the position of women in the family. This includes the level of women property ownership, the economic level of women: the nature of women's jobs, both the paid and the unpaid services rendered by women in the family and in the society at large and a call for a move for liberation from the oppressive areas. Whereas Marxism sees the bourgeoisie as the oppressor and the proletariat as the oppressed, feminism sees man as the oppressor while the women are the oppressed. In addition, Marxism believes in the emancipation of the working class, which is the proletariat, while feminism believes in the emancipation of women. Both theories believe in emancipation through revolt.

Adopting the Marxist theory in this study will expose us to the oppressive position and services of Igbo women in the family and in Igbo society as a whole, with particular reference to the women character's in the plays under study. It will consider the level of property ownership and the nature of the work Igbo women are into. It will also consider the marriage relationship between Igbo men and women, and see whether it is based on pure monogamy or masked monogamy for both men and women as suggested by Marx and Engels. It will consider the nature of jobs engaged in by women in Igbo society, whether they are of the private or the public sectors and why they are so. Marxism is necessary in the analysis of a work of this type because to the Marxists, literature is a tool of radical revolution.

Marxism views literature as a historical approach, which in relation to life should accomplish three goals. The first is to cast light on and clarify the text itself. This identifies the text's reference to history with specific allusions to people, political events, economic developments, and so on. The second goal describes the author as an artist with a past and a predisposition to write in a certain manner. It may

be an author's history of life and work. Thirdly, it goes to grasp the historical forces that shaped a literary work. Later on, Marx see history as a field of discourse in which literature and criticism make their own impact as political forces. In this Marxist view of literary criticism, "the critic is an intellectual proletariat who promotes, Cultural Revolution, through a political commitment in literary studies" Lukacs (1962:7). Thus, a Marxist critic should be an educated proletariat who, through his writings, can lead cultural revolutions through the way he dedicates his artwork to politics.

As Marxist literary theory continued to develop, according to Williams (1977), the central tenet of Marxist literary criticism sees literature and art as social practices that cannot be separated from other kinds of social practices as they are subject to special and distinct laws. According to him, although they may have specific features as practices, they cannot be separated from the general social process. Balibar and Pierre (1981:79-99) buttress this thus

Literature does not fall from the heavens, the product of a mysterious creation, but is the product of social practice, neither is it an imaginary activity albeit it produces imaginary effects but inescapably part of a material process.

This shows that literature is a product of the society and should be used to change any aspect of the social life if it is made political. This is the contention of contemporary Marxists who believe that literature and criticism should become more overtly political, that it should not only be interpreted as art work but should also be used to change the world.

As a social phenomenon, Marxism is related to literature in that it is a social movement, which uses literature as a social documentation of history to achieve its revolutionary change. They are all socially related. Marxist sociology of literature is a scientific theory of human societies and how the oppressed in these societies can change the oppression against them through organised struggles of the masses to free themselves from exploitations and oppressions. Marxist literary theory approaches literature with the intention of understanding the historical forces depicted in the literary text. Also, it intends to understand the historical forces in showing and revealing the ways by which a literary work reacts, negates, and distances itself from the society in order to explain systematically how literature is regarded as a part of a known and established society.

Feminism and Marxism are also closely related theories. They are both theories of power and class struggle. The contrast between them is that while Marxists view feminism as bourgeois, feminists view Marxism as male-oriented but they arrive at a compromise in their ideologies, which are aimed at the freedom of the oppressed and the fact that they are all products of societal history. According to Markinson (1982:2),

Marxism and feminism are theories of power and its distribution "inequality". They pervade accounts of how social arrangements of patterned disparity can be internally rational yet unjust... In Marxism to be deprived of ones work, in feminism one's sexuality, defines each one's conception of lack of power.

As to where Marxism and feminism have the same ideologies of inequality of power, Marxism believes that in a capitalist society, power belongs to the bourgeois's while the proletariats are deprived of power because of work. In the family, man is the bourgeois because he has economic power while woman is the proletariat who works to satisfy the man without being noticed or paid for her services. Women are deprived of power because of their sex. Heidi (1981:368) is of the opinion that "the production both within and outside the family is shaped by patriarchy and capitalism." The societies that produce Marxism and feminism are patriarchal societies respectively. Both theories talk about class inequality. Marxism recognises class inequality in terms of the bourgeois versus the proletariat/working class, while feminism recognises class inequality in terms of gender. Marxism is aimed at ending the oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie's while feminism aims at ending the oppression against women. Marxism claims that there should be conscientisation, which will lead to a revolution to liberate the oppressed proletariat, but feminism claims that women are the oppressed class and that there should be a movement to emancipate them. Feminists also believe that for women to be liberated, they should be mobilized and conscientised to assert their power and that it is through women's power that women will gain freedom. According to Greer (1971:20), the women should devise their own method or device which will lead them to independence and originality. Feminism mobilises women against

...Exploitation, victimisation, marginality, expendability, powerlessness, suppressed rage, and degradation that characterise both the reality of oppression and the experience of being oppressed. (Radford-Hills, 1998: 159).

It is necessary that women struggle for their freedom just like in the Marxist theory where it is necessary that the proletariat should struggle for their freedom. Emma Goldman in *Women's Suffrage in Anarchism and Other Essays* cited in (Eboh 1999: 17) emphasises that

Women as an oppressed class of the lesson of history.... should in seeking their liberation, amply assert their power. It is necessary that women learn that lesson that she realizes that her freedom will reach as far as her power to achieve her freedom reaches.

Goldman's suggestion is in line with the Marxist ideology, which puts the oppressed in charge of their freedom. In the appreciation of Igbo plays, like those in this study, applying a Marxist feminist theory of literature will enable us study the history behind the plays, which resulted in the various plays. Using a Marxist view point will enable us see if the plays have any form of conscientisation as to enable any social change in Igbo society. The use of the feminist Marxist theory will help in raising the consciousness of Igbo women towards their powerlessness position thereby mobilising them to rise up to their freedom.

The application of the Marxist theory in this study will create room for the use of Marxist feminists ideologies like Simon de Beauvoir's (1952) *The second sex* and Kate millet's (1969) *Sexual politics* ideologies which will help us consider the cause of the inferior status of women in Igbo society. We shall be able to identify why Igbo women are allotted inferior positions and occupations.

Through the use of Marxist theory in this research, we should be able to apply the historical approach to the development of the texts under study. We should be able to refer to the playwright's history of life and work in order to come out with how their literary works evolved. The adoption of the Marxist theory in this study will also help us to study how the playwrights have used their works to promote Cultural Revolution dedicated to feminist politics in order to change the Igbo society. We should also be informed of how the literary texts under study react negate or distance themselves from the Igbo society. The study will also help us to be able to analyse how the plays under study have portrayed the inhibitions of Igbo women in Igbo society and the possible avenues of class revolution suggested by the texts. We should be able to examine the type of labour and employment the Igbo women indulge in and why they are exposed to such jobs. From our findings, cases will be established for

the intention of creating a change for the better in the lives of Igbo women in particular and Nigeria as a nation.

#### 2.4.6 Structuralism and Feminism

Structuralism was a result of a later development in the study of linguistics. Ferdinand de Saussure, (1857 – 1913) a Swiss linguist and founder of Modern Linguistics was the proponent of this theory in (De Saussure 1966: 1-5 and Davis & Schleifer, 1989: 143). Structuralism analyses the conditions that allow language and meaning to arise in a literary work. It seeks to know what Roland Barthes (1975:15) calls “the structuralist activity, which means how meaning is possible. Structuralism is a literary criticism that began with the work of Levi-Strauss’s analyses of narrative discourse in the early 1950s in France (Levi-Strauss, 1963: 1-20). His was a contribution to Saussure’s work. He is of the opinion that “the function of signs is precisely to express the one by means of the other.” This means that the aim of structuralism should be to attempt to isolate and define the conditions to meaning in culture, to articulate the relationship between the tangible entities of nature and the intelligible meanings of culture. It was with his work that structuralism was introduced to the humanities. It transformed the traditional humanities into what is now called human sciences.

It was frowned at in the United State and Europe initially at its introduction because it was generally acknowledged that this movement attempted to create a scientific examination of literature in all its dimensions. Levi-Strauss’s work suggested that any work of art must have a very good understanding of certain facts that are not contained in the work. It is interested in examining the cultural milieu which informs a literary text. Arohunmolase (1997: 44) remarks that structuralism is aimed at “investigating the relationship that exists in the cultural context which foregrounds a text and the contextual structure of the text.” Later on, according to Davis and Schliefer (1989: 143), American New Criticism and Russian Formalism sought to displace “content” in literary analysis and to focus instead on literary “form” in a detailed manner analogous to the methods of empirical research. They propose that structuralism should aim at organising the generic structures of literature into a system consistent with the inner ordering of literary works that close reading revealed.

Structuralism as a form of literary criticism is dedicated to explaining literature as a system of signs and codes and the conditions which allow that to function, including relevant cultural frames. It is to account for literature as fully and objectively as possible without recourse to such mysterious and analysable concepts as genius or inexhaustible richness or poetic language inassimilable into general linguistics. The focus of structuralism is the synchronic dimension of a text (language as opposed to speaking) and the specific way in which a text is like other texts. Furthermore, the structural comparison of texts must be based on similarities of function. For instance, the comparison could be based on character development, plot, theme, ideology and so on. These relationships among texts are what Levi-Strauss calls "homologies" (Strauss, 1963:1-20). In structural analysis, changes within and among texts or genres can be accounted for as transformations in the synchronic system. Structuralism focuses mainly on general systems rather than on individual cases. So in the analysis of literary texts, it will concern itself with those genres that are general and not individualistic.

There is a relationship between structuralism and feminism, in that they are partly based on the cultural milieu. There is no adequate discussion of feminism without a reference to the culture of the society in focus. Therefore, using structuralism in a feminist criticism of a work will create avenue for the researcher to consider the signs and codes and the cultural conditions that allow particular actions or oppressions to take place. It will help the researcher through a synchronic system, to consider the homologies and the transformations applicable to the literary texts in study in order to arrive at a conclusion. In support of the above facts, Scholes (1974:10) avers that structuralism can help us to "look at individual works, literary genres and at the whole of literature as a system within the larger system of human culture."

With the help of structuralism in a feminist study of this nature, one can consider individual author's works and literary genres as a system within a general system of human culture. This is where the relationship between sociology of literature and structuralism comes in. The signs and codes of an art work could not have emerged in a vacuum. It originated from somewhere and that is the society from which it is produced. The structuralists' study of literary works according to their genres, theme, characters and so on will inform us about the cultural life of the society which the works of art emanates from. It will also help us to understand the cultural

reasons behind some forms of oppression against the females in the society and the possibility of the emancipation of the females in such societies.

Applying the theory of structuralism in this study will help us consider the cultural background of the plays under study. We should be able to study the relationship between their characters, their themes, and the language adopted in them that relate to the women. We should also be able to consider the various aspects of female characters exhibited in the plays at various environments: women as wives, mothers, concubines, singles, and so on. How are women depicted at various fields of life; at home, politically, socially, religiously, educationally and culturally? The application of the structuralist theory will help us classify the females in the plays into different groups and sub groups according to their resemblance in character. This will help us reach a conclusion on the image of the different females involved.

#### 2.4.7 Binary Opposition and Feminism

The theory of binary opposition is an offshoot of structuralism. It will help, in this study, to fully understand the relationship between structuralism and feminism. According to Ogundeji (1982: 1-4) and Arohunmolase (1997:45), binary opposition is borrowed by the literary structuralists from the linguistic structuralists. Culler (1975:15 -16) quoting Jakobson defines binary opposition as a "... fundamental operation of the human mind, basic to the production of meaning ..., the smallest common denominator of all thoughts." Culler refers to the informing factors that result in the concept of binary opposition that is the idea of attaching meaning to thoughts. Binary opposition as explained by Selden (1985:57-8) and Culler (1975: 15-16) states that a necessary condition of binary opposition is that "the occurrence of one component demands the co-occurrence of another opposing component." This means that the existence of a particular entity compulsorily requires the co-existence of its opposite. This is in agreement with the Igbo proverb which says "*The kwuru ihe akwudebe ya*" (Every thing has a complementary partner). Adeleke (1986: 19), commenting on the theory, says that it is "The basic law of existence ... in order to aid continuity of life, providence puts two opposite sexes on earth, without the real unity of opposition, life will end."

Human societies are made up of opposition: male/ female, father/ mother, brother /sister, son/daughter, uncle /aunt, nephew /niece, and so on. An Ife historian, as cited in Ilesanmi (1998:1), would always say that "God created our world in binary



forms. Day and night, hill and valley, male and female, the aged and the young..." Qzq, in *Ojaadili* by Qdunke Artists (1977:40), having been groomed in an Igbo cultural worldview where the theory of binary opposition is upheld, laments that one of the leaves given to him must have had a second. He keeps on searching for the second until Qjaadili the warrior who gave him that brain-racking puzzle kills him. He searches for the second leaf to pair up with the only leaf left over from the five leaves placed before him because he is brought up to know that things go in pairs. The Qzq speaks:

*Ibo na ibo kwu*  
*Ibo na ibo kwu...*  
*Nwoke na nwanyi, n' Ibo n' ibo...*  
*Ugwu na ndida, n' ibo n' ibo...*  
*Elu igwe na elu ala*  
*N' ibo n' ibo*  
*Ihe di mma na ihe di njo (Qjaadili P. 40)*

*Things are in pairs...*  
*Man and woman are in pairs*  
*Mountains and valleys are in pairs*  
*Heaven and Earth are in pairs*  
*Good things and bad things are in pairs (Qjaadili P. 40)*

This theory expresses the Igbo worldview that 'two heads are better than one.' In human relationship, a male needs the company of a female in order to make life worth living. A world of one particular gender lacks a great thing and that is the other gender, which will play a complementary role to the other. Ilesanmi (1998:3) explicates this thus

The realised binary system among human beings as provided by nature cannot be without a purpose, each gender should naturally interact with the other as stipulated by nature. If a gender acts contrary to its natural stipulation, there is a gender rift.

In Igbo society, it is obvious that a man of marriageable age must marry a wife for the purpose of procreation. A man or a woman of marriageable age who is still single is frowned at. He or she is seen as an abnormal person who deserves no respect. At times, in order to fulfill this order of nature to get the man or woman a wife or a husband, relations of such a man or woman impose marriage on the person involved. Contributions are made and a wife is married and imposed on the man, the woman, is made to face a lot of insinuations which would push her into marrying any man that comes her way. Moreover, it is for the sake of complementarity that couples who

have been blessed with male children endeavour to have female children even if it is one and vice-versa.

The Igbo express the idea of binary opposition in some of their proverbs. Some of such proverbs are: "*ihe na- atọ uto na-elu ilu*" (that which is sweet also possesses some bitterness). "*Ihe di oku ga - aju oyi*" (what is hot will soon get cold). "*Ochiji ochi, na- akwa akwa*" (He that laughs, also cries).

In relating binary opposition to feminism, we can understand the existence of contradictions; one thing opposes the other in a binary form. Feminism is a movement or struggle against male domination of female, white domination of blacks, and the upper class domination of the lower class, all in binary opposing form: male /female, white /black, upper class/ lower class. This implies that, as we study the good aspects of the characters, we should also study their bad sides. We should make reference to necessary male characters when needed in our discussion of the females in the selected plays because many actions of the females emanate from their relationship with males.

Using the feminist theory in the study of the binary situations of humanity and their interactive result will aid us in understanding the Igbo women's situations and their images in the texts selected for this study. This is because, just like humanity is in a binary opposition form in the human society (Igbo society), so are the characters in literature (Igbo literature) representatively in binary opposition.

In feminists' study of the image of women in Igbo plays, binary opposition becomes an important tool. It exposes both the good and the bad image of women in the plays selected and helps us arrive at a good conclusion. Commenting on how best to study a character, Ogundeji (1998:23) declares that

.... In the making of a round character within a literary text the good and bad aspects of human nature are presented, and in the development of a plot there are usually two forces at loggerheads to complicate issues and make the story interesting.

Binary opposition will help us throw light on the binary characterisation of a character. According to Ferguseen (1977:6), the images of women in literature have always been ambivalent, that "for every biological role, there has been both a negative and positive role". Feminism is not all about the oppressions against women. The use of the binary opposition and complementarity will give us room to look beyond the

marginalized nature of women into the extent to which women have been liberated both in the plays under study and in Igbo society as a whole.

#### 2.4.8 Characterisation and Feminism

The word character in literature refers to a person's mental and moral nature or qualities that make him different from others. A literary character means a person in a novel, play, or film. Characters, according to Jegede (2003:54) are "the author's invention." They are still modified by other aspects of the literary world such as theme, subject matter, plot, point of view, and other devices. To her, literary characters are "the agents of action in fiction."

According to Ogunyemi (1995:194), characters could be identified structurally by examining the different types of inherent qualities that are well structured in a character. This may be expressed through the characters personalities, appearance, physical features, and moral aspect of life, intellect, real ability or poetic mode. A character, according to him, could also be described based on a non-structural and non-semantic basis through dissemination of general information about the character or through the character's degree of sensitivity to issues and present trends of events in his environment. A character could be depicted through descriptive poetry, epithets, and mere names.

Generally in literary tradition and discourse, a character is identified by its overall function in the plot, whether as a hero or otherwise (Ogundeji 1988:290, Adeleke 1995:194). This means that the part played by a character establishes its being a character. A particular character could be identified through the following means: dialogues (a character's dialogue with others in the play and dialogue about a character between other characters or through an author's comment), setting or location and reactions. Through the above means, characters are revealed to the audience. A character is determined by the predominant behaviour, actions, or manner of the individual. Such actions are representative of the actions of human beings in the society the character represents. This informs why Fowler (1987:28) opines that "fictional characters', actions are portraits of the society they represent." The idea of a playwright depicting a character, which represents a good woman for instance, sprang up from the idea of such a good individual present in the playwright's society or environment. Isola (1998:3) reaffirms Fowlers opinion by stressing that for us to say that a character is a type, it means that the character refers "to something outside

itself, a group of people in the society, an idea, or a moral concept". That is, the characters in a literary work represent the characters available in a society.

The study of characters in Igbo literary plays will help us understand the various characters or behaviours different Igbo people put up in Igbo society. Using the theory of characterisation to study the image of women in Igbo plays will aid our understanding of Igbo women and the various types of behaviour Igbo women can exhibit at various situations. It will also help us to understand the way the Igbo society feels about characters and the level of regard bestowed on women with such characters. The situations and experiences undergone by the females in the plays also represent the situations and experience Igbo women pass through in real life experiences.

Moreover, characters could be classified according to their functions and the frequencies of their roles or functions. In this sense, there could be the following classifications of character: protagonist; antagonist; secondary (functional), and background characters. For this study, the protagonists and the antagonists are classified as primary characters while the functional or helpers, and the background characters are classified as secondary characters. This is because before there can be a secondary character, there must be a primary character.

#### 2.4.8.1 Protagonists

The word protagonist is a Greek word that is of two parts: 'protos,' which means first and 'agonites' which means actor. Therefore, a protagonist is a principle actor or first actor/actress in a play, story or film (see *Webster's Dictionary of the English language*. Various scholars have given the protagonist various identities. Downes (1998:48) calls it "the hero and the seeker." Regan (1937); Mbele (1982), and Ogundeji (1988, 1989, 1998), all see the protagonist as "the hero" and the foremost character of all literary characters. To Ogunsina (1976:201), Adewoye (1988:26), and Isola (1998:81) the protagonist is the "main character" while to Willis (1981), a protagonist is the hero who is the "focal character." Fowler (1987) refers to the protagonist as "the round character." In all, the protagonist is the key character that arouses greatest audience interest. According to Ogundeji (1988:305) "the protagonist's decisions, struggles and actions in general usually form the primary pivot on which the plot rotates." The protagonist is the main leader of activities in a

literary work, the story in a literary work is based on his interaction with other characters.

There are some postulations about the word protagonist that are arguable. For instance, some scholars, like Downes (1998:48), see a protagonist as a hero. This is arguable because, in many instances, the protagonist may end up being a hero but, in some instances, he is not. In Igbo literature, there are many protagonists (main or chief characters) that are not heroes. Some texts which exemplify this are: *Ugomma*, *Adaaku*, *Ajo Nwa Ana-eku N'ikpere* and *Okwe Agbaala*. All these protagonists turn out to be failures and disappointments to womanhood. They are all defeated in their evil games. On the other hand, those whose protagonists are also the heroes of the texts are few. They are *Ihunanya*, *Ezinne*, *Obidiya* are illustrative. The examples above lead us to the conclusion that a protagonist may not actually be a hero or heroine.

Another definition that is arguable is that given by Fowler (1987) who describes a protagonist as a round character. This is not always the case in Igbo literature. There are cases where a protagonist is a flat character. For instance, Ekwuononu in *Ajo Nwa Ana -eku N'ikpere*, changes from a bad wife to a good one when she wants to gather some information from her husband. However, such literary works are rare and may be for a purpose best known to the writer.

A better explanation of the word protagonist is that proposed by David Scanlan (1988:31) who claims that

The protagonist is the character whose objectives spearhead the action of the play. This character may be a hero, inspiring sympathy and admiration, or a villain, arousing antipathy and contempt... one character can usually be identified as the driving force of a play. This character is the protagonist... it is his desires and deeds which produce the tension and the unfolding conflicts.

From Scanlan's explanation above, a protagonist is the character that leads the actions of a play or a narrative. He may or may not be a hero/heroine or a villain. He is the pivot of the actions in the play, and his actions produce tension and unfolding conflicts.

A much better definition of the word protagonist could be as follows: The protagonist is a main character, a chief character or a focal character, the number one or the first actor or actress who is very dominant in all aspects of the actions in a text. He interacts with almost all the characters in a text. It is also necessary to add here

that, in most cases, romantic plays or plays that discuss couples end up producing more than one protagonist, especially where the couples work towards the same objective. For instance, in Igbo literature there is *Akwa Nwa*, in which it is difficult to determine who, is the protagonist between Chimma, the fifth wife of Akujobi, and her husband, Eze Akujobi. In the same way, in *Ajọ nwa A Na-eku N'ikpere*, is difficult to choose between Ekwuluonu and Ukaegbu her husband who is the protagonist.

#### 2.4.8.2 Antagonists

The word Antagonist is a Greek word: '*antagonistes*', which means an open enemy, rival or contender. The antagonist is the one who opposes the main character. Egri (1946) and Adeleke (1986:39) call the antagonist "a villain" who opposes the hero. Their description of an antagonist as a villain is not totally correct because not all antagonists are villains. Antagonists are not devilish and wicked in action in all literary works.

Adeleke (1986:39) also describes the antagonist as "a strong force, principal figure, who either causes conflict or is against the protagonist." An antagonist is actually a strong force that contends with the chief character. According to Iwuchukwu (1995:28), the antagonist is "the character that contends or struggles with the main or central character. He also calls him the "oppugnant." In Igbo literary texts, the antagonist could either be a villain or a pious person who wants to restore normalcy or peace. In other words, he could be a peacemaker or one who protects the interest of the masses or the oppressed party or humanity in general. Most often, he or she may not be a very strong force as described above, in Igbo literature but he or she opposes the protagonist.

#### 2.4.8.3 Secondary Characters or Helpers

Functional characters are according to Willis (1981:207), called "the secondary characters". They are of secondary importance to the chief or the first or number one character although they play significant roles. Their actions create the situations that invite the interference of the protagonist. Their actions help the protagonist to achieve his or her goal. This informs why Downes (1998:49) calls this character, "the donor" or "helper," because this character provides an object to help the hero in the film, narrative or literary work.

The word 'functional' is controversial because almost all the characters in a play are functional, even the background characters appear to fulfill a function in the play. A better adjective for the 'functional character' is 'secondary character' as this refers to their activities as secondary roles. The above reason informs the reason for referring to this type of character as secondary characters or helpers in this work deviating from the most popular identity known as functional characters.

#### 2.4.8.4 Background Characters

These are present in literary works to represent members of a society. They are, according to Isola (1978:181), "other people in the society as the protagonist and functional characters move about, they come across these other characters." These characters are presented as mere faces in the midst of others. These characters operate in various scenes: homes, market places, ceremonies, and festivals. They could be both sexes and could appear and disappear without playing noticeable roles. Their names are known although their voices may not be heard. They only appear to accomplish an insignificant role carved out for them.

#### 2.4.8.5 Further Classifications of Literary Characters

Another classification by Jegede (2003:54-55) differs slightly from the above. It goes as follows:

**Hero / Heroine:** This refers to either a male or a female character that is central in a work of fiction. He or she is the focal point of the reader's interest and he usually possesses heroic qualities, such as "wisdom, chivalry, grace, and honesty." She differentiates this character from the protagonist because, according to her, it is the heroic qualities and achievements that differentiate him /her from the protagonist.

**Anti-hero:** This is a protagonist of a modern novel who has the opposite of most of the traditional qualities of the hero, He is graceless, inept, sometime a stupid, and dishonest propagandist without heroic qualities.

**Protagonist:** This is a more neutral term, which has its origin from the name used to refer to the first actor in early Greek drama. He is the leading figure both in terms of the ability to get reader's interest and sympathy and in terms of his/her position in the work. This same term is used for central figures in prose narrative (Jegede 2003:55).

**Antagonist:** This is a character in fiction that stands directly in opposition to the protagonist; there is always a conflict between him and the protagonist. He antagonises every move that is taken by the protagonist (Jegade 2003:55).

**Foil:** This is a term applied to a person who, through contrast underscores or enhances the distinctive characteristic of another character. He possesses qualities that are the opposite of the other qualities. When a real character possesses good qualities, the foil will possess bad qualities; other qualities may be honesty versus dishonesty, and kindness versus wickedness. He does not antagonise the real character this is where he differs from the antagonist.

The essence of the above classifications of characters is to help identify the different female characters in the texts under study. Feminism is, according to Mugo (1998:26), "the means by which, as a woman she can break out of the prison of confining roles". Studying the female characters in the plays selected for this study will throw light on the different types of Igbo females and how they disentangle themselves from the different types of patriarchy. Feminism attacks the different forms of oppression against women. It takes into consideration the oppressive situation of the females and their various actions as they liberate themselves from such situations. As these females do so, they put up different actions or behaviours which will lead us into identifying them and classifying them into their different classes of characters. Such classifications will aid the understanding of the female types as depicted in the plays chosen for this study. It will on the whole, expose the Igbo societal values of the female in the society as important (as protagonist), as opposing (as antagonist), as placed in a secondary position (as functional/secondary characters) or, as people who should be seen but not felt and are less important (as background characters). The classification of the females in these texts will help us to take a firm feminist stance on the Igbo female, and have a concrete background for a feminist pursuit in Igbo society.

The terms to be adopted in this study, based on the various argument raised above are protagonists (for both heroes and non-Heroes) antagonists, for strong and loose forces that contend with the protagonists. They may be villains or non-villains. We are going to use secondary characters for what is known as functional characters by some scholars due to the contestable nature of the word functional. Furthermore, this study accepts and will adopt the use of background characters for all the characters it represents.



Finally on the theoretical framework of the study, we agree that all versions of feminism assert that the relationship between men and women is characterised by oppression. Feminist central issues are the family, housework, sexuality, reproduction, and all forms of socialisation and personal life. This is why feminists struggle to curb experiences like wife battering, rape, prostitution, birth control, pornography, abortion and other various sexual assaults meted out to women. Bearing the above central issues in the feminist struggle at heart, we intend to use the basic theoretical objectives of feminism as a theory and as it apply to the Igbo society. The type of feminism adopted in this work is called African womanist theory of feminism. It considers the Igbo cultural, attitudinal, institutional and behavioural circumstances. It includes all aims of both womanism and African feminism but differs a little because it is all about the Igbo and the Igbo women circumstances. It could be called African/Igbo womanist theory of feminism because it is all about the Igbo women, the Igbo culture and Igbo society.

### Notes

- (1) Some of such novels included among others: five works by J.U.T. Nzeako: *Okuko Agbasa Okpesi* (1964), *Chi Ewere Ehihie Jie* (1965) *Nkọlị* (1973), *Aka Ji Akụ* (1974), *Erimma* (1975), five works by T.U. Ubesie: *Ukwa Ruo Oge Ya O Daa* (1973), *Isi Akwụ Dara N`ala* (1973) *Mmiri Oku E ji Egbu Mbe* (1974), *Ukpaka Mijiri Onye Ubiam* (1975) and *Ukpana Okpoko Buuru* (1975), three works by F.C. Ogbalu: *Di mkpa Taa Akụ* (1972) *Obiefuna* (1974) and *Ebubedike* (1975).
  
- (2) Examples of such literary texts are:
  - (i) *Adaeze* by Innocent U.Nwadike (1998).
  - (ii) *Uru Nwa* by J.C.Maduekwe (1978),
  - (iii) *Makuachukwu* by Nkiru Christiana Kammelu (2006).

## CHAPTER THREE

### FEMALE CHARACTERISATION IN THE PLAYS

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the different types of female characters depicted in the plays selected for this study. The female characters are hereby classified according to the literary characterisation format, depending on the various activities the females perform in the plays, as children, girls, wives, mothers, concubines, mother-in-laws or aunts (Weber 1978:43). In this study, a woman is defined based on the Igbo cultural perspective as a female adult who is married, while a girl is a young unmarried female who may be either under-aged for marriage or is ripe for marriage but is not married. A wife is a female who is culturally married to a man as his life partner while a mother is a female parent especially a woman in relation to her child. Although male characters are mentioned in passing, our focus in this play is on the female characters.

In our analysis, the social statuses of the female characters are taken into consideration along with their literary relevance as protagonists or heroines, antagonists or functional or secondary characters and background characters. The female characters are further categorised based on their moral values as either good or bad, using the theory of Binary Opposition. The African feminist perspective is taken into consideration in the categorisations. At times too, both the radical feminist perspective and the African feminist perspective are used to discuss some issues where such feminist viewpoints disagree. For instance, there is disagreement between both groups on the issue of prostitution as a profession, and on the idea of home breakage. Issues of this nature are discussed based on both feminist viewpoints. Finally, from the discussions which emanate from the classifications made of female characters, we are led to a detailed discussion of the problems of the Igbo female as depicted in such classifications and this gives way to suggestions to the problems raised in the research.

The second part of this chapter shall be an onomastic study of the female characters. It shall critically analyse the names of the female characters in the plays under study in comparison to the names of the male characters as they are related to their various roles. This study shall further determine the place of the female in relation to the male in terms dominance.

### 3.1 Protagonists

Protagonists are the chief or main characters of the play. They are the focal characters or the key characters on which the actions and reactions of the majority of the other characters hinge directly or indirectly. In Igbo literary studies, he/she is called *Isi agwa* (leader or head of all the characters). This shows that the main topic of the play rests on him/her that is he/she is at the centre of the play. They are chief or first or number one characters of the plays. Their decisions, struggles, and actions in general form the basis of the content of the play (Olaniyan 1998). They are the pivots on which other characters rest. Out of about forty-eight Igbo drama texts recorded by Nwadike (2002:1-5), there are not up to fifteen female protagonists. Most of the protagonists are male. This fact substantiates the feminist perspective that women are relegated to the background in literature just like it is in the society. In Igbo society, much importance is attached to the men while the women and their activities go unnoticed. It means that Igbo literature has more of 'his' story than 'her' story and it is, therefore, macho-oriented.

The female protagonists in the texts chosen for this study are classified into two general ethical groups: the good and the bad. They are also classified according to their circumstances and their social status as girls who are still under their parents' or guardians' care, wives, mothers and widows.

#### 3.1.1 Bad Girls as Protagonists

Out of the eight girls depicted in the protagonist role in the plays under study, seven of them are represented as bad while only one is depicted as good. All the remaining ten plays have male protagonists. The bad roles in which the seven girl protagonists are depicted, which are discussed below in this sub-section include immoral sexual relationship, troublesome and mannerless behaviour and lying.

##### 3.1.1.1 Girls Involved in Immoral Sexual Relationship

Adaaku, in *Adaaku*, is in love with Chukwusolu, a university undergraduate. The two of them are deeply in love and are yet to get married. Adaaku goes to Chukwusolu's house openly and spends time with him without fear of their parents and what other members of the community may think or say about them. This attitude in the Igbo worldview is a wild behaviour common with notorious girls. Similarly Amaka a university undergraduate, in *Onye Kpaa Nku Ahuhu*, is in love

with Ikechukwu. Ikechukwu impregnates her and denies the pregnancy. She wants to abort the pregnancy but her mother prevents her and promises to help her take care of the baby. Out of annoyance that Ikechukwu has brought shame on her she curses Ikechukwu by saying that no cry of a baby shall be heard in Ikechukwu's house. It happens like she says to Ikechukwu as his wife Nnenna becomes barren. A pastor tells Nnenna that her barrenness is due to Amaka's curse on her husband. Ikechukwu and Nnenna go to apologise to Amaka and Ikechukwu moves to claim his abandoned child. Amaka cannot bear the pain of Ikechukwu's actions against her. She vows never to handover her son to Ikechukwu in her lifetime; she slumps and dies.

Obioma, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*, rejects Anene, the man who has done so much for her and intends to marry her. She jilts him and runs to Awọrọ, a famous wrestler who neither loves her nor wants her for marriage. Awọrọ only allows her to be his wife due to the great pressure mounted on him by his parents who, according to the Igbo tradition, cannot permit somebody to send out anybody who runs unto his shelter for any reason. Awọrọ never wants her or respects her as his wife. He only marries her to satisfy his parents' wish.

Obiageli, in *Otu Mkpisiaka*, is a wayward girl. As a young girl, when she is sent on an errand to a place, she branches off to spend some time with her male friends. At home, she tells different lies to her parents to cover up her movement. As a poor but greedy girl, she refuses to consider the economic class of her parents and makes very numerous demands on them, as she wants to live like her schoolmates from rich economic background. She eventually abandons her academic career and elopes with a married man who does not love her and who abandons her in his hometown. Obiageli eventually dies because she is neglected during pregnancy by her husband. She is said to have committed an abomination by delivering a baby while uncircumcised.

Chinyere in *Okwe Agbaala* is not a serious student. She is promiscuous. Her student boyfriend Ozuruigbo, whom she sleeps with, helps her in other class works while she sexually harasses her lecturer, Dr. Emezina, and lures him into accepting her as his lover. As a result, Dr. Emezina gives an examination question to Chiyere which leads him into a big court case, which earns him two years' imprisonment and a total termination of his job as a lecturer. Chinyere's degree examinations are cancelled and she is expelled from the University of Obinọzara.

The case of Ugomma, in *Ugomma* is very similar to that of Objageli, in *Otu mkpisiaka*. The only difference is that Objageli dies after delivering an unnamed baby boy for her man lover, while Ugomma remains alive after several societal humiliations and punishment for her uncultured behaviour. Ugomma a primary five pupil, is very promiscuous. She has a good and rich suitor (Alozie) who so much loves her and plans to marry her. She rejects Alozie and prefers to cheapen herself before a cobbler (Obiõha) who only uses her to satisfy his sexual urges. When he impregnates her, he refuses to accept the pregnancy, dumps her, and packs out of town; Ugomma also has other sex mates: Okorie and Okoroafõ, who also deny being responsible for her pregnancy though they accepted that they had sex with her. The fact that she becomes pregnant yet unmarried is a sacrilege in their land. Secondly, as a legionary (an association in the Catholic Church) she is not supposed to have had any sexual relationship with any man before marriage. Her promiscuous life attracts insults to her responsible and highly esteemed parents (Maazi Obinna and Enyidiya) and brings shame to the legionaries. The legionaries protest against her behaviour, holding green leaves and dropping them in her parents' house. Later on, she is made to sanctify herself by performing some cleansing rituals at the Village Square. Before her pregnancy, she lies to her parents whenever she from the market or church for confession to see her lover. She challenges her mother over little issues whenever her mother inquires about her movement from her or wants to know why she stays so much in the market.

### 3.1.1.2 A Troublesome and Mannerless Girl

Ekwuloõnu in *Ajõ Nwa a na-eku N'ikpere*, is a street fighter who gives her parents so much trouble trying to settle with the parents of her fellow children whom she has fought with and probably wounded. Her mother dies of high blood pressure due to her bad manners and troublesome life. Her own father, Oõõemelum, exclaims in a great shock at the sight of Ukaegbu and Bro. Paul who have come to ask for Ekwuloõnu's hand in marriage. He is terrified because he feels they have brought another complaint against Ekwuloõnu as usual. He says: "*Jehovah! O mere unu ginì? Obara unu õgu...*" (11)(Jehovah! What has she done to you? Has she fought with you...?) Due to her bad manners, her father, believes that she can never get a good suitor and does not want to allow Ukaegbu, (her suitor and his church member) to

marry a problematic child although she is his own daughter. Odoemelam advises Ukaegbu and Bro. Paul by saying:

*Umu m, ukwu unu dulaa unu,  
gbaalanu ekwensu oso, okuku  
ukwu nji, anaghi ere ya na diala....  
Okuku m na ya di mma, a naghj  
m eji akwa ya akwa aja (13)*

*My children, may you go home in peace  
a cock/ hen with a broken  
leg is not sold together with a healthy one  
(diala...). The hen that I am friendly with,  
I do not use its eggs for sacrifice. (13)*

Odoemelam plainly informs them that “*ihe m na-ekwu bu na onye a i na-achọ ilu abughị anye ya na mmadu na-ebi n’ulo*” (3) (I am saying that the person you want to marry is not the type that can live with a person....). He informs them that he too could have died if not for the encouraging words of God that he has been reading from the Holy Bible.

### 3.1.1.3 Liars

Obiageli, in *Otu mkpisiaka*, and Ugomma, in *Ugomma*, are both liars. When they are sent on any errand by their parents, they divert their steps to their lovers' houses. This makes them spend more time than expected on errands. When they are interrogated by their parents on where they have gone, they tell various lies in order to cover up. See *Otu mkpisiaka* (17, 24, 26, 27, and 33) and *Ugomma* (25, 28, 29, and 31).

A common quality of these bad girls is that they are engaged in different levels of sexual immorality as mistresses or girls who elope with men. It is only Ekwuloonu who differs by the fact that her problem is stubbornness and troublesomeness. Another fact worthy of note here is that almost all the girls who indulge in sexual immorality are dumped by their male partners. It is only Adaaku who dumps Chisolu her lover for an old rich man. Aworo sells Obioma into slavery with her daughter because he never loves her and she bears him a baby girl instead of his desired baby boy. Chinyere loses her many years of education, while Obiageli dies in her lover's house due to lack of care, malnutrition and abandonment after child delivery. Ugomma is dumped by her many lovers and she bears her pains as a young pregnant woman alone in shame.

Another noticeable fact in the study of these texts is that the boys who lead these teenage girls into sexual immorality and even those who impregnate them are not brought to book in any form. It is only in *Ugomma* that the king of the town, Ezeqha, tries to punish the men but cannot lay hands on the particular culprit because Ugomma has many male lovers and could not pinpoint the particular one responsible for her pregnancy. However, Ezeqha, in his judgement, is not serious about wanting to identify the culprit, because, in Igbo culture, there are traditional means that he could have made use of in order to know the truth if he actually is serious. This shows the levity with which the Igbo culture treats male misbehaviour and the kind of seriousness the Igbo society pays to women's misbehaviour: one is severely punished while the other is mildly handled, if not completely left to go free.

To the liberal feminists, Adaaku, Ugomma, Amaka, Obiageli, Obioma and Chinyere would not be condemned for promiscuity as bad girls because they are free to live their lives any way they choose. The liberal feminist would hail them for being able to use what they have to achieve or get what they want. Adopting African feminist stance, which considers and accepts the African Igbo culture which does not oppress, subordinate or marginalise women, but which rejects any negative image of womanhood, the above girls would be considered as bad girls because the African, / Igbo culture does not attach respect and honour to promiscuity. It is a dishonourable lifestyle and the African society/ Igbo society frowns at it. It does not present a good image of womanhood. Presenting girls as prostitutes, mistresses and as immoral characters are some of the presentations of women in literatures which feminists frown at. Out there, in Igbo society, there are so many girls who are responsible, the disciplined and self-actualised. These are the type of girls that the feminists expect literary authors to present in their works.

Although those bad girl protagonists are so presented in negative light, one should not lose sight of the message the playwrights may be making. They are definitely not holding up the bad- girl protagonists up for praise and emulation but are condemning actions in which they are depicted. In essence, they are encouraging the female folk not to behave like them as they may be made to face the calamities that befall those girls due to their bad behaviour. If our girls can learn lessons from such depictions then, they would have served positive purposes.

Moreover, the case in which only the good qualities are promoted and the condemnation of bad qualities are avoided as some feminists may probably wish may



at last be dangerous for the female folk and the society, at large, because the readers may have been ignorant of the aftermath of behaving in such ways.

However, the presentation of the two perspectives should be balanced to achieve a healthy purpose in the society and not to create the impression that the girls and women in general are bad. In other words the ratio of one good-girl protagonist to seven bad-girl protagonists is not balanced at all.

### 3.1.2 A Good Girl as a Protagonist

Ihụnanya, in *Ihụnanya*, is the only girl-protagonist out of the seven studied in this work who is depicted as good. She never involves herself in any form of promiscuous life like the others. She refuses to cheapen herself before male lecturers and male students. She triumphs in her studies and completes her National Youth Service Corps Programme. Her parents love her because of her respectfulness, intelligence, wisdom, and hardwork. When Ihụnanya secures admission into the University of Nsukka, Chiifu Akụdo (her father) tells his friends Odogwu proudly, "...Ihụnanya nwa m.... (9)(...Ihụnanya my daughter...). In the same way he denounces his son Egenti because according to him, he has not taken after him. He says that Egenti takes after his mother in behaviour (8). He repeats his rejection of Egenti the second time and shows his delight and acceptance of the fact that Ihụnanya takes after him in working hard through the following statements which he makes when Ihụnanya announces to him that she has made a second class grade in her degree examinations:

*Ada m, I mere nke oma. O na-adi m ka ndi,  
Nwaanyi na-ebute omume nna ha, ebe ndi  
nwoke na-ebute omume nne ha ...Ihụnanya  
Ebe o bu na I meela ka, ka nwoke, aga m emeso  
Gi ka nwoke... (38)*

*My daughter you did well. It seems to me that females  
take after their father, while males take after their  
mothers...' Ihụnanya, as you have behaved like a  
male, I would reward you like a male...*

Her father behaves here like some Igbo men. When a child is good and is progressing, such Igbo men say that such a child takes after them but when a child is notorious, bad, and unprogressive, they say such a child takes after the mother. This is because they believe that *mwa di njo o buru nke nne mana nwa dim ma o buru nke nna* (a bad child belongs to the mother while a good child belongs to the father). To the Igbo good

things only come from men, while evil things come from women. It is the same belief that makes Chiifu Akụudọ state that “*Ihunanya ebe ọ bụ na i meela ka nwoke... (38)* (Ihunanya now that you acted like a man...). To him, Ihunanya has acted like a man because she has achieved academic excellence. This means that she has achieved what is expected of a man, a feat that her brother Egenti could not achieve. He promises to buy her a fine car, employ her in his company at Ala Owere. He even goes further to promise that he will not put Egenti’s name in his will as the sole manager of his wealth (38).

Ihunanya is very respectful and grateful. In most of her discussions with her father, she shows respect. When he does anything for her, she appreciates it by giving him thanks in a very humble manner. See the following pages where she addresses her father in a very respectful way as Nna m or Nna...37-41 (My father...37-41). From the respectful way she addresses her father, she wins her father’s heart. Even when she disagrees with her father, she tactfully presents her case in a humble and respectful way.

Ihunanya is a disciplined child who is also highly morally sound. Although she has a classmate and friend Chiichii who is sexually loose, Chiichii never influences her into a loose moral life. While Chiichii easily gives up her body to her classmate, rich students and traders, Ihunanya does not want any man to touch her body any how let alone of accepting their love advances. Chukwuma, Ikechi’s roommate (Ihunanya’s boy friend), confirms this when he says that what annoys him about Ihunanya’s behaviour is that.

*“...ndị nkuzi nīīle nọ na mahadum a, e nweghi nke achughī  
Ihunanya ma Ihunanya ekweghi atupurū ha ọnū,  
umwakwukwọ niile nna ha nwere ezigbo ego churū  
Ihunanya ma Ihunanya si “ego gbakwaa ọkū... Nna m  
nwere ego. Nke ọ na-enye m na-ezuru m” 28.*

*(All the lecturers in this university have passed love  
advances at Ihunanya but she refuses to accept their offers.  
All the students whose fathers are rich have all tried to  
befriend Ihunanya but she says, “To hell with money.” My  
father is rich. The money that he gives me is enough for me.*

She is a hard working student who respects every human being whether rich or poor. Whereas her friend (Chiichii) would offer her body to their male classmates for an agreement to help her do some assignments, she prefers to do it by herself. She could only borrow books from Ikechi, a fellow serious student. At the end she makes a good

result; (a second class) and she is sent to Benin for her Youth Service Programme (19, 20, 22 and 37).

Ihunanya is from a very rich home. She is exposed to a high-class taste of life. At least in one of the occasions, we read that she can take any of her father's cars, with any of his drivers to take her to her destinations (41). Even with the taste of life she is exposed to, she does not allow pride to take her over; rather, she even dislikes having any love relationship with anybody from a rich home or any rich person. She feels that they have no respect for humanity, especially women; they are very deceitful to women. As a result, she prefers any poor man that loves her so much. This is her reason for accepting Ikechi's offer for marriage. Even as Chiichii tries to discourage her by reminding her that Ikechi wears bathroom slippers and tattered clothes to class, she is not moved at all to drop Ikechi; instead her love for Ikechi increases more and more until they eventually get married.

Ihunanya is a principled girl; she knows what she wants and goes for it, applying all available strategies towards her success. She tactfully makes her father change his decision that she should not marry Ikechi because he is from a poor background. As a child who has known the dos and don'ts of her father and what appeals to him, she generously gives Ikechi some money with which to shop and take care of his dressing on the day that he would visit her father. Ikechi using the money appears pleasing to her father who now out of his love for his dear daughter sponsors their marriage, employs them and makes sure that they are properly settled down as a married couple. As a humble girl, she wins the heart of Ikechi's parents by applying wisdom in answering the questions posed to her by Ikechi's mother, as she tests her type of person through those questions. Ihunanya applies wisdom, intelligence, and humility in securing her marriage with Ikechi.

Ihunanya heeds the good advice given her. When she explains her fear that her parents may not accept Ikechi (a poor boy) to marry her and that Ikechi himself is too shy to tell her his intention to marry her, Mrs. Ibe her former lecturer in philosophy, advises her on what to do. Ihunanya strictly obeys and does all that Mrs. Ibe, tells her to do. As a result, she overcomes her father who could have been a barrier to her marrying Ikechi. Secondly, tactfully, according to the advice given her, she influences Ikechi to pick up courage and propose to her.

Ihụnanya believes in the power of God in all her life achievements and plans. She believes that her destiny lies in the hands of God and always commits all her life plans into the hands of God. Her comments on the following pages exemplify this:

(i) *Site n'ike Chineke, oge na adighi anya, mmadu ga-esi na Mahadum a puo Chukwu mee ebere, onye ahụ enweta di*

(By God's power, within a short time one will leave this university, by God's mercy and get a husband...)

(ii) *"...ka Chukwu nye m nwoke ga-ahu m n'anya..."*  
(Let God give me a man that will love me)

(iii) *"...Chineke bu onye akaebe gi... Chineke zara ekpere anyi p. 44. (... God is your witness...God answered our prayers)*

Other pages where she refers to God are pages 45 and 46. Ihụnanya makes her newly wedded husband rise from poverty to wealth. As a result of how he appreciates her responsible nature, he rewards her with a house for her and her husband, gives her husband a 505 Peugeot car and offers her and her husband employment in his company.

As a humble and obedient child, she does not protest the fact that her father makes her a secretary to her husband, a lower position in the office. She humbly accepts the offer from her father because her father makes it clear to her that he is giving her the secretaryship because as a woman, she should be under her husband. According to Chiifu Akudo: *"Ebe o bu Chineke kere nwoke kee nwaanyi mee ka nwaanyi diri n'okpuru nwoke, ana m enye Ada m oru ugbo a di ka odeakwukwo n'ulo oru diya..."* (60). (As it is that God created man and created woman makes it possible for a woman to be under the man, I am giving my daughter a job now as the secretary of her husband's company).

It is for the same reason highlighted above by Chiifu Akudo that every Igbo woman is seen as a second-class citizen while the Igbo men are regarded as first class citizens. The above speech by Chiifu Akudo proves the fact that the Igbo culture frowns at women who are more economically empowered than their husbands. Some Igbo men even claim that such situation is natural hence they say that it is from God, right from the creation of man and woman.

Ihụnanya is a model African feminist character. She portrays a good female image. She is educationally, economically and socially emancipated. She considers marriage as her last desire after she has been empowered. She is not lazy and does not

depend on hawking her body for survival. *Ihunanya* subverts the Igbo culture, which states that a man must woo a woman he loves by indirectly and tactfully wooing *Ikechi* to marry her even though they maintain an ordinary close relationship before marriage. She subjects her father to accept *Ikechi* as her husband and not to force her to marry a man of his choice.

The situation in the other plays analysed agrees with the Igbo worldview which sees unmarried girls or mature spinsters as a group of people that only live and achieve in life through the help of their male lovers as their sex partners, mistresses or concubines. This was why almost all the girl-protagonists in these plays have some kind of promiscuous trait attached to them by the playwrights. It is also the Igbo modern belief that some girls in Igbo society are so exposed to immoral girl/boy relationship in one-way or the other that hardly can one get a genuinely decent girl who has not had a love affair before marriage. From the feminist perspective on the situations of the girls above, all the girls, with the exception of *Ekwuluonu* and *Ihunanya*, are used sexually and dumped by their male lovers. Their educational pursuits are, therefore, jeopardised and, in most cases, stifled. It is also observed from these plays that the girls either cheapen themselves before their male lovers or run to them even when the males have no deep feelings of love for them. The girls who elope with the males, do so because of the material gains they expect to get from the men. For instance, *Obioma* runs to *Aworọ* because he is a famous wrestler whereas *Aworọ* does not love her. *Obiageli* runs to a man who does not pay any bride price on her because she wants to live like her fellow students in the school who wear fine clothes, use good cosmetics and have enough provisions. In the case of *Adaaku*, her parents forced her to jilt *Chukwusolu* and marry Chief *Ibekwe* because they expect that they will gain financially from Chief *Ibekwe*'s wealth.

The girls like *Ekwuluonu* and *Ihunanya* who never cheapen themselves before men are lucky to marry good men who devote their time, energy, and/or money loving them. Their husbands respect them. The fact that the girls that are not promiscuous in these plays get married while the promiscuous ones end up badly while most of them remain unmarried explains why parents in the traditional Igbo society indoctrinate their female children to play stereotyped roles so as to prepare them for marriage. When children are busy at home, they do not have enough time to mess up around. Although *Adaaku* and *Ihunanya* do not mess up sexually or cheapen themselves before men, *Adaaku* has a male lover before marriage. Observing these girls closely

shows that the playwrights of these plays portray Igbo young girls as a group of people who cannot stay without a close relationship with the males in accordance with the Igbo world view. In most cases, the girls are pushier in the relationship although the boys may or may not have seduced them into loving them or using them sexually to satisfy themselves. Ekwuluonu, amongst the whole female protagonists is the only one without a boyfriend. This may be because of her quarrelsome nature and her bad manners. Her father even uses her behaviour against her to discourage her suitor from marrying her. The portrayal of the above female protagonists supports the feminist cry that females are portrayed as cheap, morally loose sex maniacs in African literature. Even the educated girls are presented as people who believe that marriage is their ultimate goal for self-fulfillment, despite their educational achievement.

### 3.1.3 Married Women as Protagonists

Some of these women are discussed as girls because then they were not married but later on they were married and are also discussed here as married women. The married women protagonists are Adaaku, in *Adaaku*; Obidiya, in *Obidiya*; Chimma, in *Akwa Nwa*; Obioma, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*; Oriji, in *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*; Ekwuluonu, in *Ajo Nwa A na-eku Nikpere*; Obiageli, in *Ajo Ob.*, and Ezinne, in *Ezinne*. These women are in two groups as:

#### 3.1.3.1. Bad Wives

Out of the eight women mentioned above, only two of them are classified as bad. They are Ekwuluonu in *Ajo Nwa A na-eku N'ikpere*, and Adaaku, in *Adaaku*. Ekwuluonu is married to a Christian husband, Ukaegbu. Despite the discouragement given to Ukaegbu by Ekwuluonu's father Odoemelam when he seeks to marry Ekwuluonu, Ukaegbu, due to his Christian belief, promises Odoemelam that, with time, she will change as they continue to live together. The father, knowing her daughter is not good and cannot stay peacefully with anybody, refuses to collect any bride price on Ekwuluonu. To him, he feels that the marriage will not last long. According to Igbo culture, when a man's married daughter comes back home, the father has to refund her ex-husband the bride price paid on the daughter no matter how long the daughter would have lived with her ex-husband before their separation. Odoemelam knows the stuff (a bad stuff) that his daughter is made of. He does not

want to get involved in repaying Ukaegbu any bride price when Ekwuluonu is sent back to him. He says

*...I chorọ ihe I ga-eme-cha ugbua, gi na ya bie sooso otu abali gbasaa, I bido bjawara m ugwo... kporo lawa... gi na ya mwee ike ibi n'udo, ekele diri Jehovah. (15).*

(... Do you want a situation where you will live with her for just one night and separate, then you will start to come to ask me for your money (the bride price paid on her)... take her home, thanks to Jehovah if you can live with her peacefully).

Moreover, Ekwuluonu is troublesome; she quarrels with her husband and others who have one problem or the other to settle with her. Her several clashes with her husband and their several visits to the police station attract the undue attention of their landlord (Mbadiwe) who sends them out of his house. He serves them a quit notice. Similarly, because of the so much trouble that they have caused the tenants in their yard, street and the police at Adamawa where they are settled, the police of Adamawa give them a leave township notice. This is not realistic in contemporary Nigeria, but, in the early years of urbanization, it was possible. Mbadiwe, disclosing the content of the letter from the police to Ukaegbu Ekwuluonu's husband, says

*...akwukwo a sitere n'aka ndi uwe oji bia? O bughikwanu naani na a sirig gi, site n'ulo a kwapu, kama a gbara gi liftanship... "(24)*

(this order is from the police? It is not only that you have been asked to pack out of this house but also you have been given a leave township order).

Ekwuluonu is a very disrespectful wife. She disrespectfully addresses her husband. When she insults her landlord, her husband tries to caution her but she tells him "Rieeee nshii"! (24) (Eat feaces, meaning you are stupid). Ekwuluonu is a burning fire. Due to this series of problems and trouble that she causes her husband, their landlord, out of pity for Ukaegbu her husband, says

*Mbadiwe: O di mwute na nsogbu niile na-adakwasị Ukaegbu bucha ihe ndii! Buteere ya. Ebere na emere m nwoke ibe m onye gara lorọ oku na-ere ere lobata n' ime ulọ ya p. 26.*

Mbadiwe: It pains me that all these problems that befall Ukaegbu are all caused by you. I

pity my fellow man that went and carried a burning fire in to his home.

Ekwuluonu is called a mad dog by her landlord. This is as a result of the misunderstanding that crops up between him and Ekwuluonu, as he pities Ukaegbu, her husband. Ekwuluonu slaps the landlord and pushes him down. As a result, Mbadiwe says "Ukaegbu so I hapuru nkita gi, ka o tagbuo m n'ulo m. E ee", 26. (Ukaegbu so you left your mad dog to bite me to death in my own house, E ee)

Ekwuluonu is notoriously wicked and mannerless. She insults her husband by saying: "Oo nne gi ka i na-eji otu ahụ eti aha ya" (it is your mother that you are shouting her name like that). This comment is made to her when her husband calls her to inform her that the landlord has asked them to pack out because of her behaviour. On some other occasions she insults her husband with the following statements:

<i>Ozu mkpi...</i> (23)	(Dead he-goat23)
<i>Riee nshiii</i> (24.)	(Eat feaces/stupid24)
<i>Onye iberibe</i> (39)	(Foolish man39)
"... ozu nwoke..." (37)	(Useless man37)

Other similar statements include: "... o kwa gi nyuru ihe na... (23)(Are you not the cause of the problem)... Gini wee mezie? Nne gi o bughị nwaanyi (24) (for what...is your mother not a woman?)". The extent of her disrespectful actions is seen where she insults elder Obodokwe (28); and Bro. Paul (52) both respectful church leaders. She is compared to Jezebel of the Bible: "...maa mma otu ahụ Jezibeeli nke Baibulu di ..." (20) (as pretty as the Jezebel of the Bible). Her husband is excommunicated from the church on account of her behaviour (52). It is also as a result of her bad behaviour that Ukaegbu's 'umunna' (Ukaegbu's kindred) held a meeting to ask the police to come and send her back home by force. This is a common attitude of the Igbo 'umunna' especially when it concerns a bad woman of Ekwuluonu's nature. Some even send a woman away without her husband's consent, if the umunna feels that they can no more accommodate the woman's ill manners. Izuchi addresses her as a bad woman "nwaanyi Ojoo" (27). She calls her "ajo nwa a na-eku nkpere (a bad child that is carried on the knees)" (50). This means that she is a bad child whose behaviour irritates the mother that she does not curdle her but carries her on the knees so that she does not enjoy the warmth of her mother's body.

Ekwuluonu is a street fighter and an attempted murderer. She fights her husband and afflicts him with many injuries "... ebe ihe meruru ya ahụ site n'ogu ya



*Na Ekwuluonụ* (22) (where he is injured through his fight with Ekwuluonụ). She breaks her husband's head. The husband, reporting to his 'Umunna,' says: "...*ọ kupuru m isi, Ọ na-eme nke a ihe dị ka ugboro atọ n'ime otu ọnwa*" (32). (... She broke my head. She does this about thrice in a month). She disrespectfully deeps one of her fingers into her husband's mouth warning him. Obodokwe reports that: "*Ọgụ ha abụa na-abarịta onwe ha abughị ihe eji ọny ekwu* (20). (The way both of them fight each other is indescribable). She slaps her landlord, bites her husband and pushes him down (26). As an attempted murderer, she hides a scissors under their matrimonial bed with the intention of cutting her husband's genitals with it. She is always in possession of acid, which she intends to pour on her husband any day he irritates her. She calls herself the death that will kill Onwumere, her husband's only son from his previous marriage (38). She promises to kill all the *umunna* that held a meeting against her. For a start, she pours peppery water into Izuchi's eye (41).

Ekwuluonụ is very destructive According to Obodokwe's statement; she is so destructive that she breaks the louvres of their rented house at Adamawa. This is one of the reasons that make their landlord to send them away from his house. Obodokwe comments: "*Nwata nwaanyi a akwasachalaa ihe niile Ukaegbu jiri biri n'ulo ma epekele windo ulo ha bi n'ime ya ...*" (20). (...This girl broke all the property that Ukaegbu had been using in his house even the louvres of the windows to the house where they live").

Ekwuluonụ is very stubborn and she is the one controlling her husband. Her husband Ukaegbu complains to his *umunna* that: "*Ewerela m olu nwayo gwa ya, were olu ike gwa ya ka ọ laa, mana ọ na-asị m na nke a enweghi ike ime.*" (33). (I have told her in a cool voice also in a harsh voice to leave my house, but she told me that it's impossible). When Ukaegbu narrates how he and his kinsmen have planned to ask the police to come and force her out of the house, she retorts, "... *Nkwa m na-ekwe unu bụ kama m ga-ala n'la a, unu niile were isi unu kwuo ugwo ya*" (41) (my promise to you all (Ukaegbu and his kinsmen) is that instead of me to live this town, you all will pay a price for it by your death).

Surprisingly, Ekwuluonụ is a coward. When her husband, Ukaegbu, informs her of the plan to use the police to eject her from his house, she becomes afraid. In fear, she makes all possible efforts to stop the *umunna* and her husband from inviting the police: ("*n'egwu*)..." (40) "...In fear."

She is equally very deceptive and cunning. When she finds out the intention of her husband to send her away, she promises to change. She cunningly uses this promise of change to extract some important information from her husband. As soon as she gets all the information, she goes back to her old self and breaks the agreement and promise that she reached with her husband.

Ekwuluonu is a heartless stepmother. Out of her heartlessness, she beats Onwumere often and keeps him hungry for days (27 and 49). She warns the children of her neighbour never to play in her compound. When their mother (Eringa) goes to her to warn her, she indignantly runs into her house, picks her pestle with which she intends to break Eringa's head.

Adaaku in *Adaaku*, before marriage, used to be very obedient and loving and caring. She changes her behaviour. She has been forcefully married to Chief Ibekwe by her parents (Emeribe and Nwajimalu). She has planned with her lover Chukwusolu, to get married after their graduation from the university. Her parents force her to marry an old man, Chief Ibekwe. She reluctantly accepts to marry him because her parents threaten to disown her if she refuses Chief Ibe's hand in marriage. She naturally has no atom of love for Chiifu Ibekwe. So, all his expensive gifts (wrappers, and money), and all his actions and love advances to Adaaku irritate her a lot. She keeps a secret relationship with Chukwusolu her lover. Adaaku, on one of the occasions that her husband wants to kiss her, the playwright remarks that Adaaku does the following

*Tichapu ya aka... (Ibekwe Choro  
ka o susoo ya onu ma Adaaku  
wepuru onu si ya hapu ya aka) ... (49)*

Pushes away his hands ... (Ibekwe  
wants to kiss Adaaku but she pulls her  
mouth away and tells him to leave her  
alone)

Adaaku, in her statements made to Ulooma her friend, confirms her hatred for Chiifu Ibekwe and her undying love for Chukwusolu. She has no atom of respect for her husband. She begs Ulooma to help her tell Chukwusolu that

*Gwa ya na o bu uche nne na nna m ka m mezuru;  
na Ihunanya m n'ebe o no ka siri ike karija nkume,  
na aga m na- abia ihu ya mgbe o bula anu ohia mu  
na ya bi gawara njem (p.52;*

Tell him that it is my parent's wish that I be fulfilled. That my love for him is still stronger than a stone, that I will be visiting him any time, the animal that lives with me travels (Here, animal is used to refer to Chief Ibekwe her husband)

When Njokụ reports her adulterous relationship with Chukwusolu to Chiifu Ibekwe and he (Ibekwe) inquires from her about what he is told, Adaakụ rains abuses on him lying that Ibekwe has accused her wrongly. She begins to fight Ibekwe saying

*Ibekwe i ga-emecha ihe niile n'ulo a gbanahu  
ma i gaghi agbanahu ebubo akwula a i boro m.  
O nweghi ka a  
ghara ikpe nke a ekpe... gbuo m taa Ibekwe.  
Anyi abuo ozu otu onye ga-adoro n'ala taa ( 64-  
65)*

Ibekwe you can escape being punished for every other thing you have done against me in this house but you cannot escape this false accusation of prostitution against me. It must be deliberated upon.... Kill me Ibekwe. Out of the two of us, one of us must become a corpse today.

Her disrespect for her husband can be felt from the adjectives she uses to describe him: "anụ ohia (animal), agadi Nwoke (66) (old man) Onukwu di ka gi okpa akụ eri eri (66) (a fool like you, stingy person)." She does not only call him names but also calls him by his name Ibekwe despite the age gap between them. All these attitudes of Adaakụ's, show that she wholeheartedly hates Ibekwe.

Adaakụ employs pretence and deceit to achieve her diabolic purpose. The day she plans to kill Ibekwe, she suddenly changes to be magnanimously good to Chief Ibekwe. Ibekwe suspects her sudden change of behaviour and inquires from her why she has decided to change for the better. She lies to Ibekwe that she has just remembered how her parents have warned her to be of good behaviour the day they settled their differences before her parents. Meanwhile, she has already kept a food poison for Ibekwe waiting for the appropriate time to administer it.

Adaakụ is a murderer. She thinks of the effect of Chief Ibekwe's awareness of her relationship with Chukwusolu will cause. She feels Chief Ibekwe will kill Chukwusolu, send her packing and expose her to much suffering. She then remembers that she bought a rat poison from the market the other day. She later compares her

husband with the rats in her house and comes out with an idea that rats are not as disturbing to her life as Chief Ibekwe, that she can happily live with rats rather than her husband. She thinks that if she kills Ibekwe, she and Chukwusolu, her lover and will have all the freedom, marry and continue to love each other forever. To her, she will not mind mourning Chief Ibekwe for one year, according to Igbo tradition, and later have everlasting happiness. She then adds the rat poison into Chief Ibekwe's soup. She pretentiously and romantically leads him to eat the food and he dies instantly. As soon as Chief Ibekwe dies, she pretentiously weeps, shouting, inviting neighbours and relatives to come and help her.

If not for her vices and lack of self-fulfilment, Ekwuluonu's type of bravery and enduring nature is what Igbo women require to disengage them from all unnecessary and oppressive Igbo culture. She adopts a radical feminist perspective in dominating men. She is capable of overpowering all the men of her community; they all fear her and avoid anything that would bring her wrath upon them. In the whole community, she is in control of men, women and children. Human beings cannot control her. She almost becomes a super-being that not even her husband (Ukaegbu), her father (Odemelam), her fellow women and men of the community could curb her excesses. No wonder she ends up in the hand of the ghost of her mother-in-law whom she also almost scares away. Igbo women need the type of Ekwuluonu's courage in order to be fully emancipated.

African feminists frown at the idea of a female's father refunding his daughter's bride price if her marriage becomes unsuccessful and her husband eventually divorces her. This aspect of the Igbo culture is very wrong. If not, how does the ex-husband pay the divorced wife for the sexual satisfaction which he derived from her and for all the subservient roles, home chores, and services that she rendered to him? How does the man pay her for being separated from her own loved children never to feel them closely as before and all the pains associated with the sudden separation? This remains a food for thought for feminists, as this is a serious issue, which attracts the help of feminists in an attempt to help Igbo women.

Adaaku's case is a pitiable situation. Her actions should be blamed on her parents who forced her to marry a man she does not love. Maybe she could have been a loving and caring wife to Chukwusolu if she had married him. From the Western radical feminist perspective, Adaaku's actions here would be commended. This is because she kills Chief Ibekwe in order to have freedom from her parents and society

in general. From the African womanist feminist view, Adaaku despite her struggles for freedom should not have killed Chief Ibekwe. Her protest should have been directed at her parents. The image portrayed of Adaaku and of women in her shoes in this play (*Adaaku*) is quite a negative one as far as the Igbo culture is concerned. The play portrays women as wicked, adulterous, pretentious, and murderous. In the Igbo society, and human communities all over the world, there are both men and women of Adaaku's nature who feel that the only way to have their freedom with their lovers is to terminate the lives of their marital partners. In Igbo society, the occurrence is more on the side of men than women, because most Igbo women want their husbands to live so that they can assist them in training their children. In any case, adultery in Igbo society is a dangerous game for both men and women because, in most cases, the resultant effect is fatal, like that of Adaaku and Chief Ibekwe. The acts of adultery and murder committed by Adaaku disqualify the play *Adaaku* from being a good Africanist play because both actions of hers do not portray her as a good African woman. Conversely going by the radical feminist theory, *Adaaku* is a good example of a feminist text because Adaaku is able to destroy her husband that poses a barrier to her heart desires and her freedom. Really, this action of hers is a misplaced aggression and is not the best thing for her to do. She forgets that the law awaits any murderer. She is eventually punished by the people of the land. She is sent into exile. Instead of killing, being punished and ridiculed publicly, as is done to her, she could have tried other ways of emancipation like: elopement with Chukwusolu or total disobedience to her parents' desires. She could have forgotten everything about marriage and gone to the city to secure a job. This would give her parents time to reason with her and allow her marry a man of her choice.

### 3.1.3.2 Good Wives

Obidiya, in *Obidiya*, is a traditionally stereotyped good woman who is loved by her husband despite her barrenness. It is very rare in Igbo society for a man whose wife is barren to continually love her and not be indulged in extra-marital affairs or not to have married a second wife. Obidiya is extraordinary good and caring for her husband. She is an intelligent woman who advises her husband wisely and is able to interpret her dream, which is prophetic. She advises her husband to take some gift items to the Chief Magistrate who presides on the land case between her family and Oriaku (a wicked rich man) and adjudicates in their favour (see p. 5). She cooks well

and feeds her husband properly. She is hard-working and good. She vows to avenge her husband's death and successfully carries it out by killing her husband's killer (chief Oriaku) and all his children. This is to fulfill her promise to her late husband whose death she swears to avenge.

Chimma, in *Akwa Nwa*, remains a good and forgiving wife. She easily forgets all the torture her husband makes her to go through because of her barrenness; he takes her to some traditional doctors. Secondly, he falsely accuses her of being Dr. Onuoha's lover and one who is possessed by an evil spirit. He finally sends her back to her parent's home where she suffers in penury under the care of her poor mother (Udo) who is a widow. Her mother cannot feed her properly or cater for her needs because of her poverty. Eventually, when it is discovered that her husband, Akujobi, has impregnated Chimma before he sends her packing, her mother sends for Akujobi to come and take his wife, Chimma. He refuses to take her back because he suspects that she was pregnant for her doctor. He becomes so stubborn that the town's deity, 'Chukwu,' and even the members of Umudala community threaten him severally. The deity refuses to sanction the on coming *Ahanjoku* (new yam festival) ceremony and afflicts the whole community. Members of the community on their own perform the rituals involved in bringing Chimma back to her husband in order that the *Ahanjoku* festival would hold. In this ceremony, Akujobi, Chimma's husband, has no option other than to accept his wife reluctantly. Despite all the humiliation Chimma suffers, she willfully accepts her husband and fully forgives him. She goes home with her husband even on the same day. She never queries her husband's actions or shows any form of reluctance in accepting him. Although she is the fifth wife of Akujobi, she is happy living under Akujobi's roof despite her uncomfortable condition in his home.

Obioma, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*, though bad as a girl because of her materialistic nature, becomes a caring wife to Awọ her husband who does not love her. Out of the hatred that Awọ has for Obioma coupled with the fact that she delivers a baby girl for him, he poisons his own food by himself and accuses Obioma of being responsible for it. He later sells her and her daughter into slavery. Awọ unknowingly remarries his daughter (Ođinchefu) the one he sold into slavery. The gods afflict him because he has committed incest. Going by the advice of the traditional doctors, Awọ goes about in search of his first wife, Obioma, for one year. He finds her and she forgives him and follows him home only to discover that Awọ's second wife is her daughter, Ođinchefu. Although Awọ commits suicide,

Obioma and her daughter remain in Aworo's house ironically both as co-wives and as mother and daughter.

Orieji, in *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*, is the wife of Okwundu Okwuike Ogbunanjo, an evil man, a slave trader and a ritualist. Orijeji is an intelligent, charitably and patriotic woman who hates evil. As a result of her patriotic nature, she reports her husband (ritualist) to the police because of the human parts she found inside his old box. She gives up her marriage for her moral credibility and her love for humanity. She also escapes from her husband with her two children: Uduaku and her brother (Okoto) into another town. There, they change their names and identities and live as complete strangers. Her husband, after being released from prison where he stayed for many years, traces her and still kills her. In fact, Orijeji dies a heroine in defence of mankind.

Ezinne, in *Ezinne* the wife of Ezeji, has only a female child for her husband. She is so worried over her inability to bear her husband a male child that she forces her husband to take a second wife. In order to please her husband, she adopts a male child who is an orphan. She is so kind and full of good manners that she accommodates all the insults rained on her by her co-wife and successfully avoids quarrelling with her even when she provokes her. She is as good as Obidiya, in *Obidiya*, because even in her inability to bear her husband a male child, she still finds favour in the sight of her husband. Her husband loves her more than her troublesome, quarrelsome, lazy and materialistic co-wife, Ureonu, whom her husband chastises often and does not love, despite her ability to bear him a son. Whereas her co-wife discriminates between her own children, and Ezinne's daughter and adopted son, Ezinne is a good and caring mother to all the children. She teaches them to love one another and live as brothers and sisters. She helps her husband in the farm work and is very hospitable to visitors who come to their home, unlike her co-wife. When she sends the children to go to Oriogwe (a local stream) to fetch water, Obinna (her co-wives son) is drowned. Ebere, one of the siblings, runs home to inform their parents about what happened. After some consultation with the Oriogwe deity, he requests for Ureonu Obinna's mother to be given to him (the deity) in return for Obinna her son. Ureonu runs away to her father's house, abandoning her son, Obinna with the deity. Their husband is reluctant to submit his life for that of his son. When finally he is about to offer his life for the boy's, Ezinne halts him and offers her own life instead immediately. Courageously, she runs into the Oriogwe forest shouting that the deity

should take her and release Obinna her co-wife's son. In the end, Oriogwe sees the courage in her and the motherly love she exhibits for Obinna who is not even her child and decides to release Obinna, to her without hurting her. She gallantly comes out a heroine, as she presents Obinna back to her husband Ezeji.

Obiageli, in *Ajo Obi*, is an innocent wife of Ezenwata, a man who is very jealous and suspicious of his wife's relationship with his friend, Onyema. He marries her in her second year in the university. From all indications in the play, it is assumed that Obiageli drops out of school after their marriage. Despite the fact that Ezenwata introduces her to Onyema as his best friend and requests that she treats him as such, he wickedly suspects, implicates and insults his wife severally. He even endangers her life by telling his mother Okwuchi that Onyema and Obiageli can go ahead and get married after his demise, accuses Obiageli of being an adulterer before his mother Okwuchi (Ezenwata's mother) spreads this false news in their community. She diabolically attacks Obiageli but God remains on Obiageli's side. Out of jealousy, Ezenwata deceives her into snapping pictures with Onyema on the day that he celebrates his false reunion with Onyema. He scatters these pictures at the back of his car that is being driven by Onyema on their way to Lagos. A trip that, he plans, in order to convince people that Onyema and Obiageli actually killed him. On the way, he drops and shoots himself cold dead. Obiageli is a woman who can withstand shock, a courageous woman who withstands all the gossip, and embarrassing interrogation from the police over her husband's death until the truth unfolds itself. She inquisitively arrives at the cause of Ezenwata's death. She is an intelligent and a likeable woman, because she later marries the same policeman (Uche) who investigated her husband's death. She is a humble woman. Throughout the period of humiliation and gossips against her from her husband, she remains obedient and respectful to him. She also has a forgiving heart, as she forgives her husband all the insults and false accusations he makes against her.

Obiageli is a very nice woman. Her housemaid joins her in her new home without complaining. Secondly, the fact that Mr. Uche (her second husband) overlooks the idea that she already has a daughter, Adamma, for Ezenwata and still accepts the whole household into his home are signs that Obiageli is a very good woman. Even the mood portrayed by the playwright where Obiageli and Uche are relaxing in Uche's house shows the type of peaceful and loving home she creates. The playwright remarks that "*N'oge mgbede. N'ulo Uche, Uche na Obiageli' no ala na-*



*akpa nkata...* 145 (In the evening, at Uche's house. Uche and Obiageli are seated as they discuss...). The marriage between Uche and Obiageli is rare in Igbo society because Igbo men do not like to marry women who were once married in life especially those who already have given birth. At times, old men who lack children, especially male children, marry such ladies, but not for a young man like Uche whom this is his first marriage. This attitude of the Igbo is contrary to what obtains in many parts of Yoruba land whereby a young man who has never married before can remarry a woman divorcee or marry a single parent who already has grown up children. In Igbo land, women like Obiageli usually find it difficult to remarry after the first marriage. This is why many young widows in Igbo land die in abject poverty while many are afflicted with venereal diseases. They are aware that it will not be easy for them to remarry so they prefer to remain in their husband's houses and bear more children for their husbands through traditionally legalised prostitution called *Amurudi* (discussed in chapter one). Such young widows, like Obiageli, would usually form object of sex for promiscuous old married men and young unmarried or married men too. These men secretly use them for sex in return for monetary or other gifts with which they can use to keep body and soul together. Many of these women are impregnated by such men and are left with the responsibilities of caring for their babies all alone. The men refuse to be responsible for such children because the children according to the Igbo culture belong to the deceased husband of the widow although he is not the biological father. That Obiageli married another man after her husband's demise means that she is a wise woman. She does not want to be abused sexually by men. However, one should blame Obiageli for dropping out of school because of marriage. Now her only hope of survival is through marriage when she could have had an alternative means of survival if she has acquired full university education. She should not to have dropped her educational career for marriage.

#### 3.1.3.2.1 **Heroines as Good Wives**

Women under this section are also classified as good women due to their activities as heroines. They are three in the plays studied: Orijei who dies in pursuit of justice for mankind; Obidiya, who avenges her husband's death and defeats Chief Oriaku his killer and enemy; and Ezinne, who gives up her life in order to save Obinna her co-wife's son because of the love she has for her husband whom she does not want to lose his only son. She prefers to die rather than allow the boy, Obinna, to

die. This is a courageous action, which her husband cannot take. It is a fatal decision which the biological mother of the boy refuses to make when the deity requests that she should give her life in exchange for her.

### 3.1.3.3 Barren Women/Women Who Lack Male Children

Four of the women in these plays under study lack children. They are Ekwuluonu; Obidiya; Chimma; and Ezinne, who is half-barren because she bears only one female child. In the Igbo society, she is viewed as a barren woman because she has only a female child for her husband. Even when she adopts a male child, her co-wife continues to insult and deride her because of her lack of her own male child.

In *Obidiya*, it is due to Obidiya's barrenness that Chief Oriaku feels that he should just kill her husband, Onuma, and take his land because he has no child to avenge his death. To Oriaku, he could easily remarry Obidiya after her husband's death. To his dismay, Obidiya rejects his marriage proposals.

Chimma, in *Akwa Nwa*, can no longer bear the stigmatisation and abuses that her co-wives shower on her on daily basis. They remind her of her inability to bear a child. She is tagged a possessed woman, a tree that cannot bear fruit, which deserves to be cut down. She weeps all the time she seeks solution here and there. Her husband does not help issues but worsens her case and even sends her packing out of his house.

In *Ajo Nwa a Na-eku N'ikpere* there is no mention of any child born by Ekwuluonu. Her husband once tells his kinsmen that she is pregnant but it is not discussed further in the text by the author whether she had the baby or not. She keeps on hoping that she will soon give birth to her own son who will inherit her husband's property. She is usually reminded of her predicament as a barren when she sees Onwumere (her stepson) and her neighbours' children. This is why the sight of Onwumere and the sight of other children irritate her so much that she makes several attempts to kill Onwumere.

In the plays, barren women are presented as people who do not deserve to live or deserve any form of respect. From the feminist point of view, the playwrights' plays display some married women protagonists as good women who are made to play stereotyped roles and women who are tortured when they fail in their stereotyped roles. They bear children, and are voiceless, submissive, and silent over patriarchal subjugation. They all see enslavement of women in marriage as part of women's

unavoidable cross, which they must accept in good fate so as to be regarded as good women. Adaaku and Ekwuluonu reverse the status quo by dominating their husbands hence they are seen as evil women in the societies of the plays. Due to this, Adaaku commits adultery which every one accepts as evil and goes to the extent of committing murder. These characteristics are common with many Igbo men yet they are not stigmatised like women; their actions are seen as a normal way of men's life. All these married women are portrayed following Sheila's (1980:64) description. While discussing the image of women in male-authored texts, Sheila classifies them broadly into two categories: "the serviceable and the non-serviceable images". The serviceable characterisation portrays the woman as the docile virgin, sweet mother, obedient, and chaste, pure, innocent and good wife. They are portrayed as the dotting and conservative grandmother. In some texts, they are presented as the selfless, loving and gentle mother. But in many male-authored texts; the ideal young wife is portrayed as submissive, pliable and dependent. This characterisation reflects the notion of the ideal woman and both male and female readers are expected to judge the female characters based on those characteristics of a serviceable woman. Going by Sheila's explanation above, Obidiya, Ezinne, Chimma, Obiageli and Obioma, fall into the group of serviceable women. They are docile, enduring, obedient, and good to their husbands. They are men's appendages and play stereotyped roles.

In an attempt to find out why some Igbo women decide to endure and suffer in an unfavourable marriage relationship, it is discovered that such women are always afraid of being thrown out by their husbands. Many of such women are jobless and uneducated; so they feel that to remain in marriage will be their only means of survival and without which their lives would be ruined forever. This is quite unlike what is obtainable in the Western world where women are highly educated and are favoured by the law of their nations. In such places, divorce cases are high because the women are both economically and educationally empowered, and, so have nothing to regret if their marriages fail. Again, their laws favour women who are divorced and even make them richer through the various allimonies paid by their husbands. If the divorced couple has underage children, the man is asked to pay child allimony for the maintenance of the children. Such payment depends on who among the couple first files for the divorce.

Other reasons why some Igbo women decide to endure sufferings in marriage are because no woman wants to be tagged a divorcee because of the societal stigma

attached to it. Again, some women believe that whatever the gap that might have existed in their marriages would soon be over when their children are grown up. The grown up children could stop a bullying husband. They could also take the maintenance of their mother in turn or according to their capabilities. Children can be the spokesmen of some women in times of oppression and exploitation.

Sheila's (1980:65) non-serviceable type are portrayed in literature as promiscuous, bad, incapable of decision making, passive, sexually frigid, over emotional, manipulative and troublesome temptresses. Ekwuluṣonu and Adaaku fall into this group. This is because they are bad. Adaaku is promiscuous, bad and incapable of decision-making. She is sexually frigid to Chief Ibekwe, her husband, but sexually loose to her boyfriend, Chukwusolu. She is also manipulative and troublesome. Ekwuluṣonu has all the above qualities except that she is not promiscuous, but she is deceptive, and highly manipulative of her husband's actions. She differs from Adaaku in decision taking because she plans her strategies well and keeps to her decisions. Oriji does not fall into any of these categories because she shares qualities of both the serviceable and the non-serviceable groups. Considering her relationship with her husband, one may view her as belonging to the non-serviceable group but without the other bad qualities identified with the group. On the other hand, considering her patriotic nature and the care she gives her children, she may be seen as belonging to the serviceable group, even though she is principled and keeps to her decisions.

Finally on the protagonists, both girls and married women are portrayed as playing stereotyped roles. They are presented as men's appendages as wives, mothers, mistresses; sex hunts; prostitutes; avengers; murderers; fighters; wicked; troublesome; hopeless; evil; dependent; and people who harass men sexually and pay severely for it with their lives or their life ambitions.

### 3.2 Antagonists

An antagonist may not be a devilish person and all his / her actions may not be wicked. The antagonists in the selected plays are also broadly classified into two: the good and the bad antagonists. Under these major groups, there are other sub-classifications, which are based on the similarity and differences in actions of the characters in the plays. There are nine good antagonists versus three bad ones.

### 3.2.1 Good Antagonists

The good antagonists in the selected plays are nine in number. They are in two groups: mothers and girls.

#### 3.2.1.1 Mothers as Antagonists

Out of the nine antagonists, six are mothers. In most cases, the protagonists are their children, except in the case of Nlemchi, in *Ajo Nwa a NA-eku N'ikpere*, who is a mother-in-law to Ekwuluonu, the protagonist. These women are classified as good because they strongly oppose the actions, decisions or behaviour of their children, which they feel are wicked, not ideal, or may hurt them in life. As mothers, they want a better future for their children and want to prevent, by all means, any evil that may come their way due to their mistakes or wrong decisions or actions in life. Two of these antagonists work together with their husbands in opposing their children's evil acts. They are Enyidiya the mother of Ugomma, in *Ugomma*, who is married to Maazi Obinna, a disciplinarian. They both strongly oppose Ugomma's promiscuous life but she remains adamant. She falls into the hand of deceptive men and is impregnated prematurely.

The other woman is Ikodie, in *Nka Di Na Nti*, the mother of Njoku who works together with her husband Oji. They all strongly oppose the idea of Njoku marrying from outside their town. Njoku abandons them for years and refuses to yield to the advice that he should stop his relationship with his lover, Ezinwaanyi (a deceptive and materialistic school girl who does not love him but loves his money). Ezinwaanyi later poisons Njoku and he dies in disobedience to his mother.

The third woman whose husband is living but he is not observant enough to notice his daughter's immoral behaviour and help in curbing her excesses is Uduehi the mother of Obioma, in *Nwata Rie Awo* who elopes with a famous wrestler, Aworo. Her husband, Okwukaogu, remains passive over their daughter's promiscuous nature and the way she jilts many men. Uduehi stands firmly to reject Obioma's idea that she will no longer marry Anene, whom she has accepted initially, and has been told to perform her marriage traditional rites. It is because of the strong opposition that Uduehi mounts on her that she runs away to Aworo's house. Uduehi has to oppose her decision because, the Ekemma Obioma's closest girlfriend as regards her love relationship with the opposite sex, says

*Ekemma: Obioma I bidokwa, ogba nho di aghaghi iluta eke  
ogba.  
! jula Obi, chuo Chike, gbanahu Oti, hapu Eke,  
ugbu a, Anene eluwela gii ilu.... P.33*

*Ekemma: Obioma you have started again, he who jilts many  
suitors always marries a python. You have rejected  
Obi, driven away Chike abandoned Oti, left Eke, now  
you no longer love Anene...*

It is because of Obioma's past actions that Uduehi, her mother, insists that she should marry Anene so that she does not end up marrying a wrong person. Obioma resists her mother's advice and falls into the hands of Aworo who never loves her. Aworo tortures her as a wife and sells her into slavery with her daughter, Odingchefu, whom Aworo later unknowingly remarries.

### 3.2.1.2 Widows as Good Antagonists

The other group of antagonists is widows or women whose husbands are mentioned in some of the texts under study to have died and those whom we believe their husbands are late, because no mention is made of them in the texts. These women include: Ukachi in *Onye Kpaa Nku Ahuhu*, who strongly opposes Amaka's desire to abort her pregnancy because the man responsible for the pregnancy (Ikechukwu) rejects her and the baby. She rather volunteers as a good mother to Amaka to financially, and kindly cater for both Amaka and the baby. As a good traditionalist, she sees abortion as an abomination, a sin against the earth goddess because to her, abortion is equal to committing murder. She believes that pregnancy is a blessing that does not come easily on people's way. Again, to her termination of a pregnancy is not an easy task, she speaks

*Wepu gini? O buru ogwu,  
O gaghi erere gi...  
Ala anyi soya nso  
N'ih na onye tere ime  
Egbuola ochu (p.14-15)*

Abort what? If you are charmed,  
It will not be potent on you....  
Our land abhors it  
Because whoever terminates a pregnancy  
Has committed murder.

Her child sticks to her advice, and keeps the child. His father, Ikechukwu, comes to claim him after years of lack of a child.

Another woman antagonist who single-handedly trains her son but whose son turns a deaf ear, leading to his sudden death, is Mama Obodo, in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*. She is believed to be a widow, because on page 14 of the play, we are informed that her husband has died, though no mention is made about any activity performed by her husband in the play. This is confirmed by the fact that she confides in her husband's brother, Ogu, after having a terrible nightmare. If her husband had been living, she should not have invited Ogu to help her interpret the dream and seek for solution.

She is a gifted dreamer who sees impending danger in her son's life. It is because of this revelation she received in her dream that makes her stand strongly against Obioma's wish to jilt Amarachi and marry Ojageli an evil woman. Another reason why she resists Obioma's wish to jilt Amarachi is the fact that, according to her, Amarachi has been supportive to Obioma and Obioma already has introduced Amarachi to her and her late husband (Amaechi) before his demise (p.14). She vehemently rejects Ojageli as her prospective daughter-in-law and warns Obioma never to bring Ojageli to her home if he eventually marries her. She says

*Gee nti  
O gwula ma m nwuru anwu  
I gaghi akpobata onye ozo  
abughi Amarachi n'ulo a..  
Obioma nwa m iriela ogwu! ...  
I gaghi ekweta, mana tupu gi  
amara ihe na-eme gi nke  
gi agaala ... kurukwa m aka (pg. 12-13)*

Listen,  
Unless I die, you cannot bring another  
woman into this house except  
Amarachi  
Obioma my son, you have been  
charmed!  
You may not agree, but before you  
know what is wrong with you, you  
will be a dead person...  
Bet it with me (pg. 12-13).

To show how serious she is, she rejects the money offered her by Obioma and consoles herself that if she is able to bear her husband's death, she should also be able to bear her son Obioma's death. In the end, Ojageli poisons her husband and he dies

of food poisoning. His death proves his mother's nightmare and the several warnings that she has given to Obioma correct.

The next widow who later dies and continues to protect her son's interest is Nlemchi, in *Ajo Nwa A Na-Eku N'ikpere*. She is Ukaegbu's mother, the woman whose spirit strongly opposes Ekwuluonu's evil actions. In order to stop Ekwuluonu from sending Onwumere out of his father's house, she kills Ekwuluonu and sends Onwumere back to his father's house from his maternal grandparent's home. Ekwuluonu's death brings peace to the life of Onwumere, Ukaegbu and the rest of the members of the town. Her action also thwarts Ekwuluonu's plans.

She is the only person who could challenge Ekwuluonu's excesses. This may be as a result of her spiritual powers as, the spirit of a dead woman. She reveals herself to Ekwuluonu in the form of an old woman when she is busy discussing Onwumere. She Nlemchi tells Ekwuluonu to shut up her mouth. Ekwuluonu surprised that there is a person on earth who could challenge her, goes towards her and pushes her down as old as she appears to be. She now uses her sharp nails to puncture Ekwuluonu's eyeballs and continues to torment her until she dies (p.59).

Nlemchi's actions are very vital in the play but unfortunately she is not even given proper recognition as one of the characters by the playwright. Her name does not appear on the list of characters involved in the play. We know about her only from the discussions made by Ukaegbu's (her son's) kinsmen about her. Even when she attacks Ekwuluonu, she remains silent but full of action. The playwright's silence about her, by not recognising her as a full-fledged character, may be because of the fact that the Igbo believe that the dead interact with the living although they may not be seen practically. They see every activity of the living and interfere when necessary but do not talk to the living because they are already dead and now belong to the spirit world. This informs why Ukaegbu could not see Nlemchi even though she is present there attacking Ekwuluonu. The Igbo believe that, at times, when spirits must appear; they do so in the form of an old woman or man, like Nlemchi does or in any other form that pleases them. Another reason for the playwright's non-recognition of Nlemchi's character may be attributed to the fact that Igbo men, in their patriarchal nature, do not give recognition to women no matter their achievement. They believe that, when it is an all-women's affair, there is nothing too important about it. Even if a woman achieves a feat that even proves difficult for the men, it is usually played down.



### 3.2.2 Bad Women as Antagonists

There are only two bad women antagonists out of the eight women antagonists. The women are Nkemdirim, in *Ojimba*, and Ureḡu, in *Ezinne*.

Nkemdirim is a wicked mistress to her house girl, Ekemma, a very beautiful girl. She overburdens her with numerous house chores. She starves her and does not want her to succeed more than her own children (p.21). She thinks of her children's welfare at the expense of that of her maid. She is envious of Ekemma's beauty and does not want her to progress more than her own daughters. In envy and wickedness, she orders Ekemma to prepare the skin of a wild pig (*atu*). This part of the wild pig's meat is noted for being tough to cook. This is the meat that Nkemdirim gives to Ekemma to cook until it becomes soft by the very moment that all the young girls of Umudim community are expected to gather to the village square so that Ojimba (a famous wrestler) could choose from them a pretty wife as their king commands. She dresses her daughters in very beautiful attires and takes them to the Village Square abandoning only Ekemma at home. This is a trick she uses to stop Ekemma from attending the occasion so that Ojimba will not choose her as a wife. In the end, with the help of an old woman spirit, a barber and a beautician, Ekemma prepares the meat properly, cuts her hair into a beautiful pattern and paints her body to be highly beautiful. At the square, she is chosen by Ojimba as a wife to the envy and anger of Nkemdirim.

The other bad woman antagonist is Ureḡu, in *Ezinne*, who is lazy, troublesome, discriminative, and promiscuous. She is the second wife of Ezeji and a co-wife to Ezinne. While Ezinne's behaviour tends towards goodness, her own behaviour turns always the opposite of Ezinne's. In other words, she always irritates Ezinne and provokes her in order to stir up trouble. She opposes Ezinne often just to make her change from being a good mother. Ezinne resists her often, keeping calm while keeping herself busy with cooking, house chores, or farming. In order to draw her husband's love towards her instead of Ezinne, she poisons her husband's food although he is fortunate not to have tasted the food. She refuses to offer her life in order to save the life of her only son from the water deity *Oriogwe* and runs home to her parents as a bad wife and a bad mother (45)

### 3.2.3. A Bad Girl as an Antagonist

There are four girl antagonists in the plays chosen for this study. Out of the four, only one of them is bad. She is considered bad because of her immoral, covetous, and lazy nature which reduces her to the status of a dog. From the womanist theory's angle, Chiichii is the only bad girl antagonists but adopting a radical feminist perspective will make one consider her as a girl who is liberated and who uses what she has to get what she wants. She is a girl who does not want men to use her for nothing in return. She is a friend to Iḥunanya in *Iḥunanya*. She is Iḥunanya's classmate at the University of Nsukka. She is a loose girl who offers her body to men for just a bottle of Fanta, help with assignments, and marks. She strongly advises Iḥunanya not to fall in love with a poor man especially Ikechi their coursemate whom Iḥunanya cherishes a lot. She says

... *Enweghi m ike itupuru*  
*Onye di etu a onu*  
*Ikechi o nwere ike izunye*  
*Nwaagboghọ Fanta ka o nuọ? (P.25)*

... I cannot accept love advances  
From such a person  
Can Ikechi buy a bottle of fanta  
For any young lady to drink? (P.25)

She wants to continue her life as a rich girl at all costs. She does not want any relationship with a poor man. Her type of man must be rich whether he loves her genuinely or not. She says:

Chiichii: *Achọrọ m isi n'ụlọ ntuoyi*  
*Puta banyekwa na ntuoyi*  
*Achoghị m ita onwe m*  
*Ahụhụ m otu (p.21)*

Chiichii: I want to move from an air  
Conditioned house into another  
I do not want to suffer at all

She makes this statement when Iḥunanya tells her that she wants to marry any man who loves her genuinely whether he is rich or poor. He does all she could to stop Iḥunanya from loving Ikechi (a poor student) but Iḥunanya resists her advice. She

goes further to make jest of Ikechi severally but she could not stop her. At last, her supposed business tycoon suitor jilts her and marries another girl.

What happens to Chiichii is a typical reflection of what happens to Igbo ladies of her type in Igbo society. Igbo men do not like to marry girls who are materialistic and promiscuous because they believe that it is difficult to control them and provide for them. They also fear that such girls do not usually make good housewives because they are overexposed and they always have the tendency to control their husbands. It is the assumption here that must have made the business tycoon suitor to have jilted her for the obvious reasons raised above.

A womanist would classify Chiichii like has been done in this work, as a bad girl, because of the bad image of womanhood (prostitution, laziness and unserious attitude and the examination malpractice which she is involved in) she portrays.

Radical feminists would view her as a self-emancipated lady who uses men to get what she wants. She is a lady who cannot compromise her needs from a man for nothing a lady who wants to obtain something from men for any little offer she has made to them. She must not because of her love for any man, suffer in any form under him; rather, she prefers to fall in love with a man who does not love her but can take proper care of her. To the radical feminists, she is not a bad girl but the type of girl required in patriarchal societies to deal with men. They do not care whether they are married or not, but they want their self-freedom and happiness in life.

### 3.2.3.2 Good Girls as Antagonists

There are three good girl antagonists in the plays selected for this study. They are Uloṃa in *Adaaku*; Nwamaka, in *Otu Mkpisiaka*; and Amarachi; in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*. Uloṃa, in *Adaaku* is a good friend of Adaaku. She is her classmate and her friend who knows her intimately. She discourages Adaaku from continuing her adulterous relationship with Chukwusolu and encourages her to stick to her husband, Chief Ibekwe. She advises Adaaku as follows:

*Biko wepu obi gi ebe Chisolu no  
Ma i mara na o gaghi alaputa gi  
Be di gi... (p.51)  
...Adaaku enyi m, o buru uche m,  
aga m asi gi wepu uche gi n'ebe  
Chisolu no ka o ghara ilaputa gi be di gi  
... Nwee ndidi n'ihina di bu ndidi... (p.53)*

Please erase the thoughts of Chisolu from your

heart if you do not want him to implicate  
you before your husband...p. 51  
...Adaaku my friend in my own opinion,  
I advise you to erase the thoughts of Chisolu  
From your heart so that he will not implicate you  
before your husband... Be patient because marriage  
needs patience...

As if she knows what the future holds for Adaaku, Adaaku falls into the same trap that Uloṃa discourages her from.

Nwamaka, in *Otu Mkpisjaka*, is a sister of Oḃjageli's the protagonist and a promiscuous girl. Nwamaka is a petty trader who uses her meagre income to cater for her father, mother, and her siblings. She is prepraed to sponsor Oḃjageli's education in the secondary school just to save Oḃjageli from her wayward life, which attracts shame to the entire family. She speaks to her parents thus:

... *Kama ma a chota ihe a ga -eme Oḃjageli  
ka o kpawa agwa di ka nwa amadi, aga m  
aputasi ike hu na e mere ihe ahụ ...  
Omume nwa ahụ emegbuola m n'ihere.*

.... But if there is anything that could be found to keep Oḃjageli busy so that she can behave like a good girl, I will strongly support whatever thing it is ... that girl's behaviour brings me shame.

She observes Oḃjageli's behaviour and does all she could to stop her from prostitution even more than her parents Ukoḃha and Mgbokwo. Her brother Chikwe and Oḃjageli quarrel with her because they feel she is too much on Oḃjageli's neck. When she catches Oḃjageli in her usual act with some boys, she calls her parents and Chikwe their brother who supports Oḃjageli to come and see (p 22). Oḃjageli her sister feels that she has been burging her life by overchecking her and says: "*Nke bu Nwamaka ana-enyojiri m akpiri*" (p.22) (The one called Nwamaka, overchecks' me).

Nwamaka is intelligent and hard working. She runs a petty trade and wisely uses her profit on every member of the family. She loves her sister Oḃjageli. This is why she reports every shady movement Oḃjageli makes with men and attacks her any time she is caught. At the end when Oḃjageli dies, she intelligently comes up with the idea that they should take the child back to their own home so that through the child they will remember his mother Oḃjageli (their sister). Eventually, she regrets that they lost her sister because of her stubbornness and waywardness.

Amarachi is the first girlfriend to Obioma, in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*. She so loves Obioma and intends to marry him. She has been of immense help to Obioma's achievement in life. She greatly opposes Obioma's marriage proposal to Obiageli (Obioma's second lover and latter wife). She employs all available means to stop Obioma from marrying Obiageli; she even uses Obioma's mother (Mama Obodo) but does not succeed. Obioma in the end, jilts her and marries Obiageli.

From the feminist perspective, women, both widows and non-widows, are presented as child bearers and rearers they are very sensitive in that they foresee the doom ahead of their children and struggle to prevent it. The obedient children are saved from doom while the stubborn and disobedient children are killed by the same danger their mothers warn them to desist from. For instance, Ukachi, in *Onye kpaa Nku Ahuhu*, warns Nwamaka not to abort her pregnancy, later the boy's father comes to claim him. Also, Uduehi in *Nwata Rie Awọ* warns Obioma against marrying Awọrọ, but Obioma refuses. Later, she is humiliated, and sold into slavery. Enyidiya warns Ugomma against her flirtatious nature. Ugomma disobeys and lies to cover up her suspicious movements with men. She later gets impregnated, humiliated publicly and abandoned by her male lover. Ikodie, in *Nka di Na Nti*, warns against his relationship with Ezinwanyị. He disobeys, and, in the end, Ezinwanyị poisons him and he dies. Mama Obodo warns Obioma not to marry Obiageli. He insists on his decision, marries Obiageli and she poisons him and he dies.

The events between these mothers and their children portray the Igbo world view that "*Okwu nne, a naghị agbagha ya agbagha*" (one should not disagree with the words from a mother). This is because the Igbo believe that mothers have a very strong tie with their children such that any pronouncement they make on their children is always very effective. In the lives of the characters mentioned above, women are presented as people who are prophetic in nature. Women and girls are also portrayed as people who can either direct their friends lives positively or mislead their friends and lure them into evil acts, as in the case of Chiichii in *Ihunanya*; Adaaku and Ogbenyeanyu, in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*. Women are also presented as wicked, jealous, pretentious and as a class of people who crave for men's love. Similarly, women are presented, in these texts, as a class of people who do not change their decisions no matter the pressure mounted on them, especially in cases of love relationships with the opposite sex. One could argue that after all, Obioma and Njoku who are males resisted their mothers' pieces of advice due to their love relationship

with their fiancées: Oḅiageli and Ezinwaanyi respectively but such cases are rarer in men than in women judging from this study.

Women are generally presented as good antagonists because of their protective nature over their children, a responsibility which, from the feminist perspective, should be shared by both parents but which the men abandon for the women. Radical and Marxist feminists believe that women should be paid for this duty, but it is traditionally neglected as part of women's stereotyped roles. Cases like this make the Igbo blame the behaviour of a bad child on the mother they believe that women are closer to their children; so, they should properly train their children to be well behaved. With all the above established facts, it baffles one when the Igbo attribute a child's hardwork and good manners to the father while those of bad and unachieved children are credited to their mothers.

From this research, it is evident that some men do not live long to see the future of their children. The numerous widows in these plays portray this. They are almost of equal number to the women whose husband's are alive. Secondly, the women whose husbands are alive are depicted to be more observant of their children's behaviour and they are shown to be more active in the correction of their children than their husbands. It is also the stance of feminists that women should be paid for the care they offer their children, husband, and in-laws as practised by the mothers under discussion.

### 3.3 Secondary Characters

In this study, the term secondary characters is adopted for the literary characters, which are referred to as functional characters in some works. The reason for this decision is that many critics argue about the functionality of functional characters, which gives rise to the term functional as a means of their identification. It is argued that almost every other character is functional in its own peculiarity. To critics with this opinion, it is not proper to employ the term "functional" in the description of a secondary character because every other character including the background characters perform a particular function.

Secodanry characters provide aid or help to the protagonist in order to achieve his/her aim. They could either be male or female characters. In this discussion, we shall dwell more on the female secondary characters rather than the male characters, as this research is female-oriented. Like we did in the previous classifications of the

other characters, we shall categorise the secondary characters into two using the binary opposition method: the good and the bad. The women will further be classified according to the similarities and differences in their various characters as women or girls.

There are fifty-one female secondary characters<sup>1</sup> in seventeen of the eighteen plays studied. The eighteenth play, *Ajọ Nwa A Na- eku N'ikpere*, has no female secondary character, so, it is excluded from this aspect of the study. Some other characters too are initially presented as girls and later get married and are presented as women. In cases like this, the females are classified as girls and women, respectively. Such female characters are Uduaku, in *Eri mara Nwugwu*, and Ojinchefu, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*. As a result of these facts, the number of the characters involved when categorised will not tally with the total number of characters enumerated above. There should be additional two characters to the originally calculated fifty-one and that gives us fifty-three secondary characters.

### 3.3.1 Good Women as Secondary Characters

Here, we will discuss the good female secondary characters portrayed in the plays<sup>2</sup>. They are 17 in number and are categorised based on their functionality as encouragers and helpers, those who endure and suffer for the sins of others and protective women.

#### 3.3.1.1 Encouragers and Helpers

Ndidi encourages and advises Udo, her friend, on her daughter, Chikka whose husband has just sent packing out of her matrimonial home without knowing that she is pregnant for him. Akụlọ encourages and consoles Ugomma to take heart and bear the disappointment meted out to her by Obiọha her lover who impregnates her and abandons her, Utediya and Oriaku Ibe encourage Ihunanya to go ahead and be married to Ikechi. Mrs Ibenyere helps in presenting the case between Ozuruigbo, Chinyere and Dr. Emezina to the University Senate meeting. Ogechi is a good neighbour to Oriji (Oriaku Okwundu). She seeks to know why there is noise in Oriji's family. Onukwubiri renders help to an old woman, Nne Elewechi, by dropping the water she fetches from the stream for her. Nwamgbogo helps Ojimba to search for his flute and makes sure that he tastes little food before going in search of

his lost flute. Nnenna helps her husband, Ikechukwu, to seek the source of his problem and claim back his abandoned son who later becomes his only son / child.

### 3.3.1.2 Those That Endure and Suffer For the Sins of Others

Nnenna, in *Onye kpa Nku Ahuhu*, endures her barrenness and all the social stigma and embarrassment that she faces. She endures all the false allegations from her husband. Ođinchehu and Nnenna share something in common. That is the fact that they suffer for the sins committed by their husbands. Nnenna suffers barrenness because Amaka her husband's ex-lover curses him and cast a spell on him. She says that no voice of a child should be heard in Ikechukwu's house from the very day he (Ikechukwu) rejects her unborn baby. As a result of this curse, Nnenna who later gets married to Ikechukwu remains barren.

Conversely, Ođinchehu in *Nwata Rie Awo* endures all the troubles associated with her barrenness and the sickness of her baby, which are after-effects of the sins of her husband who is also her biological father. He commits incest (ibene) by marrying his daughter. He also sells his wife, the mother of Ođinchehu and Ođinchehu herself (before he marries her) into slavery.

Omasiriđiya and Uđadiya in *Obidiya* suffer as widows and Uđadiya also lost her children for the sins of their husband, Oriaku Dike. Uđadiya revolts against Igbo culture, which anticipates that the property of any man who dies a mysterious death, like Oriaku, should be thrown into an evil forest or abandoned. She takes some of Oriaku's valuable property, yet nothing happens to her. Uđadiya's actions teaches that it is not every action that is tagged abomination that actually is. Uđadiya could have allowed her husband's property to be wasted if not that she is wise enough as not to be deceived by the people's culture.

### 3.3.1.3 Protective Women

Nwando protects her daughter, Ođiageli, by exposing the truth behind some rumours about her. She discourages some gossips that come to discuss her daughter's affairs with her. Nne Elewechi protects the life of Ezeji and exposes the fact that Ureonu (Ezeji's wife) poisons her husband's food. She protectively prevents Ezeji from tasting the food at all. Mgbokwo is a good mother who observes her children and warns them against impending danger. That is, her involvement with Ođiageli her daughter who turns deaf ears to her warnings, advice and chastisement.



The women here are presented as encouragers, and helpers. They are either encouraging their friends or children or their neighbours. The idea of women encouraging their fellow women is what some feminists call sisterhood, which states that women should be their fellow women's helpers. They should not be antagonistic and oppressive to their fellow women. They are also presented as playing a stereotyped role of child bearers and rearers. It is because of this role that they are more mindful of their children's behaviour than the men. Women are also presented as those who bear the burden of their husband's misbehaviour. Often, they suffer for crimes which they are innocent of.

### 3.3.2. Bad Women as Secondary Characters

These women are called bad women because of their bad roles in the plays. They are ten in number<sup>3</sup> and are further grouped into the following: materialistic women, diabolical women, gossips, wicked co-wives.

#### 3.3.2.1 Materialistic Women

Nwaijari and Obiageli, in *Oguamalam* are sheepishly covetous. They are aware that the land which their husband Ikekwem clashes over with Oguamalam does not belong to him. They refuse to confront him with the truth. He forces them to fight Oguamalam and they agree without complaining, but obediently succumb to his requests until the community deities; Amadioha and Ngu, strike Ikekwem and Nwaijari dead and injures Obiageli her leg. They want to own the land so that they can acquire all the palm trees in it.

Similarly, Ugbaku, in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*, covetously plans with her husband, Mazi Ugonna, to kill Ezenwa, a prince and son of the king of Isuebu (Eze Omaliko) after his father dies in exile at Potoki. She and her husband oppose the wish of their daughter Mma to marry Ezenwa for the same selfish desire (to continue to reign in Ezenwa's father's stead).

Uduaku, in *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*, jilts Ndubisi, a struggling young man who has lavished his money on her and helped her in many ways. She marries Ochonganooko, an irresponsible but rich young man who has a car and promises to take her abroad. She keeps Ndubisi's hopes high that she will become his wife only to elope with Ochonganooko at the climax of her supposed wedding with Ndubisi when they were about to be joined as husband and wife right in the church. She

suddenly excuses herself to visit the small house and there she disappears with Ọchọnganooko who, according to their plan, already awaits her in his car. Secondly, because of the pressure she undergoes from Ọchọnganooko, her husband, over her inability to bear him a male child, she bribes a nurse to exchange another man's son for her daughter, Nneka, at the hospital where she is delivered of a baby.

Nwejimalu, in *Adaaku*, due to her materialistic crave forces her daughter *Adaaku*, a University graduate to marry an old, illiterate, and rich Chief Ibekwe. She threatens to disown her if she refuses to marry him.

Nwunyedi, in *Ojimba*, having witnessed the good things that *Ojimba* (who lost his flute to the spirits) comes back with, sends her son to willfully drop his flute in the farm and later goes back in search of it. She does this so that her son will come back with as many gifts as does *Ojimba* her co-wife's son. As a bad child, the boy *Ikonne* behaves rudely to the spirits. He is killed and the spirit eats up his flesh.

### 3.3.2.2 Diabolical Women

Ogbenyeanu, the mother of Ọbiageli, in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*, having known that Ọbioma already has a fiancée who raised him from poverty to affluence, prepares a love charm for her daughter so that she would win Ọbioma's love. She and her daughter succeed in their plans, charm Ọbioma and make him to wickedly hate *Amarachi*, his former fiancée. He jilts *Amarachi* and marries Ọbiageli. With the help of *Ogbenyeanu* too, Ọbiageli poisons Ọbioma and he dies.

Okwuchi Ezewata's mother in *Ajo Obi*, disrespects her husband (p.132), she is a diabolical Christian. She goes to a traditional doctor *Dibia Efobi* to prepare a poison that she will use to poison Ọbiageli her daughter-in-law over a false allegation she lays over Ọbiageli (see P.129-130).

### 3.3.2.3 Gossips

Okwuchi, in *Ajo Obi*, is also a gossip who admires and welcomes gossips without questions. Another gossip is *Nwamgbọ*, the friend and neighbour of Ọbioma and Ọdinchefu, her daughter, in *Nwata Rie Awọ* who are both wives of *Awọrọ*. She visits them only to inform them of the news going on in the town, especially as it concerns their husband. Her sort of news is the type that stirs up trouble between the husbands and wives. Her love for gossip attracts great hatred of her person by *Awọrọ* the husband of the two co-wives.

#### 3.3.2.4 Wicked Co-Wives

Ubuwen, a wicked and jealous woman, reports her co-wife, Oḅjageli, to the members of their community, saying that she has committed an abomination because she bore a child without being circumcised. Oḅjageli and her child die out of neglect. She and her husband abandon Oḅjageli and neglect her to death.

The feminists are of the opinion that women should subvert some cultural practices that oppress women. They believe that culture is man-made and can be changed as the society changes. The above women secondary characters are portrayed as evil, diabolical, jealous, materialistic, gossipy, greedy, and wicked women. All these are some of the negative stereotyped images of women in literature. Modleski (1979:121-138) argues that the negative image of women in male-authored texts is partly responsible for the subjugation of women. This is because it promotes women's culture of imprisonment. To Modleski, what women read about them builds a psychological ceiling, which holds them captive. The consciousness of captivity disempowers many women and makes them to remain under the burden of societal limitations. Feminists are of the opinion that literary writers should portray good image of female characters in literature rather than the type described here.

#### 3.3.3. Good Girls as Secondary Characters

There are twenty-three girls who play the role of secondary characters in the plays of this study. The good girls among them are sixteen<sup>4</sup> in number and are further grouped as follows:

##### 3.3.3.1 Good Girls as Advisers, Helpers and Friends

Adaaku, in *Ogbu mmadu Ndu Na-agu*, is a friend to Oḅjageli. She advises her not to snatch Obioma from Amarachi. In the end, Oḅjageli rejects the advice and dies in her sin.

Ikoeze and Oḅuchi are children of Uduaku, in *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*. They advise their mother not to be worried over her lack of a male child. She rejects their advice and exchanges a female child for another woman's son. This act lands her in a great problem.

Ncheta, as a friend to Ojiageli, in *Ajo Obi*, helps to sort out her problems. She advises her on what to do, and tries to help her investigate the death of her husband.

Nwakaego is a good friend of Ojiageli in *Otu Mkpisjaka*. She informs Ojiageli's parents of her promiscuous life and joins the family in trying to help her out of her problems.

Ugoafo is a friend to Ekemma in *Ojimba*. She visits her and encourages her to go along with her to the Village Square where Ojimba is to choose a wife amidst them. She intends to help Ekemma but the task given to Ekemma is above her capability.

Ngozi is a friend to Nnenna, the barren wife, in *Onye kpaa Nku Ahuhu*. She advises Nnenna on where she should go and get her problems solved. Her advice actually helps Nnenna and her husband in tracing the cause of Nnenna's barrenness.

Nkiru in *Akwa Nwa* helps Chimma in pounding yam. This is against her biological mother's (Ahudiya) wish because Ahudiya and Chimma are co-wives.

### 3.3.3.2 House Maids

Orie, in *Ajo Obi* is Ojiageli's maid who takes care of Adamma their daughter. Ekemma too is a maltreated housemaid to Nkemdirim, in *Ojimba*. They are presented as humble servants who only act in accordance with what their respective mistresses have commanded them to do. They are errand girls. Their oppressors are their fellow women and not the men. In other words, they are oppressed by the oppressed and, in most cases; their mistresses vent the anger that accrued from their odd relationships with their husbands or the society on them.

### 3.3.3.3 Small Girls

This group of characters is seen as good because it is assumed that they have no life commitment as to classify them as good or bad. They include Adamma, in *Ajo Obi*; Nwamaka, in *Ezinne*, and Ojinchefu, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*. They are presented as children, exactly the way they should have been in real life situations. They are obedient to their parents, especially their mothers.

The close relationship between these girls and their mothers shows their mothers as the ones directly concerned in the moral and other aspects of their training. It portrays mothers as bearers and rearers of children. These mothers play unnoticeable roles, which are supposed to be rewarded.

### 3.3.4. **Bad Girls as Secondary Characters**

The bad girl secondary characters in the plays are Ụduakụ, Nneka, Uju, and Adaakụ, in *Eriri mara Ngwugwu*; Ezinwaanyi and Ụlomma, in *Nka Dị Na Nji*; and Ụkamaka, in *Ezinne*.- A common factor noticed in them, is their relationship or feelings about the opposite sex.

Ụduakụ jilts a man who loves her, a man who has spent so much on her, performed her traditional marriage and even has already taken her in her wedding gown to the altar. As the wedding proper is about to commence, she suddenly excuses herself and disappears with a richer man, Ọchonganoko. Both of them planned this act earlier on to the surprise of the people who attend the wedding.

Ezinwaanyi and Ụlomma as secondary school girls already have started to change men and use them to achieve their heart desires. They offer themselves to men for money and go about living promiscuously.

Ụkamaka is also a stubborn girl who does not take to advice. Her mother (Ụreonu) has already linked her to a male lover and she supports her mother's action.

To the radical feminists, these girls are fully emancipated, while to the womanist and African feminists; they are failures to womanhood, because of the negative image of the woman they create. Generally, good girls in the plays as secondary characters are portrayed as good friends who can help in shaping the lives of their friends. They are seen as people who can really know the secrets of their friends and people who stand the chance of helping to put their friends on the right part in life.

Conversely, the major area that portrays the presentation of girls on the negative side relates to their relationship with the opposite sex. They are depicted as lovers, bedmates, sexual entertainers and sexual battlegrounds for men in economic and social power.

An important fact established in this discussion on females as secondary characters is that a great number of the female characters fall under the second group. They are 51 in number. This implies that female characters are given secondary positions in literature. This is an idea that feminists quarrel with. They disagree with the idea of females being relegated to the class of second-class citizens. Their activities are important but are less recognised. In the same way, the activities of the

secondary characters are very necessary in the plot of the stories yet they are not given appropriate recognition.

### 3.4 Background Characters

These are characters that are displayed only to represent members of a society. They are characters that the protagonists and the secondary characters interact with and who are presented as mere faces in the midst of other characters. They do not play noticeable roles. At times, they appear at home, market places, ceremonies and festivals. Their roles are very insignificant and their names may or may not be known although their voices may be heard. These characters are present to make up a normal background for other characters. This is why they are called background characters. As usual, they may be both males and females but this study will concentrate on only the female characters; however, mention may be made of male characters where necessary. These characters are classified into four: women, girls, unidentified gender group, and spirits. The characters cannot be correctly categorised as being good or bad because they have not actually conspicuously participated in enough activities to earn them the adjectives good or bad.

#### 3.4.1 Women as Background Characters

The women in the eighteen plays studied that act as background characters are thirteen in number<sup>5</sup>. The characters are very silent and voiceless in the plays. In some cases, they only appear when called by their husbands to serve kolanut to visitors. In many cases too, some of the women's names are mentioned but they do not appear in any of the activities involved in the play. Examples are Jioji, in *Obidiya*; Nwunye Okpala, in *Eri mara Ngwugwu* Nwunye Okpala's case is peculiar, as she is nameless. Nwunye Okpala means Okpala's wife. Her personal name as a full-fledged individual is not revealed. She is not also represented in the activities of the play; Ahudie, in *Oguamalam*, is mentioned as one of the characters but is not involved in the play. The characters called Umunwaanyi refers to a group of women. They are many, but their characters are not given prominence in the plays.

##### 3.4.1.1 Co-wives as Background Characters

Uloaku and Nwanyiugbo are co-wives. They are only portrayed to represent the clash, which always exist among co-wives. Apart from where they are fighting

over an *Oha* tree (a greenish yellow vegetable used for preparing soup), they never appear again. The way their husband handles them shows how women are subjugated under the control of men. Just one man speaks and two women are forcefully calmed down.

The feminist interpretation of the presentation of women in the plays as background characters is that African women are voiceless in their society. They are used as men's appendages. Even in the characterisation page; it is very obvious that the women are not identified by any adjective other than the explanation that they are Mr. X's wife or Z's mother. The men are identified by their names, professions or titles, their administrative status; the women are identified as the men's appendages: Oriaku... or nwunye... (Mrs.... or wife of...). Many of the women are made to take commands insultively from their husbands. Chief Akụudo, a very rich chief, has many cars but the wife, Lọlọ Akụudo, cannot drive any of the cars. She talks only when her husband wants her to talk and keeps quiet when he commands her to be quiet. This is a typical situation of some Igbo women in Igbo society. Of course, some Igbo men ride the best of their cars while their wives ride abandoned cars (the ones rejected by their husbands) or baby cars. Some men that have only one car in their families do not give their wives access to the car. They only carry their wives in their cars when they are in a good mood to do so; but when they are in a bad mood, the women find their way or work to their destinations while their husbands leisurely ride to their own destinations. This is the situation between Chief Akụudo and his wife, Lọlọ Akụudo. Even in the house, he insults her right before her children.

In *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*, Nwamgbafo and Uruabia cry to the members of Isuebu community over the death and imprisonment of their husbands. They are presented as women who are helpless and lifeless without their husbands. They are also portrayed as lazy and jobless women who cannot fend for themselves, but only depend on their husbands.

#### 3.4.2 Girls as Background Characters

The girls in these background characters are classified as single individuals, young girls in a group called *umụ mgboto* and prostitutes (*umụ akwuna*).

### 3.4.3 Single girls

These girls only appear to fill up the background or perform some special but unnoticeable activities. Sis Angela, in *Eriri mara Ngwugwu*, preaches repentance and confession to Nọọsụ the character that exchanged a baby (female) for another male child. Ngozi, in *Ajọ Obi* merely performs her duty as a secretary to Ezenwata. Ụbaakụ, in *Ogbu mmadụ Ndụ na-agụ*, as a housemaid, performs her duty diligently by running errands, without grudging. Ugomma, in *Oguamala*, is only mentioned as one of the characters but does not participate in the play.

The feminist perspective of the image of women here is that the girls are depicted as people who are religious, serious-minded, diligent, and active in their jobs. On the negative side, they mainly belong to the lowest status of life. No matter how humiliating their jobs are, they are happy with them. The housemaids here are mainly girls. These girls are deprived of a lot of privileges as human beings. They are deprived of education and other emancipatory aspects of life. Their fellow women over-exploit them.

### 3.4.4 Ụmụ Agbọghọ / Mgbọtọ (Group of Young Girls):

In most cases, these girls are assigned with performing some rituals for the traditional cleansing of a member of their group who has defaulted. For instance, in *Ugomma*, they perform the traditional cleansing rituals on Ugomma to wash away the sin of and the curse that accompanies her being impregnated prematurely. There is also a similar action by the ụmụ agbọghọ in *Adaakụ* for the cleansing of the land of the abomination (husband murder) committed by Adaakụ.

Another feature that attracts the gathering of Ụmụ agbọghọ is in the case of Ojimba who defeats his opponent in wrestling. As a winner, one of his prizes is that he should choose a wife among the girls of the town. An occasion is arranged for this purpose. All the ụmụ agbọghọ gather either at the village square or at the market square for this selection to be done. Any girl chosen automatically becomes the wrestler's wife free of any bride prize. In the case of *Ojimba*, a housemaid, Ekemma, is chosen. This elevates her from the lowest class to an upper class.

Ekemma's type of marriage from the feminist perspective is not based on love; it is on the lady chosen. However, this type of marriage is always the desire of many girls. In fact, those who are chosen count themselves lucky because such husbands are always the desire of every young lady due to the societal class and fame



established by the wrestler's victory. The days of wrestling competition among communities in Igbo land are gone. Girls are no more given out as compensatory gifts but some parents still give out their daughters forcefully in marriage due to some materialistic tendencies. The view of the feminists is that marriage should not be forced on women; they should be allowed to make their choices based on love and not on materialistic basis.

### 3.4.5 Prostitutes

This is another class of girls presented in some of these plays. Their names are not mentioned but they are presented to represent the type of people seen in hotels. In *Nka Di Na Ni*, it is said that '*ndi akwula*' (prostitutes) are present in the hotel where Njoku and his friends go to drink wine. Although the sex of these (*ndi akwula*) is not mentioned in the Igbo worldview, '*akwula*' refers to a female prostitute. The Igbo believes that prostitution is an evil act reserved for women, especially young girls.

The feminists query why women or ladies are the only ones presented as prostitutes in the literature. Are there no male prostitutes? After all, who are the clients of prostitutes? Are they not men? Why are those men not referred to as prostitutes? Why is their part of prostitution overlooked and seen as a normal act? This is one of the problems of patriarchal societies. The evil that men do is neglected while the evil that women do is blown out of proportion and is heavily punished.

Another issue that arises from this discussion is the fact that there are many male prostitutes in Igbo society. This is true when we consider the fact that some Igbo boys keep as many female lovers as possible; it is possible to get boys who have up to ten female lovers. Is this not a form of prostitution? Yet the society notices all this but it is quiet over it. How about the 'sugar' daddies? These are men who practise what Engles (1884/1972:130-140) calls "masqued polygamy." They are married to one wife but have many other female lovers outside the marriage. It is an open secret that nobody wants to address but it has eaten deep into Igbo society. The society remains very silent over such issues because Igbo society is patriarchal. The feminists consider the unfaithfulness of men in marriage as a form of exploitation. However, to the radical feminists, prostitution is a profession for liberated women who do not want to be subordinated and exploited by men in marriage. They see nothing bad in prostitution; rather, they view it as a means of avoiding enslavement, which is the basic motive in marriage. To the radical feminists, both married women

and prostitutes are the same. They are all involved in the same business "prostitution." The only difference is that, according to Nawal El Saadawi (1983:37-86), the prostitute is wiser and is paid for her services according to her negotiative capability, her age and features, the married wife after her services to her husband at a cheap price is enslaved by her husband. Besides, while the prostitute makes choices on which man to have sex with, the married woman has no other choice but her husband whether he satisfies her sexually or not. But the married men sneak out of marriage to sleep with prostitutes for their own sexual satisfactions.

Considering the number of females presented as background characters, which is twenty five, including both women and girls, and the fact that females also form part of the unidentified gender group, it is possible to conclude that the females form a greater number of background characters in Igbo written plays. This presupposes that females are relegated to the background in Igbo written plays. This fact further buttresses the point feminists claim that women are relegated to the background in patriarchal societies. They are seen but not heard or felt. They are used as less important persons, people who are used just to fill in the gap, or who are only identified through their husbands or their children. The feminists advocate that women should be presented as full-fledged and recognised individuals in literature and not as men's appendages. They want literature to portray women achievers in various fields of life.

The groups of background characters referred to as unidentified gender group are many in the plays under study. They form a greater number of the background characters. They are unidentified gender group because it is not stated in the plays whether they are males or females.

There are also two classes of spirits in these plays. The old women spirits and spirits generally, which may be either male or female spirits, even though this is not specified in the plays. Both in oral and written Igbo literature, the spirit of old women only appear to help the oppressed out of difficult situations. For instance, in *Ojimba*, the spirit of the old woman appears to help Ekemma the maid that her mistress has given a difficult task to quickly accomplish her assignments and prepare to go to meet *Ojimba* who is to choose a wife among the town maidens. *Nlemchi's* spirit appears as an old woman to help *Ukaegbu* (her son), *Onwumere* (her grandson) and their entire community out of the suppression they face through *Ekwuluonu* (a wicked woman) her daughter-in-law.

### 3.5 Onomastics, Female Characterisation and the Portrayal of Dominance in the Select Igbo Plays.

Onomastics is the study of names. In this work, it is the study of the names of the characters in the plays used for the study. Names are incontrovertibly means of identification of individuals, places, thoughts and things in a society (Johnson 1921: 79 – 89; Awe 1970 – 71:85; Williamson 1970 – 71:53; Ubahakwe 1982: 30; Onuoha 1986, Iwundu 1994, Oluikpe 2004:388 and Kammelu 2006:1-5). In written literature, names are attributively given to characters for identification purposes, based on the author's intention and depending on the events in a story. In Igbo written literature, a character may have other names but is recognised as a character with only one name.

In Igbo society, names are given to children by their parents and other stakeholders (Ogbalu (1979:29). This shows that literary characters and their names are authors' creations: Jegede (2003:54) refers to this creativity as "the author's invention." These names are chosen based on circumstances surrounding the birth of a character, his activities in the story, and what the author wants him/her to be. In most cases in literature, the name of a character portrays an image about the character's nature; societal view of the character and, at times, the status or class of the character. Instances are, the name Chief Akudo, in *Ihunanya* signifies the image of a wealthy man of high class (a chief) as opposed to the name Ikeketorie in the same *Ihunanya*, which means one who manages, suffers or struggles to get what he eats. The image created by this name is poverty and hardship. It is so easy to decipher the nature, activities and class of both characters from their names. In support of the above declaration Ogunyemi (1995:195) asserts that literary characters could be depicted through "mere names." Ogundeji (1988:290) and Adeleke (1995:194) are also of the opinion that, in literary tradition and discovery, a character is identified by its overall function in the plot, whether as a hero or otherwise. In other words, names are given to literary characters, male, and female, by the author and those names may be given based on the characters they represent, which is informed by the functions of the characters in the play. Precisely, it could be said that the names given to both male and female characters in literature are the creation of the authors of a literary work and the names she/he assigns to the characters depend on his /her overview of the function of the characters in his literary work.

According to Fowler (1987:28), Anpe (1990), Isola (1998:3), Ogundeji (2000:2), and Dasyilva (2004:96), the actions of characters in literature are

representative of the actions of human beings in the society the character represents. This is because a character means something outside itself, a group of people in the society which the author creates and names according to his cultural, psychological, social, religious and general overview of a society he is interested in portraying through a literary piece. Therefore, the name an author gives to a character in his play has a link to the author's idea of the function he expects the character to play in his story based on his cultural, social, religious, political and psychological view point of the character in question. In a nutshell, the name a playwright gives to a male or female character depends on the function he/she wants the character to play in the story and the cultural, psychological, social, religious and political value attributed to that. It is obvious that, in most cases, whatever name a character takes in literature semantically portrays an image about the character. Some of such images could either be positive or negative.

Below are some names of male and female characters in one of the eighteen Igbo plays studied in order to actually support our claims above that Igbo names are meaningful, depict images about the bearer and are given based on the function a playwright assigns to a character.

**(1) In *Ajọ nwa a na-eku n'ikpere* by Ben Igbokwe**

**Male Names:**

Ụkaegbu - Ụka (word or quarrel) + egbu (cannot kill) = (He who

quarrels and words cannot kill).

Ọdọemenam - Ọdọ (another) + emena (don't do) + m (i) = (May none happen again to me).

Ọnwumere - Ọnwụ (death) + mere (Caused or as a result of) = (Caused by death).

Obodokwe - Obodo (town which implies town's people) + kwe (agree) = (If the community permits),

Anabaraonye - Ana (Land) + bara (accommodates or enters) + Onye (who?) =

(Nobody is comfortable in the world), Akụkalịa (When riches are much),

Mbadiwe - Mba (country/ people) + di (are) + iwe (annoyed) = (The country meaning the people are annoyed).

### Female Names:

Ekwuluṣu - E (They) + kwulu (said) + ṣu (mouth) (Object of discussion).

Izuchi - Izu (agreement) + chi (God) = (God's agreement or decision?).

Eringa - Eri (Don't eat) + nga (place) = (One whom you cannot eat in her home, a stingy person or one who does not accept defeat).

Nlemchi - Nle (watching) + m (i) + chi (God) = (I'm watching God).

From the analysis above, the name Ukaegbu is invented for the character because of his function as a husband to a quarrelsome wife. The wife abuses him and says a lot of insulting words to him yet he survived her several oppressive actions. His name bears the image of one who has a big heart and accommodates evil talks.

Ọdọmenam is given this name because in the play, his wife dies of a high blood pressure which is as a result of their daughter's (Ekwuluṣu) mannerless behaviour. His name depicts the image of resistance to (death and high blood pressure) according to the story. The character even stated this fact categorically in the play that he does not want his daughter to kill him like she kills her mother. He also said in the play that it is the word of God that has been sustaining him from dying in the hands of his daughter so he avoids anything that will make him die like his wife (p.12-13).

Ọnwumere bears the name because the death of his mother led to all the problems he experiences in life from his step mother Ekwuluṣu. It is the death of his mother that exposes him to danger and suffering as a result, he is identified as such.

The names Obodokwe and Anabaraonye all portray the image of conflict as they are some of the kinsmen that determine the case between Ekwuluṣu and her husband. Obodokwe, which means if the people or the community agree, depicts that the community members have rejected Ekwuluṣu and want her out of their community. Anabaraonye on the other hand depicts the idea that the land cannot accommodate Ekwuluṣu in their midst.

Mbadiwe, as a landlord represents the people's anger over Ekwuluṣu's continuous disturbance of the peaceful existence of the people in the town.

Ekwuluṣu is a torn in the flesh of members of her community. Every character points an accusing finger against her. Anywhere she goes to, people talk against her behaviour. Her name depicts the image of trouble.

The name Eringa has the image of stinginess or one who does not accept defeat. In this case she does not allow Ekwuluṣu to pocket her like she does to other people in the community.

### 3.5.1 General Comments

In the eighteen plays, there are 108 male names depicting the same number of male characters. There are also 94 female names in number different from the number of female characters which is 114. There is a difference in the number of female names versus the number of female characters because some female characters play double roles as girls and mothers so they are counted as girls and also as women. The difference in the number of male names versus the number of female names indicate that Igbo stories tell more of 'His' story rather than 'Her' story. This becomes obvious when one remembers that the choice of the plays studied for this work were made based on their ability to portray dominant female characters. A greater number of Igbo plays do not present dominant female characters, so they are not chosen for this study. Even in this choice, the number of male characters still dominates the female ones. What could the gap have been if about fifty Igbo plays or more, as recorded by Nwadike (2002: 1-5), were studied where a greater number of them focus on male characters? The above findings prove that Igbo society, as reflected in these plays, is highly a patriarchal society where the males dominate the females.

This study shows that many names given to male and female characters in the plays are meaningful and have no negative image attached to them. Not all of them portray the characters negatively. There are some male and female names which portray good images of the character and are real to Igbo society. Such male names are: Ukaegbu, Onwumere, Odoemena, Anabaraonye, Obodokwe, Mbadiwe, Obinna, Ugonna and many others. Such female names are Izuchi, Ezinne, Chiichii, Nlemchii, Obiageli, Ulooma, Adaaku, Chimma, Ukamaka, Ogeechi, Oluchi, Nneka, Uju, and many more. All portray reasonable names that, in most cases, exist in the Igbo society. They also portray reasonable images.

### 3.5.2 Male Names of Characters Compared to Female Names of Characters

Apart from the normal Igbo names listed above, a close feminist study of the male and female names in the above plays reveals that many male names portray the male as

(a) **Somebody in possession of wealth:** In this case, there is need for the translation of the names in order to let us actually arrive at their meanings and their likely image.

Akụkalịa. .... Wealth is more than enough

Ozuomee ..... One who thinks about it and does it when it is ready

Oriakụ Dike .... He who enjoys wealth, a brave man

Ezeji. .... King of yam

Ọkaa..... A short form of Ọkaaomee - He who schedules a thing and does it.

Akụudo ..... Wealth of peace

(b) **Somebody who is above destruction:**

Ụkaegbu ..... He who quarrels/words cannot kill

Nsiatụ ..... He that a spell or poison does not affect

Oguamalam ..... May no curse prosper in me

(c) **Possessor of strength:**

Diogụ ..... A warrior

Akakaka .....: He whose powers supersede those of the others. (The hand is bigger than other hands)

Odogwu ..... A hero

Agụ ..... A Tiger (the name tiger, which could be an attributive metaphoric name, is used in the real Igbo society to refer to a man who fights and defeats all others just like a tiger does.

Okwuike ..... A forceful talk, giving the image of a forceful person or one, who talks, forcefully.

(d) **Kingship:**

These names depict the image of kingship because of the word

Eze (king) attached to their names. They are:

Eze Omerife ..... A King who has achieved something

Onye nwe Ala ..... The land owner

Ezeji ..... King of yam

Eze Afurukwe ..... A worthy King  
Eze Ozurumba ..... A popular King  
Eze ..... King  
Eze Omaliko ..... King Omaliko  
Ezeoha ....The people's king  
Ezenwata .....Young king

**(e) People who have achieved one thing or the other**

Ogbuehi .....Cow killer  
Ogbuu .....Killer  
Omeife .....He who makes things happen  
Ogbunanjo .....He who kills badly

**(f) Possessor of power**

Ojimba ..... The pillar of the town  
Ugwumba..... The people's prestige/honour  
Ebubedike .....The great man's greatness/the grace of a hero  
Akajiofor .....The holder of the Ofo (a powerful and mysterious Traditional tree branch whose its presence shows honesty/justice)

**(g) Someone whose nature of jobs, professions and high class status in Igbo society is evident:**

Here the men are either addressed by the names of their professions before their real names or they are completely identified by their jobs. Such names are as follows:

Dokita Emezina, Profeso Diogu, Vii Sii, Deputi Vii Sii, Chief Jostis, Kot Registra, Loya Iheako, Loya Maduka, Dibja Nwokwe, Profeti, Achidikin Jon, Ukochukwu (pastor), Govano, Ezedibja (King of witch doctors), Duru (chief priest), Dibja Afa (witch doctor for divinations), Ugodibja (the handsome witch doctor). It is observed that whereas the professions of male characters are compulsorily attached to such male names or they are fully identified by their professions as shown above, the female's professions are not attached to their names. For instance, there is a character known as Oriaku Ibe (Mrs. Ibe) in *Ihunanya*, she is a university professor, yet she is addressed as Mrs. Ibe. It is only in the discussion between her and *Ihunanya* that she



explains that she is a professor. The idea of not recognising a woman by her profession is a very common practice in Igbo society. Most often, a woman Ph. D holder is addressed as Mrs. ... or Dr. (Mrs.) ---- while his male counterpart is addressed as Dr... The same thing goes for female holders of professorial positions. In the case of Oriaku Ibe, she is still addressed as Mrs. Ibe even as a professor. This attitude of the African society shows that, in Africa, women are only expected to be under men and not achievers. The activities of both national and international feminist movements have gradually been liberating African women from some barbaric, inhuman, subordinating and subjugating cultural expectations. In other words, achievements by the female folk in Africa (Igbo society in particular) are given less recognition unlike those of their male counterparts. Similarly: Sis. Angela, in *Eri mara Ngwugwu* is supposed to be called Prophetess Angela because other male prophets are addressed as such but she is not. Ukamaka, a lawyer, in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*, is addressed as Ukaamaka without the recognition of her profession as Loya Ukaamaka as it is attached to her male counterparts' names as could be seen in the examples above; Loya Iheako, and Loya Maduka. Conversely, the female Igbo names, from the plays studied, reveal the following images

(a) **Beauty combined with the circumstances surrounding their birth:**

Ekemma -----The beauty of an Eke day. A girl that is born on an Eke day (Eke is one of the four days that make an Igbo week).

Amaka ----- A short form of Nwaamaka (a very beautiful child)

Adamma----- A beautiful daughter/first daughter

Mma ----- Beauty

Mmogeli ----- A beautiful woman

Chimma ----- God of beauty

(b) **Parts of their husbands' bodies:**

Ihudiya – The husband's face

Obidiya – The husband's mind

Ugadiya – The husband's war weapon

Ahudiya – The husband's body

(c) **Objects; either as sexual objects or financial sources:**

Nwanyị ụgbọ – A woman that has travelled widely or a woman that can be taken to places.

Ụlọakụ – A house of wealth

Ibuakụ – A luggage of wealth

Ụdụakụ – The fame of wealth

Adaakụ – A daughter that attracts wealth

Ụbaakụ – Plenty riches

Ụzọakụ – The way to wealth

Ụgbọakụ – A means of mobility for wealth/car of wealth

Akụụlọ – A home made wealth

Uruabịa – profit has arrived

Ogbenyeanyụ – She who cannot be married by the poor

(d) **Objects or animals of beauty;**

Ụgoafọ – An Afo eagle. Ugo is used metaphorically here and in Igbo cultural view as an epitome of beauty; so this means a beautiful Afo girl. Afo is one of the four days that make up an Igbo week

Ugomma – A beautiful eagle, meaning a beautiful girl

Ụlọma – A beautiful house

Jioji – The Indian George material.

(e) **Objects for their husbands' use or objects of possession by the husbands:**

Ikoeze – The king's cup or sexual partner. 'Iko' in Igbo could mean cup or a Sex-mate

Ikodie – the husband's cup or sex-mate

Utediya – The husband's mat

Enyidiya – The husband's friend

Ọmasiriidiya – She that pleases her husband or her husband's favourite

(f) **Men's appendages:** These women's names are not known except that they are known through their husbands' names;

Nwunye Ozurumba – Ozurumba's wife

Lọlọ – Akụudo – Chief Akụudo's wife

Oriakụ Ibe – Ibe's wife

Oriakụ Okwundụ – Okwundụ's wife

Odoziakụ Ibenyere – Ibenyere's wife

In the case of the males, their personal names are used to refer to them. There is no instance in the plays where a man is addressed as the husband of Mrs... Rather his personal name must be presented before the following explanation. The female's have no personal names for identification except the above. So, they are not recognized as full-fledged individuals except as their husband's appendages. Odoziakụ Ibenyere is a prominent character. She is a university registrar yet she is not recognized as an achiever.

(g) **Gossip and other satirical names;**

Ọnụkwubiri – The mouth that concludes discussion or a gossip

Ureọnụ – A rotten mouth.

Nwunyedi – A second wife (A rival)

Ekwuluọnụ – The object of discussion

The above names cannot be given to individuals in a real Igbo society but can only be given as satirical attributive names, which must be different from the individuals' real personal names of such individuals. There are also some male names of this nature, like 'Anụfe' – the flying animal, 'Egenti' – the stubborn but such male derogatory names are not many. Such derogatory names are more on the female side in literature than on the male side and, at times, the negative image created by the male names of this nature are lighter than those of the female names. Most often too, some negative male names give them a positive image of toughness or real manhood. For instance: Ogbuu, Ogbunanjo and Anụfe.

(h) **Good mothers:** These names reveal the image of women as good mothers who are perfect in their roles as mothers. They portray the Igbo worldview of women and the importance the Igbo attach to motherhood. Such names are: Ezinne, Nneamaka and Nnedi. But names that portray the female characters in the positive way are few, as could be seen from the few examples above.

It is obvious that some Igbo women are proud of such dehumanizing names in order to show the intimate relationship between them and their husbands but no matter how much a man may love his wife he can never take up such names as

Utenwunyeya (the wife's mat) and Ikonwunyeya (the wife's cup). Such names are not thought of in Igbo society. This is because such names imply that the wives are in power while their husbands are subordinates so no man would like to bear such names but it becomes very easy to be given to women.

The names of some of the married women in the texts too exhibit the servitude nature of women to their husbands and the fact that men use their wives as objects of service to their satisfaction as could be seen above. The women's names above, though may be given to portray the love tie between the women and their husbands, also imply a negative shade of servitude and subordination. This could be proved by the fact that in as much as the Igbo society accepts such names because it favours the male folk, it stigmatises men who have any feminine attachment to their lives or names. Such men are stigmatised as women men, women wrapper or incomplete men.

## Notes

- (1) The secondary characters in the eighteen plays studied in this research include: Akụlọ, in *Ugomma*; Ogbenyeany, Adaaku and Ụloma, in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*; Utediya and Oriaku Ibe, in *Ihunanya*; Nwaijari and Ojiageli, in *Oguamalam*; Odk Ibenyere and Ibuaku, in *Okwe Agbaala*; Mgbogo, Ụgbokwu and Mma, in *Oku uzu Daa Ibube*; Ụduaku, Ogechi, Adaaku, Ikoze, Oluchi, Nneka, Uju and Nqosu, in *Eriri mara Ngwugwu*; Adamma, Nwando, Ori, Okwuchi and Ncheta, in *Ajo Obi*; Ụgadiya and Omasiriya, in *Obidiya*; Ụkaamaka, Nwamaka, Onkwubiri and Nne Elewechi, in *Ezinne*; Nkiru, Udo and Ndidi, in *Akwa Nwa*; Mgbokwu, Nwakaego, and Ubuwen; in *Otu Mkpisiaka*; Nwamgbo, Nwunedi, Igbeaku and Ugoafo, in *Ojimba*; Nnenna and Ngozi, in *Onye kpa Nku Ahuhu*; Nwamgbogo, Ekemma, Nwangbo and Odinghefu, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*; Ezinwanyi, and Ụloma, in *Nka Di Na Nti*; and Nwekedu and Nwejimalu, in *Adaaku*.
- (2) The good women secondary characters are as follows: Udo and Ndidi, in *Akwa Nwa*; Akụlọ, in *Ugomma*; Utediya and Oriaku Ibe, in *Ihunanya*; Oriaku Ibenyere, in *Okwe Agbaala*; Ogechi, in *Eriri Maru Ngwugwu*; Nwekedu, in *Adaaku*; Nwando, in *Ajo Obi*; Ụgadiya and Omasiriya, in *Obidiya*; Nne Elewechi and Onkwubiri, in *Ezinne*; Mgbokwu, in *Otu Mkpisiaka*; Nwanmgbogo and Odinghefu, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*; and Nnenna, in *Onye kpa Nku Ahuhu*.
- (3) The bad secondary characters in the eighteen plays studied who are women include, Ogbenyeany, in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*; Nwaijari and Ojiageli (wives of Ikekwe), in *Oguamalam*; Ụgbokwu, in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*; Ụduaku, in *Eriri Maru Ngwugwu*; Nwejimalu, in *Adaaku*; Okwuchi, in *Ajo Obi*; Ubuwen, in *Otu Mkpisiaka*; Nwunedi, in *Ojimba*; and Nwamgbogo, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*.
- (4) The good girls among them are: Adaaku, and Ụloma, in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-Agu*; Ibuaku, in *Okwe Agbaala*; Mma, in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*; Ikoze and Oluchi, in *Eriri mara Ngwugwu*; Adamma, Ori and Ncheta, in *Ajo Obi*; Nwamaka, in *Ezinne*; Nwakaego, in *Otu Mkpisiaka*; Ugoafo, in *Ojimba*; Ngozi, in *Onye Kpa Nku Ahuhu*; Ekemma and Odinghefu, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*; and Nkiru in *Akwa Nwa*.

(5)

The women that act as background characters are: Nwamgbafo, Uruabia and Uzukwu, in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*; Nwunye Okpala, in *Eri mara Ngwugwu*; Jioji, in *Obidiya*; Lolo Akudo and Sera, in *Ihunanya*; Uloaku, Nwanyiugbo and Ahodie, in *Oguamalam*; Igbeaku, in *Ojimba*; Umụ nwaanyi, in *Nka Di Na Nti* and Umụ nwaanyi, in *Akwa Nwa*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE FEMALE IMAGE: COMPLIANCE AND NON-COMPLIANCE IN IGBO PLAYS

#### Introduction

4.0

Feminist literary critics emphasise a 'rediscovery' of the African woman in literature. To achieve the process of rediscovery, there is need for a critical and thorough examination and a reassessment of the place of the woman in the African plays, in this case Igbo plays. In this chapter, we discuss the levels of compliance and non-compliance to male dominance of the female characters in the plays under study. The male dominance over the women could be determined by their speeches in dialogues with their husbands for the married females and their male lovers for the unmarried females. Their educational, social, cultural, political, religious and economic backgrounds are also discussed to help us determine their inherent situations. These are considered in three broad headings: Women who are completely compliant with male dominance, women that are partially compliant and women who are not compliant with male dominance. Furthermore, the general literary portrayals of these in the plays are compared with the respondents from the questionnaire. This aspect refers to their marital, economic, socio-cultural, political, educational, and religious representations of their various statuses.

#### 4.1 Women who are completely Compliant with Male Dominance

Women in this category form the majority of the female characters. They are of two groups: some whose level of dominance could be traced to their dialogues with their husbands and those whose level of dominance are traced to other activities. They are generally uneducated traditional women who play mainly traditional stereotyped roles of childbearing and caring, subsistent farming, and petty trading, and take marriage as their only means of self- fulfillment. These characters are married and are dependent on their husbands. They fear and respect their husbands and do not challenge them even when they have been pushed to the wall. Most of these women refer to their husbands as "*Nna anyị ukwu*" or "*Nna anyị*" (My lord). In some cases, they address their husbands as "*Di m oma*" (my dear husband) even when their husbands rain curses and abuses on some of them.

A list of such women who have dialogues with their husbands include: Ezinne, in *Ezinne*; Nwejimalu; in *Adaaku*; Enyidiya in *Ugomma*, Nwamgbogo, Uduchi and

Ọdịnchefu, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*; Obidiya, in *Obidiya*, Ikodie, in *Nka Dị Na Ntị*; Ụgbọakụ, in *Eri Marā Ngwugwu*; and Mgbogọ, in *Ọkụ Ụzụ Daa Ibube*. Others are co-wives of Njọkụ: Nwanyịugbọ, and Ụlọakụ, and the co-wives of Ikekwem Nwajbarị, and Ọbịageli all in *Oguamalam*. The level of dominance which their husbands exercise over them could be seen from the dialogues that ensue between the couples. Some of them are presented here while the rest are in Appendix III. The rest of the women in this group exhibit their level of compliance by their selfless labour both as full-time housewives and as beasts of labour and beasts of burden in the farm. Some examples are considered below.

In *Ezinne*, Ezinne the first wife of Ezeji goes to the farm with the children to help her husband in farm work. She and their children are used as beasts of burden. They carry the yam harvested by Ezeji home. She cooks for everybody in the house and serves them the food. She acts as an errand woman to her husband. When Ezeji's second wife, Ureọnụ poisons his food, he sends her to go and call Udoka for him (p.35). Her servile attitude earns her the name Ezinne (good mother). While the Igbo culture regards such acts of suffering as good, the feminists regard it as exploitation and as real work that should not go unpaid for. They are of the suggestion that women should avoid such domestic chores and pay for human labour to be carrying out such services.

Ezinne also gives up her life in order to save her step son and her husband from death as discussed in chapter three of this work. She does all these only to retain her marriage with Ezeji because she has no male child for him while her co-wife has.

In *Oguamalam*, Nwajbarị and Ọbịageli are used as farm labourers. They must follow their husband to the farm anytime he needs them, in sickness and in good health. These women are used as zombies. Ikekwem, their husband, commands them to do evil and they obey him without any form of challenge. They are aware that their reactions to his command are wrong but none of them can challenge him in any form because they are afraid of being battered or sent home by him. They are very voiceless and live in fear of him.

Nwanyịugbọ and Ụlọakụ (co-wives) of Njọkụ fights over an *Ọha* tree, in *Oguamalam* (pages 9 and 10). Their husband hears the case, rushes to the scene of the incident, and grabs both of them, holding each of them in each of his hands, as he pulls and drags them like goats back to the house, scolding them. The wives never resist him.



In *Akwa Nwa*, Eze Akujobi marries five wives and is about to marry the sixth one. He marries them to bear him children and increase his family's numerical strength so that the women and their children will help him in his farm, which they do. They act as his unpaid farm labourers and yam beasts of burden. He only feeds and cloths them when it pleases him, depending on the level of love he has for each one of them. He uses them as sexual objects; he rotates the days that he uses them for his sexual satisfaction. Through their efforts in his farms, he earns the fame of being the highest yam farmer in the community.

In *Obidiya*, Chief Oriaku also marries many wives (Ugadiya, Omasiridiya and Jioji) to satisfy his sexual urge and to prove his affluence. His wives are highly dependent on him. This is why they all become hopeless after their husband's demise and take solace in their fathers' homes.

Other women in this class are Izuchi and Eringa, in *Ajo Nwa a Na-eku N'ikpere*, Utediya and Sera, in *Ihunanya*; Uduaku, in *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*; Uzoaku (Mmaogeli), Nwamgbafo, and Uruabia in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*; Mgbokwo, in *Otu mkpisiaka*; Nwangbo, Nwunyedi and Igbeaku, in *Ojimba Nwamgbogo*, Uduchi, and Nwangbo, in *Nwata rie Awọ*; Ihudiya, Chimma and the three others, in *Akwa Nwa*.

Some of the above examples also indicate that polygamy is the orders of the day for the traditional women. They accept to play the second fiddle in marriage just to secure a shelter and a source of living, no matter the situation they find themselves in such marriages. Such women are regarded as cheap commodities that can be discarded as their owners please.

#### 4.1.1 Dialogue between Compliant Married Women and Their Husbands

Here are some of the examples of dialogues between some women whose marriages are still firm but are highly dominated by their husbands. Noteworthy is the level of abuse and disrespect from their husbands as compared to the level of respect their wives accord them

(1) *Nwata Rie Awọ (Ọ jọ Anọ)* by Goddy O. Onyekaonwu  
A Dialogue between Obidike and His Wife Nwamgbogo

Nwamgbogo: *Oe di m!*  
*Di m, ihe nke a olu gi na-etigbo n'ututu a,*  
*Onye ka o na-esere gi na ya?.. (14).*

Oo my husband...  
My husband why are you shouting  
This morning.  
Whom are you quarrelling with ... (14).

Obidike: *Taa nwanyi a ikuku burukwe gi?*  
*Asiri m aju jukwe gi anya*  
*Amadioha machapukwa gi imi;*  
*Mgbọ! Mgbọ!! Mgbọ!!! Pjawapukwa gi isi,*  
*... Bja na ihe i nyuru esiwela*  
*Nne ewu na-ata agbala,*  
*Nwa ewu ya ana-ele ya anya n'onu ... (14).*

Taa this woman let the wind blow you away  
Let dizziness fill your eyes.  
Let Amadioha cut off your nose,  
Let bullet! Bullet!! Bullet!!! Scatter  
your head ... Come, your defecation  
is now smelling.  
When a mother-goat eats the  
Itchy herb, the child watches her mouth ... (14)

Nwamgbogo: *Di m, obi ruo gi ala (ya egbuo ikpere)*  
*Biko egbula m, lee ikpere,*  
*Lee isi ala.*  
*O na-abu nwata na-eme*  
*Ezi omume o buru nna ya ka o yiri,*  
*Ma o na-eme ajo omume*  
*O buru nne ya ka o yiri....*

My husband, cool down (she kneels down)  
Please temper justice with mercy  
I kneel down for you, I bow for you.  
When a child behaves well  
He resembles the father but if his/her behaviour is  
bad, he/she resembles the mother ... (15).

Obidike: *...Nwanyi a, kogheriri, gi ihe ahụ*  
*Si n'ihu m pụọ ... (16).*

...this woman, get out of my  
Face with all your bla bla bla ... (16).

In the above dialogue, Obidike quarrels with his wife over their child who has gone out for long and has not returned. He rains abuses and curses on the woman and blames her for not bringing up her child in the proper way.

(2) *Adaaku* by Obioma B. Mogboğu  
A Dialogue between Emeribe and Nwejimalu His Wife

Emeribe: *Nwejimalu! Nwejimalu!! Nwejimalu!!!*  
*Onye maara ma nwaanyi a o bidola chiwe nti*

*Nwejimalu! Nwejimalu!! Nwejimalu!!!*  
Who knows whether this woman is now deaf?

Nwejimalu... *Oe di m oma!...*  
*Di m Ezeugo. I bọọla chi?*

Yes my dear husband....  
My husband Ezeugo. Good morning.

Nwejimalu: *Nna anyi ukwu ka m gazie ga meere gi nri ututu... (8).*  
My Lord let me go and prepare your morning food

Emeribe: *Jeenu. Gaa nnoo puta ka anyi kpaa..... (9).*  
Go then. Go and come back for a discussion

Emeribe: *Nwaanyi a mekwaanu ngwa bja ka anyi kpaa...*  
*Nwejimalu! Nwejimalu!! (11).*

This woman should hurry up and let us discuss.  
*Nwejimalu! Nwejimalu!! (11).*

Nwejimalu: *Oe di m, ana m abia ngwa ngwa o...*  
*Nna anyi abiala m.*

My dear husband, I am coming...  
My Lord I am coming.

Also see the several use of *Nna anyi* (My lord) on pp 14 and 21, by Nwejimalu. Nwejimalu over-respects her husband in this dialogue. She praises and pets him, calling him "*Nna anyi ukwu*" disregarding his insults. Emeribe, on the other hand, humiliates and disrespects her by addressing her in her own name "*Nwejimalu!*" and by calling her a deaf. He, alienates himself from her by referring to her, as: "*Nwaanyi a*" (this woman). Even with all the insults, she still pleads with him to know whether she should serve him food.

(3) *Ihụnanya* by Ođinaaka Azubuike

Dialogue between Chiiifu Akụudo (Husband) and Lọọlo Akụudo (Wife).

Chiiifu Akụudo: *Kedu ebe Egenti buru ugboala oheru m gawa kamgbe  
Ututu. Amaghi ma emere m ihe ojoo weee muo Egenti ... (8)*

Where has Egenti carried my new car to since morning?  
I do not know what offence  
I committed by bearing Egenti... (8)

Lọọlo Akụudo: *Nnamuukwu biko ajula....  
Ajula ogu. Biko... (8)*

My Lord please do not curse  
Do not curse. Please.... (8)

Chiiifu Akụudo: *Bia nwaanyi a, achoghi m  
Inu onu gi ebe ahụ. Amaghi  
M onye nwa a butere omume  
Ya. O nwere ike buru omume gi.....(8)*

Look this woman, I do not  
Want to hear your voice  
there. I do not know whose behaviour  
This boy has taken after. It may be your behaviour. (8)

Akụudo: *Biko di m, gbaghara ya.....  
Please my husband, forgive him.*

Lọọlo Akụudo: *(talking to her daughter)  
Kwusie ya ike nwa m. Aka o jidela gi?*

Speak louder my daughter. Have you found a husband?

Chiiifu Akụudo: *Kpuchie onu gi nwaanyi, kpuchie  
onu gi ka anyi nu nti! Ada m  
gaa n'ihu .....(38)*

Shut up your mouth, you woman,  
Shut up your mouth that we may hear. My daughter, speak on.

Chiiifu Akụudo is a very wealthy politician and a bussiness tycoon. He has many cars and he is chauffeur driven. He treats his wife like a housemaid. She cannot contribute to discussions going on in her own house without her husband's permission. He commands her to shut up her mouth at will. He does not allow her to contribute to issues on her children. Similarly, she does not allow her to use any of his cars, except

when he feels like taking her along. As a result of his disrespect for her, his daughter, Iḥunanya decides not to marry a rich man, because she believes that all rich men treat their wives like her father.

(4) *Nka dī na ntī* by B. Emeka Okoro  
A Dialogue between Oji and His Wife Ikodie.

Oji: *Ikodie!*  
*Ikodie, I nọkwa n'ụlọ a? (2).*

Ikodie! Ikodie are you in this house?

Ikodie: *O-o*  
*Deede, I kpọrọ m oku?*

Ye-es!  
Dear / My lord, did you call me?

Oji: *Zuzuru bịa, Amadiọha akugbuo gi*

You fool come here, before Amadiọha strikes you dead.

Ikodie: *Deede, ọ dika mma taa nke a*  
*I ji ututu agbọ uja?*

Dear, is all well today as you are  
already barking this morning?

Oji: *I na-ekwu na I nọ n'ụlọ a*  
*Ndị mmụọ afacha gi udu ntị nututu a?*  
*Ka ọ bụ itetebeghi ụra mere I nughị*  
*Kamgbe m ji akpọ gi?*

Do you want to tell me that you have  
been inside this house and the spirits  
blocked your ear drum this early  
morning? Or is it that you are still  
asleep that you did not hear that I had been calling you?

Ikodie: *M na-anụ oku gba bem. Anyị sekwaranụ mgbe ole .....(2).*

Do you think I heard your call and  
refused to answer. Are we quarrelling or what?... (2).

Oji: *(n'olu dī ala)*  
*I riekwala.*  
*Butere m ora mmai ahụ m dọtara n'ọba*  
*Onye ma ma oke dī n'ụlọ a ejekwubeghi*  
*Ya n'uko ebe ahụ.*

(in a low voice)  
you are enjoying.  
Bring that leftover wine that I kept in the  
yam barn. Who knows whether the rat in  
This house has tampered with it.

Ikodie: *Ihu mmaị nke a dị ka m*  
*Ọ ga-ekwekwa ọnụnụ?*

This wine that looks like me will it be good for drinking so?

Ọji: *Ọ dị otu ole?* (How does it look?).

Ikodie: *Leenu ya di m ... (3).* (Look at it my husband ...3).

Ọji: *Ị ga-añụ?* (Will you drink?)

Ikodie: *Mm, ndewo.*  
*Agaghị m atụtutali mkpuru azịza ta*  
*Ma m detu ihe nke a ọnụ.*

Mm, thank you.  
I will not be able to achieve anything today  
If I should taste this thing.

Ọji: *Werenụ ọjị ... (3)* (Take cola-nut then ... 3).

Ikodie: *Mma mma ... (3)* (Thank you ... 3).

Ọji curses his wife even when the situation does not warrant it. He calls her a fool and wishes that Amadiọha (a god), strikes her. Ikodie uses a soothing voice to appeal to him to calm down after all, they are not quarrelling. To still mellow him down, she compares her face with the looks of a soured wine which her husband wants her to bring to him.

However, Ọji's case may have been a case of bad habit. He may have imbibed the bad habit of abusing his wife even when he does not mean any harm. This could be deciphered from the fact that suddenly, he offers Ikodie both wine and cola-nut.

#### 4.1.2 General Comments

The dialogues between married males and females show a lot of asymmetrical relationship. The speeches of married males dominate those of their wives no matter their wives' educational, economic, social status, their level of empowerment and civilisation. Their speeches about their wives vary, depending on the closeness

between the couples. Few of the couples who actually love and cherish their wives speak to them and about them with respect. For example, Aworor loves his wife, Qdinchefu, and respects her because she is quite younger than he and their marriage is still young. Onuma loves his wife, Obidiya, because she cooks well and she is resourceful. Ugonna also loves his wife because she is his partner in crime. She is the evil genius behind his success and she helps him keep his ugly side a top secret. (See Appendix III for the dialogue between these couples).

Nevertheless, the majority of the married males in this study, the rich and the poor, the educated and the non-educated, the polygamists and the monogamists, disrespect their wives perhaps because most of the characters involved here are old and their husbands do not find them attractive any more. They rain abusive words and commands on them even when the situations do not warrant such. They send their wives on errands by commanding them to do so without any word of appeal. In most cases, the uneducated male characters, in particular, rain curses on their wives incessantly.

Generally, the married male speeches are problem-solving; oppositional; full of vigour, imagination, independence and creativity. They also use more commands and authoritative words than the females. They always have the concluding answer. Their speeches are very authoritative, dominant and powerful unlike those of their wives.

The married females' speeches present them as subordinate species and nurturers and serve as a celebration of motherly qualities in the African scene. Such qualities could also be used to support the traditional, conventional idealisation of womanhood. Their speeches are noted for the presence of servile response, too much humility, and lack of confidence and certainty; they also display less usage of figurative language, listening without challenging the offensive words used against them. They also use co-operative style and investigative and soothing questions in order to please their husbands.

#### 4.1.3 Reasons for Asymmetrical Relationship in the Speech of Completely

##### Compliant Females.

There are many reasons that could be deciphered as being the source of the inequality between the speeches of male and female characters in this study. Basic among them is the fact that Igbo society is a patriarchal stereotyped society. Sex-

exclusive and sex-preferential difference is highly practised. Acquiring such habits is an important part of learning how to behave as proper 'men' or 'women' in the society. As Talbot (1998:6) rightly observes, a child's failure to "acquire appropriate forms and their usage can have serious, even devastating consequences for the individuals concerned." An individual's collision with the linguistic norms of his community makes him/her become a social misfit and a source of ridicule in his/her community. Such sex-exclusive and sex-preferential differentiations are ways of doing gender and have diversified facets. They are not biological because they are acquired from the society based on the societal norms. In effect, a married Igbo woman suddenly changes her natural habits to suit the cultural norms expected of an Igbo married woman. She takes time to think of what she says, especially to her husband, in order not to offend him. She is expected to humble herself while talking with her husband. She should not talk authoritatively lest she is called names. She should talk gently.

In Igbo society, the possibility of the man dominating the woman is high because the society respects the 'penis' greatly. As a result, the male is given much freedom, even from childhood, to discover himself at the detriment of the female. The female is also from childhood made to realise that she is created to serve the male both by her parents and other members of the society. She is restricted and her life is patterned to please the man. She should talk like a woman, walk like a woman and should not participate in any violent act. This, therefore, means that the speech of married Igbo women is as a result of the Igbo societal restriction of a married woman's freedom of expression. It is a socially acquired behaviour and not a biological trait in women. Secondly, scientists have proved that men, due to their high testosterone levels which make them aggressive always, have a domineering nature and dominate the female. In support of the issue of male hormonal effect, Dworkin, an American feminist (1979:515) asserts that "violence is male and the male is the penis."

Another fact which may have also contributed to the authoritative and powerful nature of the speeches of many of the male characters may also be their indoctrination at the societal level. Igbo males are made to understand from childhood that they are superior to the females. They watch their fathers treat their mothers that way and grow up to exhibit the same traits. To an average Igbo man, a woman is a second-class citizen; her status is just a little bit higher than that of a child. It is for



this reason that an average Igbo man sees the wife as inferior to him and addresses her as such.

In the real Igbo traditional society, even till now, the male Igbo are groomed to be economically empowered while the female are trained to keep the home and remain in the private sector of life. As a result, the men are in most cases the breadwinners of their families while their wives are dependent on them. This unequal economic empowerment leaves the men with so much authority over their wives that hardly does a woman in Igbo society dominate her husband except that these days, some women are gradually being economically, educationally, politically and administratively empowered. Other reasons why the husbands of these traditional women dominate them could be linked to their low empowerment status as analysed below.

#### 4.1.4 Level of Empowerment of Completely Compliant Women.

Udegbe (1996:9) conceptualises empowerment as "...giving people power or increasing their power to enable them do what they could not hither to have done...." He (Udegbe) is of the opinion that empowerment is a psychological process of transformation which can be achieved through constructive changes in persons environment, circumstances and psyche. African feminists believe that some of the processes of emancipating African women are through empowering them economically, politically, socially, educationally and so on, most importantly, changing their economic environment, circumstances and psyche. Such empowerment could be achieved by the ability of women to have access to economic opportunities or resources through which they can fully realise all their potentials as human beings with some special qualities (Odobogun 1996, and Bookman and Morgan 1998). In this section, we want to consider the levels of empowerment attained by the females who are completely compliant to the males.

(i) **Economic Empowerment:** Most women in this group, as could be seen from the examples above, are mere subsistent farmers. They depend on their husbands for survival. Lọlọ Akụudo is the only one in this group who does not farm although she is poor and dependent on her rich business man husband. The only woman in this group that is semi self-actaulised is Obidiya in *Obidiya*. She is a retailer and combines her business with farming.

(ii) **Social empowerment:** The women are local traditional people. Their level of socialisation rotates around their families, their market, and their immediate communities. They are not famous in any form. The only woman portrayed as a heroine and a human rights fighter is Obidiya in *Obidiya*. She fights back her husband's killers, kills the chief and almost wipes out his entire family.

(iii) **Educational empowerment:** All the female characters in this group never enter the four walls of formal school. They pass through the Igbo traditional form of education which is meant to equip them with the qualities to become servile wives, family cooks and dry cleaners, child bearers, family nurses and home keepers.

(iv) **Cultural empowerment:** They are good observers of Igbo culture. Their husbands have more cultural freedom than they do. They dare not exceed their cultural boundaries. They are to play their culturally specified roles which are gender-restricted.

(v) **Religious and political empowerment:** None of these women holds any religious or political post.

#### 4.2. Women who are partially Compliant with Male Dominance

All the women in this group are few in number and are educated. As a result of their educational experience and knowledge, they psychologically approach their relationship with the males tactfully. They apply the wisdom which they gain from being educated and finally persuade their male counterparts on why they should not comply with their decisions. In some cases, it is a gradual process which involves series of arguments, and quarrels. No matter the trials they go through and the time it takes them to get the males involved convinced, the end result is that they have their ways as they plan it.

The females in this group are classified into two: the unmarried girls and the married women. Each is discussed below.

(i) **The unmarried girls:** There are only three girls in this group. They are *Ihunanya*, in *Ihunanya*; *Mma* in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*; and *Uduaku*, in *Eri Mara Ngwugwu*. They all tactfully resist patriarchal domination.

*Ihunanya*'s father, Chief *Akudo* (uneducated) refuses to grant her the permission to marry *Ikechi* her choice because *Ikechi* is a poor boy. After a prolonged disagreement, *Ihunanya* persuades him to allow *Ikechi* to marry her. She achieves her

aim by reminding her father the story he told her about how wretched he was before he married her mother and how he eventually became a renowned, rich and famous, business man and politician. Reminding her father the story of his life convinced him that Ikechi may still be prosperous in future. With such hopes in him, he gives Iñunanya his full support and even sponsors their marriage and provides the basic needs of life for the couple.

Uduaku Okoto's sister in *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*, having noticed how keen her brother (who now represents her father) is in getting her married to his best friend, Ndubuisi, deceptively play along with him making him believe that she is interested in the relationship. She refuses to open up to him. She secretly plans with the man of her choice to come and pick her up on her supposed wedding day with Ndubuisi. Just as the priest is about to call them to the altar, she excuses herself to visit the ladies. On finding herself outside the church, she elopes with Ochonganoko (the man of her choice) who is already waiting for her outside the church. They escape to an overseas country. The brother goes in search of her to no avail. When all hopes are lost on her whereabouts, she writes a letter to her brother informing him of her plans. Okoto becomes so happy for her instead of the other way round.

Mma the daughter of Chief Ugonna wants to marry Ezenwa, the prince and later the king of Isuebu. Her father, as a result of his selfish interest in Ezenwa's father's throne, disallows the marriage. Mma elopes with Ezenwa to Potoki. They wed without her father's consent and knowledge. When Ezenwa defeats him in the election and is to become the king of Isuebu, Mma then appears before her father as the wife of Ezenwa on the coronation day. This is the first time her father has seen her after the disagreement they have had over the marriage issue. At this stage, her father has no other choice than to bless their marriage. She tactfully avoids much disagreement with her father, pretends as if she has accepted his wishes and eventually hooks him into accepting her decision.

(ii) **The married women:** There are only two women in this category. They are Nnenna, in *Onye Kpaa Nku Ahuhu* and Ojigeli in *Ajo Obi*. They tactfully resist their husbands' dominance over them in partial obedience, as could be deciphered from the following dialogues between them.

#### 4.2.1 Dialogues between Partially Compliant Marreid Women and Their Husbands

In this section, speeches of women who are partially in compliance with their husbands are discussed.

(1) *Onye KpaaNnku Ahuhu* by Inno Uzoma Nwadike  
A Dialogue between Ikechukwu (a Graduate) and His Wife  
Nnenna.

Ikechukwu: *Nnenna!*  
*Nnenna!*  
*Bia ebe a*

*Nnenna! Nnenna! Come here*

Nnenna: *Gini ka i na-agboro*  
*Ka nkita huru ndi mmuo*

Why are you barking?  
Like a dog that has seen spirits?

Ikechukwu: *Gini ka m gwara gi*  
*Mgbe m na-apu?*  
*...Ka i ghara inwa anwa*  
*Gaa na nke Profeti*

What was my instruction to you  
When I was going out?  
That you should never  
visit the Prophet

Nnenna: *... O gwula nno?*  
*O buru otu a*  
*E nweghi ihe i ji*

... Is that all?  
If that is your stance  
You have no case

(See pp 26-34, and 38-45)

Although this couple share a great amount of love, Nnenna does not allow Ikechukwu to intimidate her or dominate her. They both respect each other's feelings. When Ikechukwu raises his voice on Nnenna, she too raises her voice against him and later they settle their disagreement amicably. Nnenna knows how best to compel him to do things against his wish to her own favour. Obviously, Ikechukwu, as an African male

character, exhibits some level of dominance over her. He does not always give her the chance as could be seen in the dialogue above. One may think that this relationship between the couple is as a result of the fact that they are both university graduates. Their type of relation is only possible among the educated Igbo couple. An uneducated wife sees it as an abomination to disagree with her husband let alone challenge his command.

(2) *Ajọ Obi* by G.I. Nwaozuzu

A Dialogue between Ezenwata and His Wife Oḅiageli on the Bed.

Ezenwata: Oḅiageli, (o na enu ya aka)  
Oḅiageli, oḅii ....

Oḅiageli, (pushing her to wake up)  
Oḅiageli, oḅii .....

Oḅiageli: (Hichaa anya ura). Ee-o-ogini

(Wiping her sleep off her eyes) ye-e-s  
What is it?

Ezenwata: *Biko, o nwere obere ihe m choro*  
*Igwa gi n'abali a.*

Please, I have a little discussion  
With you this night.

Oḅiageli: *N'etiti abali a ura ji mmadu? Ihe*  
*o bu o ga-agba oso tupu chi aboo?*

This midnight that one is asleep?  
Will the thing be late in the morning?

Ezenwata: *O ga-agbakwa .....(24).*  
It will be late...

Oḅiageli: *Ngwa kwuwe. O mere gini?*  
Speak on. What did he do?

Ezenwata: *Ihe m choro ime ka i mara bu na*  
*Amatala m n'oge a na o nwere ihe*  
*na-aga n'etiti gi na Onyema.*

What I want to let you know  
Is that I know that there is a  
Love affair between you and Onyema.

Ọbịageli: *I si gịni? Isi o mebiela gi?*  
What did you say? Are you mad?  
Ezenwata: *Isi di m mma, Ọzọkwa, ańughị m mmanya n'etiti*  
*Abali a ma sị na mmanya*  
*Na-egbu m ... (25).*

I am not mad. Again, I am not drunk this midnight so you cannot say that I am drunk.

Ọbịageli: *I di nura na-ekwu ihe a ka ara*  
*O biala gi?*

Are you asleep as you say this or you are mad?

Ezenwata: *Gị ka ara na-agba. Akpu m*  
*Mmiri n'onu?*

It is you that are mad. Have I made myself clear.

Also see pages 14, 15, 16, 26, 27, 28, 29, 48, 49, and 50 of the text.

The case of Ezenwata and his wife is different. He is an uneducated business man married to a second year university dropout. His mother already has poisoned his mind that educated women are wild and flirtatious. It is with this negative thought that he relates with his wife. He erroneously accuses her and his best friend of committing adultery. The relationship between Ezenwata and Ọbịageli is that of deception and true love. Ọbịageli is really in love with Ezenwata, but Ezenwata uses her and deceives her. He backbites and conspires against her, endangering her life in the hands of his mother Okwuchi (a diabolical woman) because of his false suspicion of his wife (pp48-49, 54, 55 and 57). Upon all his tricks, Ọbịageli continues to love and serve him, playing her stereotyped roles perfectly but making sure that she controls her husband's insolent attitude.

However, with the knowledge Ọbịageli has acquired as an undergraduate, she tactfully handles Ezenwata and does not allow him to intimidate or dominate her. She ignores his lack of socialisation, goes on with her life, no matter how he feels; she fears no accusation as long as she maintains a clear conscience. Ezenwata commits suicide out of his timidity and lack of social exposure.

#### 4.2.2 General Comments

This foregoing analysis on partially compliant women reveals that females in the text under study whether married or unmarried, are still dominated by their husbands, their fathers or their brothers but there is the issue of whether the girl or the woman concerned will accept the dominance or not. This section also shows that the educated females do not completely accept male dominance because all the female characters involved in this section are all educated. It also shows that unlike the traditional women, the educated female characters always devise silent plans which incapacitate the men and make them accept their decisions without much confrontation.

The speeches of the married women in this group are neither asymmetrical nor symmetrical. The reasons for their type of relationship may be attributed to their level of educational emancipation. They have more freedom of expression than the traditional women. Although they respect their husbands and play their stereotyped roles, they maintain a limit to which the males can dominate them. They are wiser than the traditional women and are loyal to the males concerned but maintain their stand on issues affecting their lives, whether it goes well with the males or not. They refuse to compromise their future for anything.

#### 4.2.3 Level of Empowerment of Partially Compliant Women.

(i) **Economic empowerment:** Two out of the three unmarried girls who later get married in this group are economically empowered. They are *Ihụnanya*, who works as a secretary in her father's company, and *Mma*, who is a trained psychologist, although nothing is discussed about her practice of this profession. The third girl, *Ụdụakụ*, and *Ọbiageli*, the wife of *Ezenwata*, are full-time housewives who depend on their husbands while *Nnenna* dumps her certificate to become a full-time housewife and dependent on her husband.

African feminists would have loved the triumphs, achievements, and successes of girls like *Mma*, a psychologist and *Ihụnanya* a secretary, rather than they stopping at the stage of marriage. *Mma* could not have ended up as a housewife. Portraying their activities as a psychologist and a secretary, respectively, should have had a better impact on the presentation of the female than the way they are portrayed. The playwrights should have developed their characters to the extent of portraying how successfully they practised their professions.

(ii) **Social empowerment:** Mma's social status is lifted to the level of the queen of Isuebu. A status, which her father's selfishness would have denied her if, she had accepted his decisions against her marriage plans with Ezenwa. Nnenna's husband restricts her movements and interaction with some people, against her wish.

(iii) **Educational empowerment:** All the female characters in this group are university graduates, with the exception of Q̄biageli, who is a university dropout and Ūduaku, whose level of education is not indicated in the text. It is obvious that she is educated because she could write a letter as seen in the play (p. 42-43).

(iv) **Cultural empowerment:** They are not culturally empowered like the men. Although they show some recognisable resistance to male dominance, they still play some second-class roles, as second class citizens, to their husbands. Nnenna is quite uncomfortable in her marriage as she is barren. She fears being stigmatised by the society.

Q̄biageli is erroneously accused of her husband's murder by her mother-in-law. She goes to a witch-doctor to help her avenge her son's death on Q̄biageli. The rumour spreads around the community of the play. Q̄biageli is not affected by the spell because she is innocent.

Ochonganoko Ūduaku's husband pressurises her on the need for her to bear him a son or be pushed out of his house. She pays a nurse heavily to help her exchange a male child with her new born baby girl after labour, which the nurse does. The nurse could no longer keep the secret after being converted. She exposes the secret and Ūduaku is eventually thrown out by her husband.

(iv) **Religious and political empowerment:** None of these women holds any religious or political post, except Mma. She is the only female character that enjoys little political power as a queen. She can exercise some political authority over only the women of her community and secretly advise her husband, the king, on political and administrative matters if he so desires.

#### 4.3 Women who are Non-Compliant with Male Dominance

There are two groups of female characters in this category. They are married women who have sour relationship with their husbands and unmarried girls. The unmarried girls are further classified into two: promiscuous lover-girls and a greedy girl.



#### 4.3.1 Married Women

The women in this group are categorized into two as well. Those who are viewed as good: Orijei Okwundu, in *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*; and those whom are viewed as bad: Ekwuluonu, in *Ajo Nwa a Na-eku N'ikper*; Adaaku, in *Adaaku*; Ureonu, in *Ezinne*; and Obiageli; in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*.

(i) **Good woman:** The only woman who is viewed as good in this group is Orijei Okwundu, in *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*. She vehemently refuses to allow her husband Okwuike Ogbunanjo to continue his nefarious activities of ritual killing and sale of human parts. She chooses to give up her marriage in the fight and save the lives of innocent souls from his evil acts by handing him over to the law. In fact, she is a selfless freedom fighter.

(ii) **Bad women:** These women are viewed as bad because of the bad roles they play in the texts. Their actions are ignited by one reason or the other. They are: Ekwuluonu, in *Ajo Nwa a Na-eku N'ikpere*; Adaaku, in *Adaaku*; Ureonu in *Ezinne*; and Obiageli, in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*. One quality they share is that although they are married, they detest their husbands for one reason or the other. Ekwuluonu and Ureonu attempt to kill their husbands, while Adaaku and Obiageli poison their husbands. The relationship between them and their husbands are already sour. The love bonds in their marriages are shattered. The women are discussed below:

Ekwuluonu is a notorious child who grows up to become a notorious wife. As a child, she dominates her father and mother to the extent that her father fear her and her mother dies of high blood pressure because of her mannerless behaviour (p. 12-14). She threatens her father that if he succeeds in persuading Ukaegbu not to marry her, her father's house will not be able to contain both of them (14). The details about this character is discussed in chapter three. Her level of non-compliance with male dominance could be assessed from the following dialogue between her and her husband.

(1) *Ajo Nwa a Na-eku N'ikpere* by Ben Igbokwe

A Dialogue between Ukaegbu and His Wife Ekwuluonu.

Ukaegbu: Ekwuluonu! Ekwuluonu!!

Ekwuluonu: *Oo Nne gi ka i na-iji otu ahu eti aha ya,  
Kedu ihe I na-etiri aha m ebe so mu na gi  
No ebe a? (22)*

Is it your mother's name that you

Bellow like that why are you bellowing my name  
When I am the only one that is here with you. (22).

Ukaegbu: *Were nne m mewe ihe mkpari otu soro gi.  
ihe m na-achọ igwa gi bu na onye nwe ulọ a achọla  
ka anyi site n'ulọ ya puo ozugbo ozugbo.*

Make a nuisance of my mother anyhow you  
want. All I want to tell you is that the  
landlord of this house has demanded that  
we pack out of the house immediately.

Ekwuluonu: *Gini were mezie? Ulọ o gwula n'ala a?  
I nweghi ike gaa chota ulọ ozo?*

What about it. Are there no more houses in this town?  
Can't you search for another house?

Ukaegbu: *O bu ichota ulọ bu okwu? Nke ozo bu  
Na ndi uwe ojii enyela iwu ka anyi site  
N'obodo a kwara puo n'ihi nsogbu niile  
i na-enye ha....(22).*

Is to get a house a problem? Another  
thing is that the police has ordered  
us to pack out of this town because  
of all the problems you have been creating for them.

Ekwuluonu: *Ire ahụ i na-eji agwa m okwu  
dabakwa gi n'afọ. Onye na-enye nsogbu?  
O di m ka I na-achọ  
Onye I ga-anwunye n'aka ugbua.*

May that tongue with which you  
use to address me fall into your stomach.  
who creates problems? It seems you  
are looking for someone who will kill you.

Ukaegbu: *Mechie onu gi, i makwa na i bu nwaanyi  
Keep your mouth shut. Don't you  
know you are a female.*

Ekwuluonu: *Gi aburu gini? Nwoke (maa usu)  
Ndi bu nwoke ekwubeghi  
Okwu ma ya fodu ozu mkpi dika gi ... (22).*

Then what are you? A man (she sighs) those  
who are real men are silent left alone of  
a dead he-goat like you .... (22).

Ukaegbu: *Oge adighi anya i ga-agwa m onye  
Dotere gi n'ulo a ... (23).*

Within a short time you shall  
Know who brought you into this house... (23).

Ekwulonu: *Mu na gi onye dotere ibe ya n'ulo?  
Ego ole ka i kwuru n'isi m. Onye  
Na-alu nwaanyi. Emee gi ana-amali elu onye luru nwanyi,  
I kwuru afu ka o bu kobo n'isi m... (23).*

You and I, who brought the other  
into this house? How much bride  
price did you pay on me. Who is marrying  
a wife, you? All the time you keep on shouting  
about who marries the other. Did you pay half a kobo or  
any kobo on me... (23).

Also see pags 38, 39, 40, 41 and 59 of the text.

Ekwulonu has no respect for her husband. She overpowers both her husband and his kinsmen. This is an unusual occurrence in Igbo society. As a result of this, she is regarded as mannerless, cantankerous, irresponsible, fearless, notorious, wicked, mischievous, diabolical, murderous, disceptive, insatiable, and troublesome in the community of the play. Certain acts of humiliation and insults from her husband, which the traditional women would overlook for the sake of peace, are vehemently and aggressively rejected by her. For instance, consider her first statement in the above dialogue.

Adaaku, in *Adaaku*, is fully discussed in chapter three. She is forced into marriage by her father who threatens to disown her if she fails to marry the man he has chosen for her. In order not to lose her relationship with her parents, she grudgingly accepts the marriage but swears never to love the husband and never to break her former relationship with her lover, Chukwusolu. She disrespects her husband, commits adultery and eventually kills him with rat poison when he is informed of her affairs with her lover. According to her, she prefers to live with rats than to live with her husband. Her level of non-acceptance of her husband's domination could be seen from the following dialogue between them.

(2)

**Adaaku-by Mogboḡu**  
**Dialogue between Chief Ibekwe and Adaaku His Wife**

Ibekwe:

...Adaaku! Adaaku!! Adaaku!!!  
Bija ebe a. (61)

...Adaaku! Adaaku!! Adaaku!!!  
Come here. (61).

Adaaku:

(Bata kwuru, gbanye aka n'ukwu)  
Abjala m. kedu nke i na-akporo m udiri oku esepu aka (61)?

(Enters, stands akimbo) why are you calling me  
Continuously like this? (61).

Ibekwe:

Noro ala n'uche na o nwere ihe m  
Choro iju gi...Biko Adaaku, achoro m.... (61).

Be seated, I have a question to ask you ... please  
Adaaku I want ... (61).

Adaaku:

Biko o buru na o nwere ihe i choro  
ikwu, kwuo ngwa na ura na-atu m....(61).

Please if you have anything to say  
speak fast because I am sleepy. (61).

Ibekwe:

Anu ohia. Ono na di achọ di di ka gi .... (62).  
You fool. You married but promiscuous woman...

Adaaku:

(si n'uche malite na-arụ di ya aka)  
Ibekwe o zuola, naani ma i choro  
Ka anyi wusie obara ugbua ....(63).

(Jumps out of a chair pointing towards her husband)  
Ibekwe it is enough, unless you want us to spill blood here.

Ibekwe:

O buru na I maara na aka gi di ocha,  
Gini ka ahụ na-ekpokasiri gi? O kwa ajuju ka m juru gi? .... (63).

If you know that you are innocent,  
why are you so upset? Was it not only a question  
that I asked you?

Adaaku:

Nke ahụ bu okwu gi. Agwachaala m gi  
na taa ka i ga-akporo m ndi ahụ na-  
Asiri gi ihe ahụ. There adighi eme gi... (63).

That is your business. I have told you  
that today you must bring all those that tell you lies about me  
You are not ashamed... (63)

Also see pages 64-65 of the text

Adaaku, from the dialogue above challenges her husband for shouting her name without respect. She refuses to obey her husband's orders that she should sit down. She even challenges him to a fight even when she knows that she is guilty of the offence she is accused of.

Ureṣu, in *Ezinne*, disrespects her husband because, as a second wife, she believes that their husband loves her co-wife, Ezinne, more than her not minding that Ezinne is barren. Secondly, she feels proud and protected from her husband's dominance because she is the mother of their husband's heir apparent and so deserves to be honoured.

To the feminists, Ureṣu, whom the Igbo views as a bad woman, is an emancipated woman. This is because she does not allow herself to be used by her husband. She does not go to the farm, she does not cook and she is never there for him to attend to his errands, unlike Ezinne her co-wife. She does whatever pleases her. When she is chosen to exchange her life for that of her son whom their deity has condemned for sacrifice, she runs to her parents' home for safety, requesting that Ezeji (the boy's father) should exchange his own life and not hers because the boy bears his name not hers.

Ọbịageli, in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*, dominates her husband (Obioma) because she has hypnotized him through diabolical powers. She snatches him away from his fiancée Amarachi. Her husband does whatever she commands him to do because he is under a spell. She orders him to send his younger siblings out of his house which he does. She finally poisons him according to her plans with members of her family. They intend to acquire his possessions after his demise.

**4.3.2 Unmarried Girls:** These are single but mature girls. There are two categories of girls in this group: promiscuous lover-girls and a greedy girl.

**(i) Promiscuous lover-girls:** The girls in this class are Ugomma, in *Ugomma*; Chiichii, in *Ihunanya*; Ọbịageli in *Otu Mkpisi Aka*; and Chinyere, in *Okwe Agbaala*.

A common characteristic they share is that, contrary to the normal situation in Igbo society, whereby the male woos the female, displaying their dominant traits, these female characters go after the males on their own volition although it is later to their own detriment. An example to show their dominance of the males is portrayed in the discussion between Chinyere, a university undergraduate, and her lecturer (Dr.

Emezina) number 2 below. Though the (lecturer) is quite older than her, she is able to lure him into having a sexual affair with her. She controls him and makes him to expose an examination paper to her. She disregards the fact that she already has a campus boyfriend who is also aware of her relationship with the man. She manipulates these two males to her advantage, though later she suffers for her deeds. Below is a dialogue to testify to her activities:

(1) *Okwe Agbaala* by I.U. Nwadike  
Dialogue between Ozuruigbo a Male Lover and  
Chinyere His Female Lover

Ozuruigbo: *Chii Chii,*  
*O nọkwa ya e?*  
Chii Chii is she around?

Chinyere: *Onye na-aku... (4).*  
*Ozii*  
*Dee fuchọ prof!*  
*Nnọọ .... (4).*

Ozii  
the future professor  
welcome ....(4).

Ozuruigbo: *Chii nwanne m...*  
*Kedu?*  
*Ama m na i naha atari ya ka egu.*

Chii my sister...  
How?  
I know you have been reading your books like the catapillar  
(eats green leaves).

Chinyere: *O nyere gi onu okwu*  
*Ebe i na-ekwu otu a*  
*I si ndi otu anyi mee aña? .... (4)*

You have time to talk like this. What do you expect people like us to do? (4)

Ozuruigbo: *Nwanne m,*  
*Nsogbu di mana ila azu*  
*Adighi ya maka na... (6)*

My sister, there is a problem but there is no going back.

Chinyere: *Fuchọ prof nwanne m.*

*I makwa na adi m nnoo nzuzu.*

Future Prof, my brother.  
do you know that I have been so stupid?

Ozuruigbo: *Nwaada*  
*I meela oji ... (8)*  
*Ihe anyi chotara*  
*N'ala okwu ike a*  
*Anyi ga-ahụ ya .*

Babe.  
you have brought kola...  
Whatever we seek in this difficult land we shall find it.

Chinyere: *Amiọ! (Amen).*

Ozuruigbo: *...Nwaada, distinkshon, distinkshon, kredit, kredit kpokwa anyi ihu,*  
*Kama o ga-adi njo. Anyi enwewa meriti meriti,*  
Babe, may we score distinction, distinction, credit, credit.  
At worst, let us score merit, merit... (8)

Chinyere: *Amiọ! (Amen).*

Ozuruigbo: *Nwaada, lutakwa ezigbo di; ...*  
*Ebe ihu mu na gi abuo na-adagba ya danye na anyi ga-alu onwe anyi*  
*Onye ajukwala.*

Babe, may you get a good husband  
As we like each other so, if it happens that we should get married,  
let none of us refuse.

Chinyere: *Ta! (Buru onwe ya danye n'ahu Ozuruigbo)*  
*Onye ara*  
*Kwuferi ri puo ebe a.*  
*Gi na onye ga-alu gini?*  
*O sila n'oji o na-ajo*  
*Gafere n'ihe ozọ ... (9).*

*Ta! (Throws her body on Ozuruigbo's body)*  
You mad person.  
Stop talking nonsense.  
He has jumped from the breaking of kolanut to another thing (9).

## (2) Dialogue between Doctor Emezina a Lecturer and His Female Student Chinyere Before They Become Lovers

Chinyere: *Dok Ndeewo.*  
Dkt Emezina: *Oo!*  
*Nwaada*  
*O bu gi?*

Nnọ ọ  
Oche dị  
Kedu?

Oo!  
Young girl, are you? Welcome, be seated.  
How are you...? (20)

Chinyere: *Dọk,*  
*Ụbọchị amaghị kwurū...*  
*Ya ka m, ji bịa*  
*Ijụ gị ụzọ ị ga-esi*  
*Enyere m aka.*

Doctor, things are not easy....  
That is why I have come here  
To ask you how you can be of help to me.

Dkt Emezina: *Inyere gị aka*  
*N'uzọ dị anaa?..*

To help you how?  
(Chinyere eбилie jekwuru ya bigidi ya aka n'ubu-(Chinyere stands up  
and walks towards him hanging her hand over his shoulders).

Dkt Emezina: *(Jụọ n'olu ike-Asks shouting)*  
*Oọ gini? (21)*  
*Anya ọ dikwa gị mma?*

What is it?  
Are you mad? (21)

Chinyere: *Bikonu Dọk (Ọ dagide ya na-esusu ya onu)*  
*Ama m na ị ji nwaanyi*  
*Ma onye nwere ị*  
*Na-erikwa ị onye ọzọ*  
*Onye rikata ofe egusi,*  
*Oritukwanu ofe ọgbọno... (22)*

Please Dr. *(She leans on him kissing him)*  
I know that you are married  
But he that has yam can eat another man's yam  
After eating melon soup for a while  
One changes with ọgbọno... (22).

Also see pages 23-25 of the text. For other examples of dialogue between lovers  
check Appendix III.

(ii) A greedy girl: Obioma the daughter of Okwukaogụ, in *Nwata Rie Awọ* is a  
greedy and materialistic girl. In fact, she is a gold-digger and the only girl in this



category. She resists her father's choice of marriage between her and Anene, and forces herself on Aworọ (a famous wrestler). Her father had no choice other than to accept her decisions after making so much noise which Obioma turns deaf ears to. Her father threatens her fearfully but she refuses to listen to him. She believes in her thought and makes up her mind to marry Aworọ even against his wish. Aworọ's parents have no choice other than to force their son to marry her because the Igbo culture does not allow one to send away anybody who has taken shelter in one's house.

#### 4.3.3 General Comments

The analysis on married women in sour relationship with their husbands and unmarried lovers above shows that there is no asymmetrical relationship between the speeches of both sexes who are not bound by marriage and those whose love relationship in marriage is sour. There is no compliance with male dominance. Both the male and the female characters have rights of expression, unlike the case of traditional women. The male lovers' speeches are marked by appeal, adoration, praise and petting words. They are less authoritative and commanding and are, in most cases, uncertain as most of their decisions depend on the decisions taken by their female partners. The patriarchal power and privilege exhibited by the males naturally is highly reduced here. They are often the topic initiators and ask questions that receive minimal response from their female lovers.

The female lovers' speeches are marked by much freedom of expression, boldness in speaking and in usage of words. They speak with assurance and less uncertainty. At times, depending on the level of love both parties share, the females too could use some petting words but less of praise words. They are not authoritative and commanding in their speeches. They give minimal responses to questions and attract the attention of their male partners more. Their speeches reflect less of the subordinate status of women and more of self confidence. They speak to convince and buy the consideration of their male lovers. Their speeches exhibit more of equality than inequality of gender. Moreover, in the dialogue between male and female lovers, the female speeches have no reflection of women's subordinate status as hypothesised by Lakkoff (1975). Their speeches have no notable image of uncertainty, weakness, excessive politeness and lack of confidence. Furthermore, their speeches do not show any difference from men's authoritative language. They do not

use what O'Barr and Atkins (1980) refer to as powerless language. The female characters utilise their full freedom of expression.

#### 4.3.4 Reasons for the Non-Asymmetrical Relationship in the Speeches of Non-Compliant Women.

The nature of the speech of male and female lovers may be as a result of the fact that there are no traditional, legal or religious ties that bind the lovers together. Their relationship can break at any time. There are no societal stereotyped roles expected from both parties because Igbo society views such a relationship as immoral and it should not be practised. People who engage in such a relationship make it a top secret from their parents and members of their community even though there is nothing hidden under the sun.

Moreover, in Igbo society too, just like in some instances in this study, there are some women who dominate their husbands, but not under normal circumstances. A woman could dominate her husband if the woman is mannerless and lacks a good cultural upbringing. For instance, Ekwuluonu in *Ajo Nwa a na-eku N'ikpere*, is naturally a stubborn and troublesome person. The death of her mother at her early childhood leaves her with a great lack of home training. She bullies her husband and talks to him and other men she comes in contact with disrespectfully. In her husband's community, his kindred dread her. Their several plots to send her packing prove abortive, as she overpowers them.

Another instance that can debar a woman from being submissive and even make her to dominate her husband is a case whereby the woman does not love the man and is forced to marry him. Out of hatred, such a woman may jump some cultural boundaries in reaction to her resistance to marry the man. An instance is that of Adaaku, in *Adaaku*. She hates her husband, Chief Ibekwe, because her parents forced her to marry him. She dominates him in their discussions and, in the end kills him with a rat poison.

Fetish and diabolical women too dominate their husbands and reduce them to a subordinate position. This situation could be seen in the marriage between Obiageli and Obioma, in *Ogbu mmadu Ndu Na-agu*. Obiageli's mother prepares a charm for her and she uses the charm to control and dominate Obioma, her husband.

Another reason why men dominate women in Igbo society could be because Igbo men do not marry on time. They make sure they acquire enough wealth before

marriage. Even when they want to marry, they marry, in most cases, younger women. As a result of the age gap between such couples, the men who are older dominate their wives as such wives revere them due to their age differences.

Finally, a major fact which determines the level of dominance a husband has over his wife is the status of the love that binds them together. Men whose love ties with their wives are very tight respect and adore their wives. It is believed that this is also the case in the real Igbo society. Such men show less dominance and authority in their speeches. They use more of petting and admiring words. Instances of this could be found in the dialogue between Maazi Ugonna and Ugbokwu, his wife, in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*, Aworo and Odinghefu, in *Nwata Rie Aworo* and Obidiya and Onuma, in *Obidiya*.

Another factor that affects men's dominating attitude is education. From the study, especially as regards the dialogues between Ikechukwu (a university graduate) and his wife Nnenna and that of Ikechi (also an university graduate) and Ihunanya, who is also a university graduate from a wealthy home, educated men respect their wife's human rights and are less dominant. Women who are educated too usually resist patriarchal dominance by applying the knowledge and wisdom which they have acquired as educated women.

#### 4.3.5 Level of Empowerment of Non-Compliant Women

(i) **Economic empowerment:** The character that is independent in this group is Orijeji. She is a subsistent farmer and she has enough to cater for her two children after she had separated with her husband. All other females in this group are either dependent on their parents or on their husbands. Even Adaaku, who is a graduate, dumps her certificate for marriage. All the married women in this group are full time housewives.

(ii) **Social empowerment:** Socially, these females are viewed as misfits with the exception of Orijeji, who is loved for her patriotic nature and human rights pursuit. All the others are socially stigmatised because their roles are contrary to normal occurrences where the males take the upper hand or the lead. Some of the morally loose girls among them are rejected by their parents who feel that they have brought shame to their families. Conversely, the men whom they run to or cheapen themselves for later abandon them as cheap commodities.

(iii) **Educational empowerment:** Orijeji, Ekwuluonu, Obioma and Ureonu are completely uneducated. Ugomma attempt primary education even though she drops out because she is prematurely impregnated. Objageli drops out of secondary school too because of the same reason while Chinyere drops out of the University during her final degree examinations for committing examination malpractice. Adaaku and Chiichii are university graduates.

(iv) **Cultural empowerment:** The characters in this category sort of revolt against the Igbo culture which gives the Igbo male authority over the females. Their subvertive attitude earn the majority of them hatred and stigmatisation.

An exemplary case is that of Ekwuluonu. She subverts the Igbo cultural male domination or male chauvinism. Instead of her being the weaker sex, her husband Ukaegbu becomes the weaker one. She controls her husband and uses many techniques: husband battering, threats, abusive words, and other deceptive acts to bring her husband to dance to her tune even as good as her husband is. This is a feat common with men. If not for her other negative attributes, she could have been a good feminist character. Her husband, her fellow women, children and men of the community fear and avoid her aggression. She is no respecter of any personality, not even spirits. She believes in herself, and what she can do for herself applying her intelligence, physical strength and vocal threats to subdue people around her. Hear her speaking to her husband about his conspiracy with his kinsmen to send her out of his home through the help of the police.

Ekwuluonu: ... *Nkwa m na-ekwe unu bu, Kama m  
Ga-ala n'ala a, unu n'iile ewere isi unu  
Kwuọ ugwo ya... Unu na-achọ ka m laa ugbo  
A unu metosichaala m.*

Ekwuluonu: My promise to you all is that instead of me  
To go to my father's house, you will all loose your  
Lives for it... You want me to go now  
That you have over used me sexually.

**Feminist Perspective:** Feminists who believe that women should not be driven out of marriage anyhow would commend Ekwuluonu's decision. She is not like Chimma, in *Akwa Nwa*, who begins to cry when her husband asks her to leave his house. Ekwuluonu threatens to kill both her husband and all his kinsmen if she must go. As a result of her threat, her husband and his kinsmen are afraid to carry out their plans; they resort to laying blames on Ukaegbu for having disclosed the outcome of their

deliberations in their meeting to Ekwuloronu. Ekwuloronu's action here is not common with Igbo women. Normally, an Igbo woman would have wept and even packed out at the mention of such by her husband. Ekwuloronu boldly requests that since her husband cannot restore her former shape and looks, she is not packing out.

Feminists welcome the idea that women should go for a formal divorce whereby, according to the Western laws; a man pays for his divorced wife's maintenance. Such allowances paid by the man scare Western men from divorcing their wives. In Africa, divorce is so rampant because the laws on divorce favour men more than women. In *Akwa Nwa* too, Akujobi divorces Chimma because she is barren. It is possible that if the Nigerian law adopts the Western law as regards divorce cases in Nigeria, a lot of marriages that could have been carelessly broken would survive. Nigerian men will also restrain from divorcing their wives over trivial cases.

(V) **Religious and political empowerment:** None of these women holds any religious or political post. In fact, they are not empowered in these areas of life.

#### 4.4 General Portrayal of the Females in the Plays Compared to the Views of the Respondents Sampled

In this section, we consider the analysis of female characters in the plays under study with special reference to the marital, economic, social, educational, cultural, religious and political aspects of their lives. The findings are then compared with the result from the 300 respondents that responded to the questionnaire administered for the study. Other information gathered from the oral interviews granted to some people in the course of the study, which is relevant for this study is also discussed.

##### 4.4.1 Respondents Views on Marital Issues in the Plays

The questionnaire was administered to three hundred women. From the answers given by the women, some of the injustices and violence Igbo women experience in marriage are analysed as follows: out of the three hundred women interviewed, 84% are married; 26% of the married women married between 10-18 years of age, while 66% of them married between 19-30 years of age. Out of the six single girls interviewed, 4 of them were already engaged.

Furthermore, out of the 84% percent that are married, 52% percent of the women confess that their husbands regard them as unequal to them and dominate

them, while 32% agree that they are equal to their husbands. On the general overview of women by men in Igbo society, 70% of the three hundred women interviewed confirm that women are regarded as lower than men, 16% agree that women are regarded as second-class citizens or sub-humans while 12% agree that women are equal to men. 72% of the women sampled accept that Igbo men exploit their wives. 20% of them disagree with the above view, while 8% are indifferent to the issue.

26% of the respondents are private and public workers who are teachers, nurses and government workers. 20% agree that their husbands take their salaries every month and give them a meagre amount for their maintenance, while 6% of the women confessed that they had to fight it out with their husbands before they allow them full possession of their salaries, but they agree that their husbands still monitor their expenses and, at times, enforce some items of the family budget on them, especially in the area of family feeding.

Out of the same number of women, 4% are divorced because they are childless. Another 4% of the women are also childless while some who bore only female children among them all agree that they are not divorced but their husbands married another wife. Some of the barren women agree that Igbo society is so harsh on them that they are neither respected in the society nor are allowed access to their deceased husband's property.

On the issue of husband battering women, out of the three hundred women sampled, only 6% of them agree that their husbands never beat or slap them, the majority of the women agree that they do excess domestic work compared to what their husbands do, while only 4% accept that their husbands help them in cooking and carrying out some domestic work. 12% of the women agree that their husbands have concubines; while 80% of the women claim that they experience sour relationship with their in-laws (this relationship decreases in gravity from sister-in-law/s, to brother-in-law/s, to mother-in-law/s down to father-in-law/s and uncle-in-law/s).

100% of the Igbo women sampled are of the opinion that man is superior and more powerful than woman in Igbo society. They all agree that man has more freedom than woman in the same society and that a woman who challenges a man, is looked down upon and is stigmatised. About 98% of them agree that they cannot challenge their husbands because they may be beaten or slapped by them or that the society will tag them bad women. Only few of the educated women agree that they can challenge men. These educated women are those who have obtained first degree

certificate or above. All the educated women with certificates below first degree agree that they cannot challenge men. The majority of the women also see it as an abomination for a woman to challenge a man, especially her husband. The women also believe that it is a natural position of women to be seen and regarded as lower beings before men. 98% of them are not happy with the situation but at the same time they believe that a move to subvert such subordination of womanhood is uncultured, therefore, should not even be thought of. This is why some Igbo women and men disapprove of the introduction of Western feminism into Igbo land.

#### 4.4.1.1 Types of Igbo Marriage as Experienced by Respondents

From the respondents to the questionnaire and the interviews granted to some people in this research, the following types of marriage which some of them have adverse effect on the human rights and existence of the Igbo women, are found to still exist in some parts of Igbo land even in this 21st century. Such observations made the researcher to classify Igbo marriage under the following:

**Love initiated marriage:** This is a type of marriage in which a mature male adult reaches an agreement with a mature female adult and they both get married. 75% of the married respondents fall under this group.

**Forced marriage:** In this type of marriage, a mature female adult or a premature female is forced by her parents to marry a man of their choice due to some selfish reasons. 22% of the women sampled who married between 10 and 18 years agree that they were forced to marry their spouses by either all or one of their parents or guardian.

The third which could be regarded as the worst part of the second type of marriage is called *idọ oku nwaanyi* (betrothal of a newly born baby girl): In this type of marriage, a baby girl or a young or premature female is betrothed to a young or premature male based on an agreement reached by both parents of the concerned children. It means to pay a dowry on the head of a newborn baby with the hope of giving her hands in marriage to a baby boy of her age who may be a son to a family friend of the baby girl's parents. This type of marriage has caused a lot of marital problems in Igbo society of today. It is a type of enforced marriage. The parents begin early to make the couple realise that they are meant for each other and that they must be married in order to seal the relationship between them (their parents). Most often when such couple become adults and realise that they have no emotional attachment

to each other, they end up quarrelling, and finally, such marriages break up. From the sample, 2% of the divorce cases are linked to this type of marriage.

**Poligamy:** Polygamy is another form of marriage whereby a man marries more than one wife. This type of marriage has a lot of disadvantages. The women involved in it, out of jealousy carry out a lot of atrocities that are hazardous to their husbands' lives, their childrens' lives and their own lives too. As a result of the dangerous after effects of polygamy, only very few Igbo especially those in search of the fruit of the womb still practise it. Only 3% of the sample is married into polygamous homes. Polygamy currently is replaced in Igbo society by secret concubineage called "masked polygamy" (Anderson 1997:351).

The types of marriage as defined above are the major types currently found in Igbo land through this research. Other forms of marriage discovered among the respondents are discussed below:

*Ikuchi nwaanyi* (the idea of an immediate brother to a deceased husband to inherit the late brother's wife) is another type of marriage which is practised in some parts of Igbo land. This practice is currently called widowhood inheritance. The wife to a deceased man is forcefully inherited in most cases against her wish.

There are only few cases of this nature among the respondents. Some of the widows interviewed in this research agree that their husband's siblings tried that on them but they stood their grounds against the idea because their grown up children defended them from such embarrassment. They also agree that their refusal to accept their being inherited generated unending trouble between them and their in-laws.

Followed by the above type of marriage is **female husbandship**. It means a woman marrying another woman for her late husband for reproductive reasons. In this case, a woman whose husband predeceases her without a male child though with or without female children, can marry another woman for her late husband in order to bear him a male child. Secondly, a widow who loses an only male child and can no longer bear children can also marry a young girl for her late son. Thirdly, a woman who bore only female children for her husband can marry a wife too for her husband so that the woman newly married may bear the husband a son.

From our findings, there is only one female husband among the sample. She married a young girl for her husband because the man is dead and she only bore him female children. The major reason behind her action is for the sake of primogeniture.



She does this so that her so-called wife can help her bear children for the man and prevent his lineage from being faded out of the earth. This type of marriage is another indigenous structure of women power in Igbo society (Mc Call 2000). The married wife meets other men for reproduction. The woman that married her bears the responsibility and a dominating authority over the wife. She feeds for her needs and takes care of her children. In this case, she exercises power over her wife so to say. The fact that she has power over her wife does not excuse her (the husband) from other cultural, political and social suppression that the female experiences in the society. This type of marriage is still very much in practice in most parts of Igbo land.

**Feminist perspective:** Female husbandship is another form of traditionally approved prostitution because the woman so married is permitted to meet any man or men of her choice and bear children through them for the deceased husband of her female husband. The problem associated with this type of marriage is that the life of the surrogate wife especially in the face of AIDS- (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) becomes endangered. Again, the moral upbringing of the children raised in such a marriage is questionable, as many of them constitute a nuisance to their communities and the entire Nigerian society as a whole.

There is also what the Igbo of Edo and Delta State call *Idegbe* the Igbo of South East call it *Nrachi* (Eze 2003:119) while the Igbo North call it *Nhechi*. *Idegbe*, *Nrachi* and *Nhechi* are terms used to describe an unmarried female who is by obligation not to get married but traditionally is permitted to produce offspring for her late father who has no male child in order to keep his lineage going. In a way, this is a way of encouraging traditional prostitution. The females involved in this form of prostitution are called *Amurunna* (she who bears children for her father) among the Igbo North group especially in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State. It means that such a woman is married to her father though her father if alive cannot have sexual intercourse with her but other men do.

In Enugu state too, a young widow who is still of reproductive age and who does not want to remarry is culturally allowed to remain in her late husband's house and still bear children for him. Such widows are called *Amuruḍi* (bearing children for a late husband). They bear children for their late husbands through any male lover that comes their way whether he is related to their late husband or not. The children born under this condition are traditionally accepted as offsprings of the late husband. This practice is however, not generally acceptable all over Igbo land. In places like Oḡwa

in Imo State, any child born after the demise of the husband must be taken to the biological father wherever he may be. Both *Amurudi* and *Ikuchi nwaanyi* expose women into several bitter experiences especially when such women are the disciplined types who reject love advances from both their husband's relatives and non relatives. Most women who refuse to be inherited are sent out of their husband's homes with their children empty handed, except such a widow has grown-up children who can stand up against their uncles in her defence.

#### 4.4.1.2 Presentation of Marriage in the Plays

There are sixty married women in the eighteen select plays studied for this work, some of whom are widows. There are also forty-eight single girls. Amongst them are *Ihunanya* who later marries Ikechi and Chiichii, her friend whose fiancé disappoints and marries another girl, all in *Ihunanya*. There is also *Obioma* who runs to *Awoṛo*, in *Nwata Rie Awo*, and her daughter (*Odinchefu*) who marries her biological father unknowingly. In *Otu Mkpisiaka*, *Obiageli*, a secondary school student abandons her studies and elopes with a man who takes her as a second wife. In *Akwa Nwa*, *Chimma* is forced by her father to marry *Eze Akujobi*, while in *Adaaku*; *Adaaku* is forced to marry *Chiif Ibekwe*. In *Onye kpa Nku Ahuhu*, *Ikechukwu* rejects marriage with *Amaka*, but marries *Nnenna*. *Amaka's* future life plan is retarded. In *Ugomma*, *Ugomma* in primary five has a rich suitor whom she finally rejects because he worships in a denomination different from hers. In *Ajo Nwa A Na-eku N'ikpere*, *Ekwuluonu*, a small girl who still partakes in street fights, is suddenly married to *Ukaegbu*. *Mma*, in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*; celebrates her graduation from the university in marriage with *Ezenwa*. *Nneka*, in *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*; marries *Taagbo* while still a young girl; her mother, *Uduaku*, jilts *Ndubuisi* and marries *Ochonganoko*. In *Ogbu mmadu Ndu Na-agu*; *Obiageli* snatches *Obioma* from *Amarachi*, a lady he intends to marry before he meets *Obiageli* who diabolically charms him into marrying her.

In *Ojimba*, all the grown up girls gather at the village square for *Ojimba* to select a wife among the ladies of the town. *Ekemma* is chosen and that earns her envy from other ladies who are not chosen. She suddenly marries a man she has never interacted with and she feels happy about her choice. In *Nka di Na Nti*, *Ezinwaanyi* finishes from the secondary school and immediately gets married, while in *Ezinne*, *Ureonu* is already arranging her daughter, *Ukamaka*, and *Okee* for courtship, which

will lead to marriage at her very tender age. Her stepsister, Nwaamaka raises an alarm over her and her mother's irresponsible behaviour (p.9). In *Ajọ Obi*, Obiageli as a young widow could not even finish mourning her late husband; she re-marries without bothering to complete her university education.

#### 4.4.1.3 Image Portrayal of Women in Marriage

From the analysis made on the plays, the following image portrayals of the female characters are observed.

**4.4.1.3.1 Marriage as the Only Source of Self-Fulfilment:** From the above discussion, it is obvious that out of the forty-eight girls in the plays, nineteen are attached in one way or the other to men or eventually get married. This figure, added to the total number of married women in the plays which sums up to sixty-six, makes it clear that the issue of marriage seems to be overemphasised in Igbo society. Ladies no longer want to struggle and be self-actualised; they want to depend solely on marriage as their only source of fulfilment in life.

One may also say that the over-dependence of women on men for their livelihood is the cause of the much emphasis which they place on marriage. In addition, in the traditional Igbo setting there were not many recreational facilities that will keep people busy so their major source of socialisation was to get male partners and get married or attend wrestling competitions. Wrestling was a forum where youths come together and get to know each other. Similarly, there was not much emphasis on formal education in the early traditional Igbo society until very late after the colonial period; so people were uncivilised and purely traditional.

Another reason why Igbo ladies rely on marriage for survival is that some of the ladies are not well-employed. Even those who are, earn very meagre salaries so they look forward to marrying a man who would provide for them and release them from the present economic crunch in the nation. It is true that in marriage, men are traditionally made to cater for their wives. This was typical of men of the preliterate Igbo who observed their stereotyped roles of protecting and providing for their families. These days, women in marriage have many problems with some modern Igbo men. They abandon most of the domestic chores for the women and even abandon their own traditional roles for their wives to play.

These days, although about 96% of Igbo women still look forward to marriage as their highest point of self-fulfilment, there are still about 4% of Igbo women who prefer not to marry and be enslaved by men. Some of such ladies bear children as single mothers.

#### 4.4.1.3.2 Portrayal of Women Forced into Marriage

From the plays too, some females are forced into marriage. These women are presented in these plays as adulterous women who cannot make decisions on their own. They are unhappy, filled with vengeance and are killers. *Adaaku* in *Adaaku* being unhappy that her parents forced her into marrying Chief Ibekwe makes up her mind to continue her love affairs with her male lover Chukwusolu. In order to be liberated from the bondage she finds herself in marriage, she poisons Chief Ibekwe and ends up miserably.

Chimma in *Akwa nwa* is forced to marry Eze Akujobi (a king) as a fifth wife. The king and his other wives maltreat her. She severally weeps and laments that her father has messed her life up. She lives a miserable life and is humiliated severally by her husband who suspects her to be committing adultery.

#### 4.4.1.3.3 Portrayal of Co-Wives in Polygamous Homes

According to Akorede (2005:222) "the co-wives conflict is a narrative motif that is conceptualised in various ways in African literature". The relationship in this type of families is of two types: love between a husband and a wife and hatred between the same husband and another wife, and equal relationship between husband and wives. The first relationship is the most common in real Igbo society while the second relationship is rare. In *Ezinne*, Ezinne is loved more than Ureonu. The women are each other's rivals. In *Oguamalam*, Ikekwem loves Ojageli more than Nwaijari. On the other hand, in the same play, Njoku loves Uloaku and Nwanyigbo on equal bases. All the co-wives in *Oguamalam* are presented as rivals. In *Akwa Nwa* the king Akujobi loves Ihudiya more than the other four wives. He confides in her and hearkens to her advice while Ihudiya out of jealousy ill-advises their husband against Chimma and makes him dislike Chimma. The women envy each other and quarrel often. They gossip against each other and plot evil against each other.

The relationships in the above homes are best described in the words of the following scholars: Opuku-Agyemang (1998:97), who describes polygamy as a fertile

arena for discord in the family. Courtlander (1975:288, 306) also recognises that polygamy gives way to intra-gender conflicts. The type of relationship that exists in such homes are best described by Adenubi (1977:102), who in his discussion of Mr. Lawals polygamous home says, it is a place where there is: "Perpetual wrangling. The wives wrangle. The children wrangle. You could cut our jealous with a knife! Everybody gets at everybody and father, taking sides with his favourite wife of the moment (102)." Men, women and children are usually unhappy in the polygamous homes presented in the plays above due to the activities of the cowives. This goes to prove the assertions of the above scholars right.

Co-wives' study as revealed in this study, portrays women as cantankerous, jealous, murderers, intolerant, wicked, and diabolical, amorous, segregating and mischievous. An example of what happens in such homes could be seen from what happens in Ezeji's home in *Ezinne* as shown in Ureṅṅ's speech to her co-wife Ezinne and those of their daughters below:

Ureṅṅ: *Bia Ezinne, o ka i di e!..  
I chorọ ibu m ụzọ nara mmanya, eekwa?  
Onye ụsà mmụọ!...Nne ozu ụmụ... (5)*

Ureṅṅ: *You Ezinne, is this your way...  
Do you want to collect the wine before me?  
You voracious idiot... mother  
of useless children (5)*

Among the children, when Nwamaka (Ezinne's daughter) wants to correct Ukaamaka (Ureṅṅ's daughter) from the way Ureṅṅ has been arranging male lovers for her, Ukaamaka does not take it kindly with her. She complains that Nwamaka is only jealous because men love her. Nwamaka replies her by saying:

Nwamaka: *Tufiakwa, ihere mee gi...  
Ihere megbue gi na nne gi...  
Okee o na-achọ onye, n'obi nne gi?*

Ukaamaka: *O gbasara gi? Ewu...  
Onye soro Okee ya chotawa (9)*

Nwamaka: *Shame, you should be ashamed of yourself...  
You and your mother should be ashamed of  
yourselves... Who does Okee come to visit in  
your mother's apartment?*

Ukaamaka: *Is it any of your concern?  
She goat! Who ever pleases Okee, let him visit (9)*

Another example is the quarrel between Ihudiya and Chimma in *Akwa nwa* by Chukwuezi (1979) over Nkiru Ihudiya's daughter on whether Nkiru should help Chimma to pound yam or not (p.1-2). Also see the quarrel between Nwanyịgbọ and

Uloaku (p.9 and 10), and that between Nwaijari and Obiageli (p.11 and12) in *Oguamalam* by Gbujie (1979).

In the case of Ezinne and Ureonu above, when children clash over little things, Ureonu turns it into a quarrel between her co-wife and herself. She continues in her jealous and hateful mannerism towards her co-wife that she later goes to a witch doctor that gives her a poison for a love potion for her husband. Believing that what is given to her is a love potion, she adds some into their husband's food. He is about to eat the poisoned food when Nne Elewechi a neighbour saves his life by preventing him from eating the food.

#### 4.4.1.3.4 Daughter-in- Law/Mother-in-Law Relationship

At times, there are conflicts between daughter-in-laws and father-in-laws (Omosho's *The Edifice* 1971), but these are not common both in real life and in literature and none of such exist in the plays studied rather, there are four mother-in-laws in the plays. These women have one misunderstanding or the other with their daughter-in-laws as could be seen below:

In *Ajo Obi* Obiageli the wife of Ezenwata has a mother-in-law called Okwuchi. Her relationship with Obiageli is not cordial because according to her, Obiageli is an educated girl. She believes that educated girls especially those who attain up to the University level, are wild and over exposed. See page '130' for the discussion between her and her friends against highly educated girls and Obiageli her daughter-in-law.

Another case of a mother-in-law is that of Ogbenyealu the mother of Obiageli wife of Obioma in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*. She is also Obioma's mother-in-law and the architect of Obioma's failure and death (see details in chapter three).The two mothers-in-law discussed above are wicked, heartless and diabolical. They encourage their children to maltreat their spouses.

There is also the case of a mother in law's spirit attacking and killing Ekwulonu the evil wife of her son Ukaegbu in *Ajo nwa a na-eku n'ikpere*. The spirit of Ukaegbu's mother (the spirit of Nlemchi) could no longer bear the torture her daughter-in-law metes out on her son and her grandson. In order to save them from her attacks and trouble, her spirit appears and kills Ekwulonu. She is portrayed here as a protective mother. Her attack on Ekwulonu is justified because Ekwulonu is a

threat to Ukaegbu and his son's lives and even the lives of members of the entire community. Elemchi appears as their saviour.

Another group of mothers-in-laws are the type that may not come after their daughters-in-laws but may disown their sons and would not allow him to bring the wife into their compound. Such is the case of Mama Obodo the mother of Obioma in *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*. She is of the opinion that a girl who snatches a fellow girl's fiance must have been a bad girl from a bad background. She warns her son over the dangers of marrying such a woman and also over the danger of dumping a woman who built him up (See chapter three).

Another instance, which is similar to the above, is the relationship between Njoku's mother and Ezinwaanyi in *Nka di na nti*. Njoku's mother rejects Ezinwaanyi for the reason that women from their area do not make good wives. Njoku abandons her and refuses to visit home. Though he ends up not marrying Ezinwaanyi he dies in his adulterous relationship with her (See chapter three).

From the above examples, it is observed that not all mother-in-laws are wicked. As mothers who understand their gender class and their capability so well, they can foresee the future of their sons or daughters in a marriage. Their conclusion about such relationships their children want to enter into is often concluded from the nature of the spouse to be (Modupe 2002:27). Most often they appear prophetic because their conclusions about the marriage are always the case. Many marriages that mother-in-laws did not support are always unsuccessful or fatal. This is exactly the case of the marriage between Obioma and Obiageli.

The above examples cited actually emphasise that mothers are prophetic and the love ties between them and their children intuitively make them to foresee their children's future in a relationship. Critics argue that boys and girls should rely mainly on marriage choices made by their mothers that they feel are aimed towards the intention of the security of their own (sons and daughters) lives and their general future happiness. This is because it is believed that women are endowed with the powers to foresee the future of their children and like the Igbo world view would have it, "*Okwu nne aghaghi ime*" (mother's words always come to pass).

However, mother-in-laws are presented as materialistic, wicked, diabolical, and unforgiving in the plays studied. They are also determined when it comes to cases of making a choice of a marriage partner for their sons and daughters. The presentation of mother-in-laws as evil is not acceptable to Feminists. They prefer an

image of a mother-in-law, which is positive. This is because they believe that just like there are evil mother-in-laws so are there very good mother-in-laws in the society. They suggest that such good mother-in-laws should form the theme of discussion in literature so that growing youths and even adults can imbibe some positive attributes of such women. They also suggest that there are also conflicts between father-in-laws and daughter-in-laws and also cases of father-in-laws and son-in-laws which is even more rampant but which is ignored by literary writers.

#### 4.4.1.3.5 Brother-in-Laws/Sister-in-Laws Relationship

An outstanding relationship between sisters-in-law is that between Adaaku and Nwekedu in *Adaaku* (See chapter three). In this case, Adaaku is portrayed as a murderer, adulterer and a cheat. Her sister-in-law is depicted as an avenger and one who is unforgiven and unforgetful of past events. As a human being, it is normal for Nwekedu to have avenged her brother's death. On the other side, Radical Feminists would argue that Adaaku's murder of Chief Ibekwe is the rightful thing to do in order for her to regain her freedom and love for Chukwusolu. They will highly recommend her actions. In the light of both cases, one can say that both women are not to be blamed for their actions but Adaaku's parents should. This is because they are the ones that forced Adaaku to marry a man she does not love. For the two years of their marriage, Adaaku complains that she is never happy at the sight of her husband (69).

In *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*, Obiageli the wife of Obioma hypnotises Obioma. Under the spell, she commands him to send his only sister Uloma and his only brother Nnodim away from their house. She enforces him to do so by claiming that Nnodim has stolen her money. Her husband not knowing that it is a false allegation, sends Nnodim home. In the same way, she falsely accuses Uloma of refusing to cook for her brother (Obiageli's husband). Uloma reports that she has lied against her and she pounces on Uloma. A fight ensues and it results into Obioma sending Uloma packing out of his house.

The clash between Nnodim /Uloma and their sister-in-law Obiageli portrays that the fact that women complain that majority of their relationship with their sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law may have been due to their bid to have their husbands alone to themselves. This is the case between Obiageli, Uloma and Nnodim. Obiageli being so materialistic wants to enjoy her husband's wealth alone with her people. She trickily sets Uloma and Nnodim up in order to achieve her aim.



Obiageli is presented here as wicked, deceptive, materialistic, covetous and trickish. Feminists may argue that there are many women who are more than receptive to their sisters and brothers in law. They want to know why literary writers prefer to portray the negative sides of women characters to the positive aspect. It is their stand that positive images of women should be portrayed in literature in order to booster the positive psychological effect of the images of women that women read about women and even provide more avenues of women emancipation.

Apart from the above, women according to the questionnaire used for this research, have proved that brothers-in-law form the greatest thorn on the flesh of daughters-in-law. Why are these motifs not represented in both oral and written literature? Why are the motif of the cruelty of husband's siblings and uncles over a deceased man's widow as regards the inheritance of her husband's property not highlighted in literature?

**Feminist perspective:** Women in marriage in the plays are presented as servants, second-class citizens, traditional women, sexual objects, voiceless individuals, diabolical people, zombies, men's appendages, wicked people, lazy individuals, hopeless humans unless attached to men, and people who over-persevere in order to retain their marriages. It is the opinion of feminists that such presentations of women are on the negative side. They promote prejudices, customs and attitudes responsible for the low morale in women. The feminists suggest that instead of a negative portrayal of women, literature should be a tool or platform for correcting the false and negative image of women. The feminist theory rejects the rigid traditional sex-based stereotyped roles ascribed to women in literature (Friedan 1983:51). The feminist critics lament that the traditional images of women have been exclusively based on her domestic and sexual roles. They believe that the woman's images create the world for her, shape her consciousness and her relationships in the world around her. In the feminists attempt to curb negative presentation of women in literature, Stubbs (1979: ix) suggests that the female writer should create "new alternative images which... try to expand women's consciousness of themselves."

Okereke (1998:145) observes that male authors of African novels usually relegate their female characters to secondary spaces, indeed to literacy ghettos, as lovers and bed mates, entertainers and sexual battlegrounds for men in power. He opines that when a woman eventually gets married to a husband chosen for her by her

father, she is expected to "serve," "worship" and "reverence" her husband, who then becomes a demi-god to the woman.

#### 4.5 Opinions of the Respondents on Economic and Educational Status

Through the questionnaire administered for this work, the economic status of Igbo women could be classified as follows: out of the three hundred women interviewed, 32% are petty traders, 18% are teachers, 6% are seamstresses, 4% are nurses, 4% are government workers, no woman doctor or engineer, 30% of the women assist their husbands in managing their businesses as saleswomen who are unpaid for their labour (They are as well unemployed women) while 4% are full time house wives.

It is assumed that if among three hundred urban Igbo women (urban dwellers) from where the samples for this study were drawn, the number of unemployed women, petty traders and full-time housewives could rise to the figures cited above, and then the number of rural unemployed women and petty traders would be quite greater. This shows that, in real Igbo society, the greatest population of women falls in the lower economic status. Although currently there are some Igbo female professors, doctors, engineers and women in other fields of labour, they are incomparable in number with those at the lower echelon of the society.

In the course of the interview conducted in this study, it was found out that there are some economically empowered Igbo women whose records have not been documented in any form except through the oral literature of their communities. Some of such women are discussed below.

##### 4.5.1 Wealthy Women

There is no written documentation found in the course of this study that discusses wealthy Igbo women of old. The only record within the reach of this study is an oral poetry about two women (a mother and child) from Lett village of Umulumgbe in Enugu State. They were noted for their hardwork which made them not to be dependent on anybody. The woman was **Late Nwezenwanchikpa Ugwuęu** while her daughters name was **Late Oriude Ugwuęu**

Nwezenwanchikpa was a widow with three children: Oriude Ugwuęu, Ogoenyi Ugwuęu, and Oliver Ugwuęu. She catered for her children and did not allow men to exploit her in any form. She was so disciplined that she never tolerated

nonsense from anybody. She had more than enough that she, unlike other widows, did not need any financial help from anybody. A song was composed based on the fact that she was an independent widow (an unusual occurrence) a woman contented with what she had. The song goes this way:

<i>Nweze Nwanchikpa</i>	<i>Onye nwere ego, biko nye m,</i>
<i>Nweze Nwanchikpa</i>	<i>Onye nwere ego.</i>
	<i>Onye nwere ego, biko nye m,</i>
	<i>Onye nwere ego.</i>
Nweze Nwanchikpa	Rich woman, please give me some money.
Nweze Nwanchikpa	Rich woman.
	Rich woman, please give me some money.
	Rich woman

Oriude Ugwuęu was nicknamed Eriřuđęuđęu (a very long rope) because, as a hard working and industriuos woman, she never liked to waste her time on unnecessary issues or discussions that would disturb her schedule for the day (long rope, to her, meant long discussion). As a successful farmer, she had a large cashew plantation and many other economic trees that yielded much income for her. She preferred to be in her farm working to waisting her time on unnecessary women meetings. Another nickname Chirowoęku (God's planned wealth) was given to her due to the amount of wealth she acquired. She never depended on her husband unlike other women of her days did. For this unique aspect of her life, a song was composed in her name depicting her level of independence as follows:

*Chirowoęku Nwaugwuęu onye awonuru o nye onwo nye,  
Ayaaya bu egwu, ayakata bu egwu.  
Chirowoęku Nwaugwuęu onye awonuru o nye onwo nye,  
Ayaaya bu egwu, ayakata bu egwu.*

Chirowoęku Nwaugwuęu she that was not given and she gave her self,  
Ayaaya is a type of music ayakata is a type of music.  
Chirowoęku Nwaugwuęu she that was not given and she gave her self,  
Ayaaya is a type of music ayakata is a type of music

(Story narrated by Mr Oliver Ozo Ugwuęu (the only surviving child of Nwezenwanchikpa and an uncle to the researcher. He was aged 78) from Lett village, Umulumbe in Enugu State on 28<sup>th</sup>, April 2006).

#### 4.5.2 Economic Status of the Females in General in the Plays

The majority of the women studied in the plays are subsistent farmers, full-time housewives and petty traders. Out of the sixty-six women and forty-eight girls

presented in the plays, only the following are economically emancipated: In *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*, Mma is a government worker as a psychologist; Ụkamaka is a barrister at law, while her twin sister, Ezimma is a midwife in a hospital. In *Okwe Agbaala*, Odoziaku Ibenyere is a whole university registrar while, Ibuaku is a top university secretary. In *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*, Amarachi is an average government worker, while Ụloma is engaged in a petty job, which she secured with her West African School Certificate. In *Adaaku*, Ụloma (Adaaku's graduate friend) is gainfully employed. In *Eri Mara Ngwugwu*, Sis. Angela is a renowned evangelist; Nọọsụ is a nurse, while Nneka is a school graduate teacher. In *Ajọ Obi*, Ngozi is a mini office secretary. Nwamaka, in *Otu Mkpisiaka*, is a petty trader who becomes the breadwinner of her family, providing for her father, her mother and her younger siblings. Lastly, in *Ihunanya*, Ihunanya is a company secretary while Oriaku Ibe is a university professor.

The above analysis shows that out of 114 adult females presented in the eighteen plays studied for this work; only 15 of them are economically empowered. This presentation of women is the opposite of the result given from the questionnaires administered. Going by this research, it is obvious that the portrayal of the female's economic status in the above plays is far from what it is in the present Nigerian economy. Women are more economically empowered in real life than they are in the plays even though the nature of the jobs they do fall under the lower cadre. This gives us the conclusion that the economic status of women in Igbo plays is negatively represented. One point, which emerges from this study through the literary data, the questionnaire and the interviews granted, is that Igbo women are better economically at present than in some decades ago. With this idea in mind, the playwrights of these plays could be exonerated on the account that they present the economic status of women as at the setting of their stories. This notion is established by the fact that the plays written in the 1970's: *Obidiya*, *Nka Di Na Nti*, *Akwa Nwa*, *Otu Mkpisiaka* and *Oguamalam*, only depict women as subsistent farmers, full-time housewives, few petty traders and school girls. This presentation is not far from what the situation of women was in the 1970s.

The plays written in the 1980s: *Ugomma*, *Nwata Rie Awo*, *Eri Mara Ngwugwu*, *Ezinne*, *Onye kpaa Nku Ahuhu* and *Adaaku*, also present few graduates, non-graduate workers, teachers, full-time housewives and nurses. This is also true of the Igbo society in the 1980s. The plays written in the 1990s on the other hand,

present the economic status of women as complex as it was then. The only play written then that portrays the economic status of women in the traditional setting is *Ojimba*. One is not surprised because *Ojimba* although written in 1991, is a written traditional oral narrative transformed into a play. It is a folktale set in the unpolluted traditional Igbo society. All other plays written in this decade: *Okwe Agbaala*, *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-agu*, *Ajo Obi* and *Ihunanya* portray women according to their economic situation as at the time of writing them.

Another play written in 1999 but which depicts women negatively as rural housewives and traditional women is *Ajo Nwa A Na-eku N'ikpere*. The reason behind the nature of its exposition of women economic status this way may be traced to the fact that this play is set in the early period of urbanisation when urban dwellers were so few that their activities were monitored by the police and the notorious ones were given a leave-township notice like it is done to Ukaegbu and Ekwuluonu. In the 1990s the Igbo society had surpassed that level of civilisation and has become more complex.

In the plays women like Adaaku in *Adaaku*; Nnenna, in *Onye kpa Nku Ahuhu*; and Ojiageli, in *Ajo Obi* are either graduates or highly educated women but are full-time housewives because their husbands do not want them to secure white-collar jobs. This is common with some Igbo men who, in most cases, do not want their wives to be economically empowered more than them. They want the women to remain as their subordinates forever. These days, because of the hard economy in Nigeria, Igbo men have experienced the advantage of allowing their wives to gain full economic emancipation. This is why there are now many Igbo women in almost all spheres of life. Although the number of Igbo women who are economically empowered can, in no way, be equated to the great number of rural Igbo women and uneducated women who are far from economic emancipation. Many of such women are still poor subsistent farmers, petty traders and full-time housewives.

The reasons behind the negative representation of the economic status of the female characters lie in traditional Igbo role-sharing patterns imbibed by the playwrights. As a result, they attribute wealth to men, while women are mainly dependent on men. From the plays studied, this attribute of Igbo culture is depicted in the names invented by the playwrights for the characters, as discussed below:

**Male names:** In *Okwe Agbaala* Loya Maduako (a barrister at law), Chiif Jostis (Chief justice of a court), Loya Iheako (a barrister at law), Deputi Vii Sii (the deputy

vice-chancellor of a university) Polis (police men), Vii Sii (Vice-Chancellor of a university) Professor Diogu (Professor Diogu), Dọkita Emezina (Doctor Emezina), Akukalja (more than enough wealth); in *Ajọ Nwa A Na-eku Nikipere*, Ezeji (king of yam); in *Ezinne*, Ezenwata (a young king) in *Ajọ Obi*, Chiifu Akudo (A chief, the wealth that brings peace) in *Ihunanya*, Eze Akujuobi (A king-Akujuobi, means the wealth that fills the palace); and in *Akwa Nwa*, Chiif Ibekwe (a wealthy chief). These are just few of the names which imply the economic empowerment of men (See onomastics in the last section of chapter three for more details).

In the plays, there are many kings, many chiefs and many wealthy men both in the traditional sense (wealthy by their possession of plenty yam farms, many wives, many children and livestock) and in the modern sense (wealthy by their professions and possession of lucrative businesses). Some, like Chiif Akudo, in *Ihunanya*, has chains of companies, cars and many workers. All the above are men who have reached great levels of economic achievement. On the other hand, the women's names depict the fact that they are created for men's sexual satisfaction, to enjoy men's wealth, to be married by men or to be beautiful so as to attract men. Some examples of such females are examined below:

**Female names:** Some of the female characters names are: Ugomma (the beautiful eagle) in *Ugomma*. Adaaku (the daughter that attracts wealth maybe when she is married), in *Erii Mara Ngugwu* and *Adaaku*, Obidiya in *Obidiya* (the husband's heart), Ugadiya (the husband's war weapon), Omasiriya (she that pleases her husband or her husband's favourite) and Jioji (a beautiful cloth), Uloma (a beautiful house) and Mma (beauty) in *Nka Di Na Nti*.

It is obvious that the names given to women do not depict any intention to expose them to the economic fields of life. They are meant to be dependent on men so long as they are beautiful enough to satisfy men's sexual desires. This was why the traditional Igbo women of those days did not go for high-level of economic achievement. They were mainly subsistent farmers who assisted their husbands in farm work, petty traders who sold some of the farm products like pepper, tomatoes and other food items or ingredients.

With the coming of the missionaries, women became a little bit economically empowered. They learnt sewing, baking, cooking and mid-wifery, making house keeping their basic assignment. With the introduction of education in Igbo land, women became employed in the teaching field; now there are many Igbo female

teachers. With the increase in modern technology and civilisation, Igbo women now have increased economic empowerment. One unfortunate thing is that Igbo women are not fully economically empowered because probably they lack resources or probably they are suppressed by their husbands or fathers who may not want them to be fully economically empowered.

**Feminist perspective:** Although the economic status of the females in the plays are portrayed according to the settings of the plays, a fact established from the plays and from the data collected from the questionnaires and the oral interviews show that a great majority of Igbo women are jobless, housewives, unpaid shop attendants, petty traders, and people in the lower economic status of the society. This presentation shows that very few Igbo women occupy the higher echelon of economic status in Nigeria. Marxist feminists, like Engel's (1884/1972) are of the opinion that women should be paid for their services as full-time housewives because they are busier and work more than the men. Without their services, the home collapses.

It is also the opinion of feminists that literature should present women who are economically empowered and successful so as to encourage female readers rather than demoralise them. Igbo literature should portray women like Dr. Dora Akunyili, the former Director-General, National Agency for Food Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (A former Finance Minister), and Mrs. Chinwe Nora Obaji (A former Minister of Education) and other women of that calibre. After all, these prominent women are all Igbo indigenes. The portrayal of women of such status in literature will boost the ego of women and ginger many growing children to work hard and achieve high positions like such women instead of depending on men and marriage for survival. Again, it is the opinion of the feminists that women should not allow their husbands to economically enslave them. They should struggle and achieve economic success rather than depend on men for the supply of their daily needs.

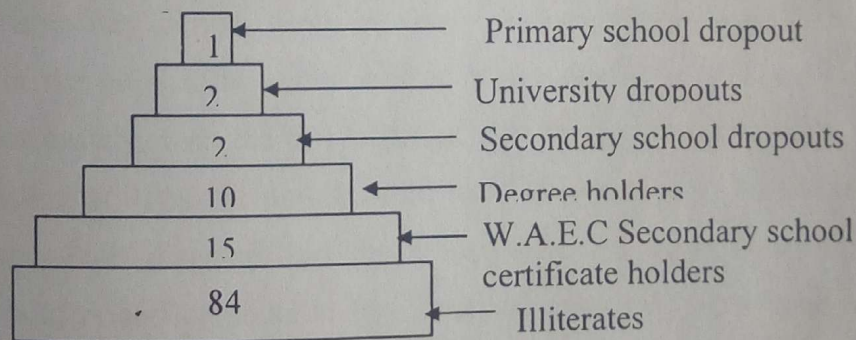
Feminists reject the negative stereotypes ascribed to women (Friedan 1983:51). By the same token, Tana Modleski (1979) argues that the images of women in the negative form, is responsible for the subjugation of the women in the society. It promotes women's culture of literary imprisonment. What people read about women, make them form a perception of the woman. Such portrayal could be positive or negative depending on the nature of the woman's image presented. On the other hand, what women read about themselves make them form an opinion about themselves. It

builds a psychological ceiling in their lives that hold them captive. Such consciousnesses of captivity relegate some women and make them to remain under the burden of societal limitation. This awareness gives way to an advice given to women by Fatterley (1978: XXII). It states that women should become conscious of resisting reading of texts by male writers. To him it is only this way that women can break the power and the effect of negative portrayals that bind women "knowingly to their male design"

#### 4.5.3 Educational Status of Females in General in the Plays

In the plays studied for this work, there are over one hundred and fourteen female characters: sixty-six women and forty-eight girls. Out of the above numbers, thirty females are educated while the other eighty-four women are uneducated. Out of the thirty educated women, ten attained up to a higher education, two are university dropouts and two are secondary school dropouts while there is one primary school dropout. The rest completed and ended up with secondary education. This means that fifteen out of the women stopped after secondary school education. The representation of the educational status of the females in the plays is presented in a pyramid below:

Diagram A



The above diagram shows that the uneducated (illiterates) are the greatest in number followed by the secondary school certificate holders, then the number of the degree holders, university dropouts, secondary school dropouts and finally the primary school dropout.

Out of the three hundred women interviewed from different local government areas and states of Igbo land, 10% are uneducated, 14% stopped at primary school



education, 30% stopped at secondary school education, 14% dropped out of secondary school, 20% completed their National Certificate in Education (N.C.E) and Ordinary National Diploma (OND), while 12% completed first degree and above. The figures above give us the pyramid shown below:

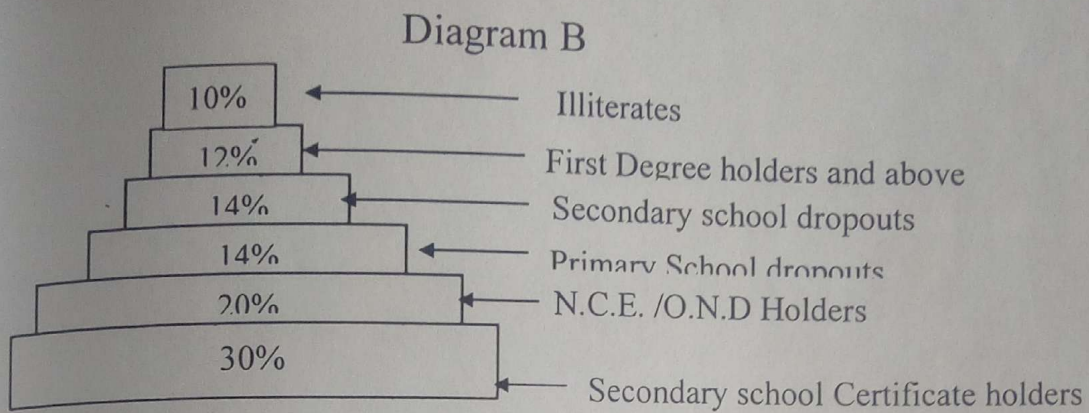


Diagram (A) shows the literacy status of Igbo women, and diagram (B) depicts the practical presentation of the educational status of Igbo women differ a lot. Whereas there are a great number of uneducated women in diagram 'A', the number is quite reduced in diagram "B." This shows that there is a negative representation of the number of uneducated Igbo female in the Igbo plays studied. The uneducated Igbo in the contemporary period are not as numerous as the plays present. In real Igbo society of the contemporary period, there are fewer uneducated people than the number presented in the plays. The presentation of higher degree holders as few, tallies, although not exactly, with the data collected from the Igbo women. Both numbers obtained for higher degree holders show the fact that women of such cadre are few in Igbo society. Both diagrams too depict that there are many secondary school certificate holders and dropouts in Igbo land and many primary school certificate holders.

In the literary representation, the NCE and OND holders are completely not recognised. This also adds to the fact that the literary portrayal of female educational status in the plays is partially positive and partially negative. However, the data harmonises with the literary findings in that they both show that many Igbo women need to be educationally empowered, as a greater number of the women fall within the middle and lowest status of education.

A general observation made as regards the presentation of the educational status of the females in the plays studied is that the period of setting of a story determines the possibility of the females in the plays to be educated or not. If a story is set in a period when the Igbo had seen the advantage of sending the girl child to school, some of the females in the story are likely to be educated, but if the story is set in a period when formal education of the female was an abomination, that is when people were still skeptical about female formal education, the females are likely to be uneducated or very few of them will attain the primary level of education or may dropout from secondary school. For instance, *Ojimba* is a traditional folktale written as a play. It is set in the Igbo pre-literate period, when men and spirits had close interactions and when wrestling was a major source of recreational activity for the Igbo. The women are purely traditionally uneducated subsistent farmers, while the girls are seriously prepared for marriage by their parents. Anyone lucky to be chosen by a wrestler becomes a very lucky girl. In this play, both the male and the females are not educated. Their level of socialisation is based on marriage, child bearing and wrestling.

Other plays set in the pre-literate Igbo period or purely Igbo traditional settings are *Akwa Nwa*, *Nwata Rie Awọ*, *Obidiya*, *Oguamalam*, *Ajọ Nwa A Na-eku N'ikpere*, and *Ezinne*. The female characters in the above plays are completely uneducated because women education was not in vogue in the time of their setting. On the other hand, *Nka Dị Na Ntị*, *Ugomma*, *Otu Mkpịsịaka*, *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*, *Ogbu Mmadu Ndu Na-Agụ* are set in the period when women education had just begun and the highest educational attainment of the female in the plays are either the primary education or the secondary education. In some other plays, the women have quality education. In *Okwe Agbaala*, Chinyere is a graduate and Odoziakụ Ibenyere is a university registrar while Ibuaku is a highly placed university secretary. In *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*, Mma is a psychologist, Ezimma, a midwife and Ukamma a barrister-at-law. In *Adaaku*, Adaaku and Ulooma her friend, are university graduates. In *Onye kpaan Nku Ahuhu*, Amaka is a university dropout. In *Ajọ Obi*, Qbiageli is a university dropout too. In *Ihunanya*, Ihunanya and Chiichii are fresh university graduates, while Oriakụ Ibe has been a university professor for long. For the academic achievements of the above women, it is understandable that the stories in the plays are set in the period of Igbo society when women have actually been given much freedom to excel as much as possible in the field of education.

#### 4.5.3.1 Constraints to Igbo Women Education as Portrayed in the Plays by the Respondents.

From the data collected from the questionnaire 46% out of the three hundred women interviewed agreed that they could not continue their education due to some financial reasons; 22% out of the number were forced by their parents to marry instead of going to school because they believed that formal education was not needed by women. 2% dropped out of school due to sickness, and premature pregnancy respectively.

There are some factors that led to the low level of women education in Igbo society, considering the literary data and the views of the respondents. These factors, which include gender segregation inherited from the colonial masters, some socio-cultural factors already discussed above (Azikiwe 1999:4 and Onuegbu 2005:36) are examined below.

##### 4.5.3.1.1 Immoral Sexual Relationship

This has been a major factor which affects female education in Nigeria as a whole. It is very prevalent in Igbo land and has ruined the educational plans of some Igbo females. Most often, young girls and boys in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions engage themselves in immoral and illicit love affairs. In some cases, it ends in a way that the boy impregnates the girl and the boy denies responsibility over the girl and the pregnancy. Eventually, the girl drops out of school and may never go back. She could be married to an old and childless man or an old man who has only female children. This is a major cause of female school dropouts which, if not curbed by the government, will continue to hamper the education of many more females. Ugomma in *Ugomma*, and Ojiageli, in *Otu Mkpisiaka*, drop out of school because they are prematurely impregnated in school. Amaka, in *Onye Kpaa Nku Ahuhu*, drops out of the university because of the same reason.

##### 4.5.3.1.2 Sexual Harassment

Some girls are sexually harassed, raped and defiled in schools by occult boys, irresponsible lecturers, teachers and workers. Such activities of the males against the females have retarded or affected female education indirectly. Some undergraduate girls' performances are affected negatively. Some have died on their way back to

school and reseat for examinations which they were made to fail by their lecturers whose sexual requests they turned down. An example in this selected plays is that of Chinyere, in *Okwe Agbaala*, who sexually harasses Dọkįta Emezina and seduces him into indulging in an examination malpractice. She is later expelled from the university without a certificate (pp 10-74). This example shows that it is not always the men that sexually harass the girls. Some lazy and unserious female students like Chinyere, in the example above, also seduce men.

#### 4.5.3.1.3 Economic Factor

Widespread chronic poverty, which is prevalent in Africa, is a major constraint to female education. Due to the economic crunch biting hard on some families, parents find it difficult to train their numerous children in school. It is a Herculean task for them to feed, clothe their children and care for their health. As a result of the lack of fund to train all the children in school, an elimination process is followed. As the boy child is valued more than the girl child, the boy is sent to school while the girl stays at home expecting to be married by any willing man. In *Otu Mkpisiaka*, Obiageli is to be deprived of her education if not that Nwamaka; her sister sacrifices her life to cater for her education as their parents could not afford to train her in school.

Even now that primary education is free and secondary education is highly subsidised, the number of people who acquire education is still low because there are other costs to be borne by parents which they may still find very difficult to afford. The costs come in form of text books, uniforms, boarding fees, transport fares, pocket money and other necessary expenses which are not covered by free education programme. The expenses in higher institutions especially for those situated in the eastern part of Nigeria (Igbo land) are extremely high. Apart from the payment of heavy amount of money to different lecturers for the handouts they offer students for their various courses, it is mandatory now, since the Nigerian universities have been given a free hand by the Federal Government of Nigeria to source for funds, that successful candidates must pay a very huge sum of money before they are admitted into any university of their choice in Nigeria. For some universities in Igbo land, candidates who are to study law pay as much as N500, 000:00 bribery fees, which is different from the school fees and handout fees which they will still pay.

High school fees worsen the chances of a great number of Igbo females that want to be educated to a higher level like the tertiary institutions. It still goes on as usual that the female shall continue to stop schooling in order to enable the males attain greater heights in education. The female then remain the sacrificial lamb for the well-being of the Igbo males.

**Feminist perspective:** The Feminist are of the opinion that women should be given equal educational rights with men in all levels of education. There should not be any preferential choice made on either of the sexes and, if there must be any such thing, women should be preferred because already men have been enjoying such a privilege for long.

To encourage female children, literary texts should present women who are educational achievers both in history and in the contemporary society. Such positive presentation will spur growing females to aim higher in life like their literary models rather than relax and depend on marriage, like most of the negative models they read about in literature.

#### 4.6 Presentation of the Political Status of Females Based on the Questionnaire

There were no serious political or communal leadership posts occupied by the respondents in this study except that some of the women are leaders of some local women meetings: the *umuada*, the *otu ndi inyom* and some home and abroad Christian women associations. Even among the working-class respondents, none occupied any serious decision-making position.

##### 4.6.1 Presentation of the Political Status of Females in the Plays:

The *Umunna* is the only political group presented in the plays with much recognition. Although in *Ugomma* and *Adaaku*, the *umuada* (daughters of a big family called the *Umunna*), are presented as “*Umu mgboto*” and “*Umu agbogho*”, respectively. They are not accorded much recognition. They are mainly presented as background characters just to fill a space in the story and to perform some traditional rituals.

Discussed in the plays are also some recognized male politicians like Chief Akuudo and his friend, in *Ihunanya*, kings: Eze Omaliko of Isuebu, Mazi Ugonna, who later contests for the kingship of Isuebu and Ezenwa who takes over kingship from him in *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube*. Other kings mentioned are Eze Akujobi, Eze

Omerife in *Ojimba*, Eze Akujuobi, in *Akwa Nwa*; Ezeoha in *Ugomma*, Eze Afurukwe, in *Adaaku*; and Eze Ozurumba, in *Nwata Rie Awọ*.

In the plays, no mention is made of any woman leader or woman king. In fact, responses got through the questionnaire and oral interviews, show that it is an abomination for there to be a woman king in Igbo land. 100% percent of the people interviewed on this issue agree that there has never been a woman king in their towns. The men in the interview group also agree that even if all other Nigerians will accept women kings, it is an impossible task in Igbo land because the men will never allow it. In Igbo land, based on the interview, there are no female representatives in the various kings' cabinets, called Eze's cabinets as a chief representing a particular ward, rather what they have is association of women married to the cabinet chiefs. These women have little or no administrative assignments except that, once in a while, they take care of women matters. Women leaders are not recognised at the core leadership level of the Igbo communities.

A greater percentage of the women interviewed are of the opinion that traditionally, women are not installed with chieftaincy titles like it is done in Yoruba land. What is present in Igbo land are *Lọlọ* which is the title given to women whose husbands are titled men, like kings, chiefs, Nzes, and *Ọzọs*. The women are not individually installed as chiefs but are given the titles as accruing from their husband's installations or coronations. In this case, the women are indirectly installed because their husbands are installed. The only case of women installed as Chiefs is that done by Igwe Nnaji of Abakpa Nike, Enugu, who hearkened to the yelling of women of modern days for equality with men. As a result, he installed about fifty female chiefs in 2004. There is also a new trend in Igbo land whereby very important female personalities are given the title *Adaoma* (a good daughter) or any other name the female chooses. With this new trend, it is obvious that Igbo people will soon begin to install female chiefs but they may not be bestowed with the kind of authority and respect that the Yoruba female chiefs enjoy.

In the plays selected for this work too, some chiefs are mentioned depicting their importance in Igbo society. There are chiefs like Chief Ibekwe who is a very rich chief and Chief Akudo, also an influential chief and a renowned politician. Conversely, no mention is made of any influential woman in the plays. No mention is made of any titled woman in the plays as well.

In *Ajo Nwa A Na-eku N'ikpere*, the only political organisation so portrayed is the *Umunna* (Ukaegbu's kinsmen), which comprises only males (Anabaraonye, Akukalja, Obodokwe and Ukaegbu). In the Igbo traditional political organisation, power rests on the father of a family, who is the head of his family (*ezinulo nta*). Any case that proves impossible to him he takes to the 'Umunna' meeting (kindred meeting). Such meetings are always held at the house of the oldest man of the Umunna. In this text, Anabaraonye is the eldest. Hence, all the meetings of the Umunna are held in his house. The Umunna is a patriarchal set up which considers the affairs of the individuals, both male and female, under her jurisdiction. There are no female members present in the Umunna. The Umunna deliberates on issues concerning the affairs of both males and females in their Umunna. Whatever decisions they make for or against the females who are not represented in this forum, is final and the females must abide by them.

In *Ajo Nwa a Na-eku N'ikpere*, the female is not represented in their political set up (the Umunna). The women have no strong political set up of themselves. In this text, mention is made of the women's meeting which Nlemchi belongs to and which she carelessly dissociates herself from in her bid to be a devoted member of her church. Apart from this, nothing is said about this organisation any more. The brevity of the presentation about this women association buttresses the lack of seriousness Igbo males attach to female matters, especially when it is all about political or leadership issues.

Similarly in this text, the Umunna hold several meetings against Ekwuloonu (Ukaegbu's wife). They do not invite her for fact-finding or for cross questioning before they reach the conclusion that the police will be invited to force her out of Ukaegbu's house. The action of the Umunna here is typical of Igbo society where women are treated with serious neglect. Decisions on serious matters concerning women are also made and enforced on them without inviting them to contribute in any form to the discussion.

In *Ihunanya*, the political organisation involved is the Umunna. Ikechi's umunna accompanies Ikeketorie (Ikechi's father) to Chief Akudo, his in-law. It is at this meeting that the traditional wedding of Ihunanya is performed. During the ceremony, although Loolo Akudo is very much around, she is not invited to the occasion. Ikechi's mother too is not invited either. The only time a woman or female appears at the scene is when Ihunanya is invited to come and show them her husband

as tradition demands. The *umuada* or the *otu inyom* are not invited because the Igbo believe that “*nwaanyi anaghi, eje okwu nwaanyi ibe ya*” (women do not participate in the traditional negotiation of the bride price of a woman and the payment). It means that a woman who should be equally sold off or is bought into a family should not be involved in the selling of her fellow woman. The men who are born in the land and who will remain in the land are in the best position to do such negotiation.

In *Nwata Rie Awọ*, it is the *Umunna* of Awọ that decides that they should not allow *Obioma* (the wife of Awọ) to go free from the false allegation of food poisoning which her husband levelled against her. They feel that only sending her back to her father is not an enough punishment for a woman who tries to kill one of their sons. They secretly agree that Awọ and others should go and kidnap her from her father's house and sell her into slavery. Their intention is to punish the people of *Obioma* community for having used their daughter to bring insult on them (p. 55-59).

**Feminist perspective:** It is the feminist stance that women should be part of the decision making and leadership roles of their communities and societies because just like there are good male leaders, there are also good female leaders. Secondly, the feminists believe that as females form almost more than half of the people in most societies of the world, there cannot be any effective leadership without their assistance or contribution towards the affairs affecting their own lives and those of others because they are mothers who know the best for their children.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY , CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the thesis. Notable recommendations are also made. All these are targeted towards reawakening people's consciousness to gender issues, especially in relation to literature and its presentation of gender.

#### 5.1 Summary

This study focuses on the image of the female in Igbo plays. Eighteen select plays, which portray recognisable female characters, and allow the identification of the images of the female in the plays were studied. Out of the eighteen plays, two were written by females while the rest are male-authored. In effect, it means that many Igbo plays are male-authored. Out of the male-authored plays, only *Ihunanya* presents a female protagonist *Ihunanya*, who matches the demand of feminists in the image portrayed of her. She is a disciplined, well-mannered, cultured and intelligent graduate. She is self-determined and conscious of her self worth. She does not allow the opposite sex to subordinate or humiliate her. She makes the men that cluster around her believe that she does not need their relationship as their lover for her survival. She toils and takes her academic work seriously, believing that she can equally make it better than the males. Her academic excellence reached its peak when she is admitted into the University and her only brother, *Egenti*, could not pass his examinations. This aspect of the story implies that women can even outshine men if both are given equal opportunities and freedom, like *Egenti* and *Ihunanya*.

For her excellent performance, humble behaviour, determined and reasonable nature, and crave for achievement, her father disowns *Egenti* who is presented as an irresponsible lazy boy and replaces his position as his first son, his heir-apparent and would have been next in command after his father with that of *Ihunanya* his younger sister. She does not see marriage as her utmost means of achievement but as a last resort after being fulfilled as a graduate with a very good result. Although *Ihunanya* eventually gets married marriage is the last thing in her programme. She proves her self-worth by not just marrying any man not because of what she would gain from him or because her parents force her to do so, but because she loves him and wants to spend the rest of her life with him. She successfully and intelligently overcomes her

father's threats and discouragement over the choice of a marriage partner whom she has made. She raises her husband Ikechi from poverty to riches. Unlike the case in many Igbo plays where the men are always the wealthier, and the women are always dependent on men, struggling to get married to them in order to gain materially from the relationship, Ihunanya's case is a reverse of the normal trend.

The study also reveals that as the majority of Igbo plays are male authored, the playwrights present women's image negatively, as traditional women who play stereotyped roles as wives, mothers and men's subordinates, they are also presented as evil, cantankerous, greedy, wicked, diabolical, voiceless and unaccommodating to their co-wives. Some of these women are patriotic, courageous, and independently fearless, as in the case of Obidiya, in *Obidiya*; Nwaamaka in *Otu Mkpisjaka* and Oriji, in *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*, but they are not achievers and are uneducated. They are petty traders, as in the case of Obidiya and Nwaamaka and subsistent farmers, as in the case of Oriji.

The study portrays many of the married women in marriage as their husbands' servants who are almost enslaved, dominated and subordinated by their husbands. They are not happy in the enslaved position, but they persevere because they do not want to be thrown out of their husbands' houses. In other words, they are presented as people who are helpless, worthless and lazy except they are linked to men. Women who are sent out of their husbands homes become a nuisance, they fall back to abject poverty and the feeling that the world has ended for them.

Moreover, in this study, widows too are presented negatively as the poorest of the society. They feed from hand to mouth and ever regret the death of their husbands. They are presented as people who are just managing to survive, awaiting their death, because, to them, life has become worthless without their husbands.

The young ladies are also negatively portrayed as people who do not aspire for greater heights. They all focus their minds on marriage as their only means of self-achievement. They are presented as people who are materialistic, dependent, immorally equipped; they are depicted as prostitutes or sex mongers who go in search of men whose wealth they will usurp. They are not achievers and serious-minded people. Some of them are school dropouts who elope with men. Even some, who eventually get certificates, dump their certificates and become full-time housewives. These pictures of women reveal that the female characters cherish marriage more than any other aspect of life. Women are presented as people who do not have self-esteem.

They submit themselves for marriage to wealthy men as second, third, fourth or even fifth wives provided they are married. Their happiness in the marriage do not bother them hence they live under the roof of a man.

Women are negatively depicted as sexual objects that are used and dumped by the men. Eze Akujuobi, in *Akwa Nwa*, rotates the days that he has intercourse with his wives; he shares them on rotational basis. Women who cannot meet up their biological expectations are dumped for others, driven out, humiliated for life or tortured severally. They are treated as semi-humans who do not deserve to live, just like the Igbo adage has it that 'Osisi *anaghị amị mkpuru kwesiri mgbuda*' (a tree that does not bear fruits should be cut down). Barren women are disrespected and are regarded as the people responsible for their biological incapacities.

The plays negatively reveal married co-wives as people who cannot accommodate one another. They antagonise, hate, and implicate one another so as to win their husband's love. Young spinsters are presented as people who have clash over the love of a man and people who can go to any extent to win men's love.

The presentation of women's status in other fields of labour and human interaction also portray women in the negative; married women play servile and traditional roles as second-class citizens, child-bearers and child-carriers, housemaids, house cleaners, cooks, launderers, beasts of burden and people whose lives could easily be wasted without regrets. The dialogues between married women and their husbands portray women in marriage as people who are dominated and lack freedom of expression, self worth, human right and are insulted at will by their husbands. The study also reveals that marriage engages the Igbo female, enslaves her and renders her powerless and restricts her chances of being self actualised.

Politically, females in the plays are presented as people without the least political ambition. They accept the leadership of men as natural and an aspect of Igbo life that should not be challenged in any form by women. The women are presented as people who must be under the leadership of men. The few women who challenge the patriarchal nature of men and the fact that they are the heads of their families, like Orijeji, in *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*, and Ekwuluonu, in *Ajo Nwa A Na-eku N'ikpere*, are eventually destroyed. Orijeji is made to accept that men are still in control by being killed by the same husband of hers whom she has handed over to the police and has been imprisoned for years. He still traces her to her new home and kills her. Ekwuluonu becomes so powerful and her fellow woman, Nlemchi, who feels that she,

is becoming overpowerful as a woman kills her. Nwadike the playwright suddenly kills Amaka, in *Onye kpaa Nku Ahuhu*, who is determined to punish Ikechukwu for rejecting her pregnancy by allowing Amaka to collapse and die after handing over her child (a child she solely suffered to bring up) unto her irresponsible father.

In a way, one may say that these playwrights purposefully make these fearless and courageous women to die in order to scare other females who may want to challenge some patriarchal subjugation or oppression of the female. It is like the plays are discouraging women from showing any form of revolt against the societal status quo. In the case of Obidiya, in *Obidiya*, it may be argued that she is able to subvert the oppressive nature of Oriaku and avenge her husband's death because she uses fetish means. This presupposes that nobody, except the killers and the witch-doctor whose services she pays for, is aware that a woman is the brain behind the death of Chief Oriaku. If she has not hidden her activities under fetish acts, may be she could have been killed equally by the playwright.

The above instances prove that male-authored plays portray courageous women as people who face the danger of losing their lives in their courageousness. In a way, they use literature to advertise the superiority of men over women and as well register in the hearts of women readers that they should not, in any way, revolt or struggle against male superiority else they may end up endangering their lives. In effect, it is assumed that many male playwrights discourage the feminist pursuit of women for gender equality.

Another baffling revelation from this study is that even the few female playwrights do not project the image of the female positively. They followed the line of male playwrights. Dr. Gabriella Ihuarugo Nwozuzu, in *Ome Ihe Jide Ofo* (1991) (it is not one of the plays used for this study but it is authored by one of the female playwrights in this work) presents women in a polygamous home as love-mongers; and deceptive, devilish, wicked, cantankerous, diabolical, materialistic and dependent on men. She also presents women in *Ajo Obi* as persevering even when they are humiliated and their husbands put their lives in danger. She depicts women as gossips, and wicked, diabolical, and ignorant and people who have no other source of self-fulfilment except marriage. Even her effort to present Obiageli as an educated graduate is defeated by the fact that she makes Obiageli to drop out of the university and get married in her second year. G.I. Nwozuzu's presentation of women in this way is most annoying when one remembers that she herself graduated with a first

class from the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Currently, she is a self-filled woman whose life history alone could make a reasonable contribution to the female psychological development and hope for a better future. Unfortunately, she does not portray this aspect of her life achievement in her writings in order to subvert the male-chauvinistic status quo in literature.

Another female playwright discussed in this work because of her position as the first Igbo female playwright is Nonye Gina Nsoana. She is now late. According to the oral interview I was granted by Mr. Bright Chigozie Nnabuihe, a lecturer at the University of Lagos, who personally knew this lady to her family level, he could not gather much information from her brother because he refused to be reminded of this loving sister. He testified to the fact that she was a graduate and concluded her youth service before her death. Although she is the first Igbo female playwright, her play, which is not part of this work because it does not focus on the female at all, did not see any need to project her gender in literature. She discusses the after effect of doing evil generally, that evil does boomerang.

Obioma B.Mogboḡu who wrote *Adaaku* could not be reached by the researcher so she did not gather information about her life. But it is obvious that she does not present a good image of womanhood in her work. *Adaaku*, in *Adaaku*, a graduate, could not resist her parents' wish to force her into marriage. She ends up an adulterer, a full-time housewife and a murderer. This implies that females are negatively presented, even in worse forms in Igbo literature by female playwrights than male playwrights although many male playwrights also portray negative images of the female.

The educational, economic, religious and social statuses of women are also wrongly and negatively presented. Educationally, the majority of the women interviewed are either primary school leaving certificate holders, West African School Certificate holders, Secondary school drop outs, National Certificate of Education (NCE) holders, Ordinary National Diploma (OND) holders or and holders of first degree and above certificates. In terms of education, it is observed that women are presented in literature as it was in the past where the uneducated females form the majority. Only very few plays display the educational status of Igbo women as they are in the contemporary society.

Moreover, in the real Igbo society of today, stark illiterates, as are presented in the plays, are very few and they are the old people among the present rural and urban women, with very few young ones who may have found themselves in such a situation due to financial problems but who must have entered the four walls of a formal school. The plays fail to portray this latest development in the lives of Igbo females.

Politically, administratively and economically the present achievement or status of few women in Igbo society who have reached the peak of self actualisation like (Professor Miriam Ikejiani Clarke and many other Igbo female professors, Mrs. A. Adogu, Dr. Kema Chikwe-a former minister, Mrs. Chinwe Obaji-a former minister, Dr. Mrs. Ngozi Okonji Iweala-a former minister, Dr. Mrs. Ezekwesili and Professor Dora Akinyili -the present Minister of Information and Communication and Former Director- General of NAFDAC) has yet found no place in Igbo literature especially in the plays. Women in literature are unrecognised politically, economically, religiously, and administratively. Wealth, good professions, power and leadership in literature fall within the possession of only men, not women. This is a negative presentation because at present, there are Igbo women who feed their husbands and have had much financial breakthrough in business, in their professions and even in administration.

Similarly, the roles of women in festivals, celebration of new-born babies and even in other women activities (as organisers, peacemakers and home and community builders) are neglected in the plays. It is observed generally that Igbo plays are mainly focused on men and their activities more than the women.

## 5.2 Conclusion

This work concludes by stating that Igbo male and female playwrights portray Igbo female negatively in literature. Male playwrights author the few works which attempt to portray the female positively. Secondly, Igbo female playwrights are too few compared to the male playwrights. These findings are in accordance with the findings of many African literary critics, who agree that the African female is negatively presented in literature, but disagree with the assertions of some of such critics who believe that it is only male playwrights or male-authored literary works that present the female negatively. This work argues that even female-authored literary works portray worse images of the African female in literature. It is also of

great importance to mention here that the male playwrights studied in this work may not be blamed much for their portrayal of the female in the way they have done because they portray the females exactly as they are as at the time of the setting of their plays. The plays that were set, during the pre-colonial periods present many uneducated female characters. Those set during the colonial period, present few primary or secondary school females. They also present the status and situations of females as at that period. Those set during the contemporary period, when women are more exposed, educated and experienced, show very few women in such conditions. This is why this work hopes that with the current cry for women emancipation, future Igbo plays are likely to present emancipated women in their stories.

Nevertheless, it will be of great importance if further literary studies on Igbo literature study the image of the female in Igbo oral literature, Igbo novels and Igbo written poetry, so that such studies, combined with the findings of this work, will give a concrete picture of the image of the female in Igbo literature. It will also be a thing of great interest if future researchers study why there is a shortage in the number of female literary playwrights as compared to the number of male playwrights. The practical implication of this study hinges on the fact that there is a great need to improve on and better the image of the female in Igbo plays in order to change the wrong impressions of the female already established in Igbo literature.

### 5.3 Recommendations

This work discovered that male and female playwrights negatively portray the female in Igbo plays. The female playwrights too do not portray the female in a positive image. The only play that presents a positive image of the female is male-authored: *Ihunanya* by Oḍinaka Azubuike. All other playwrights are blindfolded in their writing by the Igbo cultural view of women. Even those women characters who try to portray the image of women who subvert the Igbo cultural norms are killed, to prove the Igbo sayings that '*nwaanyi anaghi aka di ya*' (women must be under the men), and '*O haghiri nwoke na nwaanyi*' (men and women are never equals).

Igbo literature should portray women's struggle for emancipation. It should present women with self-worth, recognised women, highly educated women, hard working women, women in high administrative offices, women with voice and authority and women in politics. It should also present women with dignified names, professions and even titles as it is in the Igbo society.

Women achievers and female characters that successfully subvert the Igbo patriarchal, oppressive, suppressive and exploitative cultural norms should be protected in Igbo literature by the law. This will create awareness on the part of growing Igbo females on the use of the law for their struggle against patriarchal oppression, suppression and any form of marginalisation. More ladies, like *Ihunanya*, in *Ihunanya*, should be portrayed in Igbo literature in order to divert the great value Igbo growing female youths attach to marriage and the resultant dependant and withdrawn attitude of female youths from the struggle for self-actualisation. Ladies whom men rush after because of their worth economically, educationally, socially, politically or religiously, should be presented in Igbo literature in order to inspire growing female youths to work harder and be successful in life.

Moreover, playwrights should stop the use of achaic names, names that portray bad image of the female, and names that gratify men in identifying female characters in their plots. Contemporary names which depict the importance of the female in a society, names that portray achievement, decency, and the like should be invented. Women achievers in educational, administrative, political, economic, socio-cultural and religious fields of life should be given attention. Their professional titles should also be attached to their names as is done to their male counter-parts.

The doom experienced by ladies who drop out of school for marriage or due to premature pregnancies should be mirrored in Igbo literature in order to discourage female pupils and students from indulging in such acts. The implication of a woman dumping her certificate for marriage and the doom such a woman experience later in life should also be portrayed in Igbo literature so as to discourage educated Igbo women from dumping their certificates without using them for gainful employment.

This study suggests that educated Igbo women should pick up their pens and begin to tell their stories of struggles, transcendence, victory and success to the growing Igbo females, in particular in order to change the overall worldview of women in literature and in real life. The present and the future playwrights should focus on stories which are aimed at reversing the present conception of the female in Igbo literature and in general. Such playwrights should portray the female motives, desires, frustrations and ambitions, and characters whose images should be solutions to some gender issues. Written Igbo drama should bear stories which discourage polygamy, by presenting females who reject marriage offers from married men. It



could portray the hardship experienced by women who marry as second or third wives and the risk they undergo.

Written Igbo drama should focus mainly on the need and the importance of the educational, economic, political, cultural, social and religious emancipation of the female folk in Igbo society because the problems of women in literature and all other aspects of life lie in their lack of full emancipation to really be self-actualised. Literature produces its materials from the society. If the society as at present produces emancipated woman, it is expected that literature should portray women as such.

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## APPENDIX I

### SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAYS IN THIS STUDY

#### *Ajọ nwa a na-eku n'ikpere* by Ben Igbokwe

(1)

Ukaegbu, the son of Nlemchi, goes with his friend Paul to Maazị Odoemelam's house to ask for Ekwuluonu's hand in marriage. The father is surprised that a man comes to marry his troublesome child. Finding out that the daughter's suitor is his church member, he advises Ukaegbu to desist from his plans because his daughter is a bad girl. He tells Ukaegbu that it is better that he does not marry his daughter because he does not want her to cause any problem between him and Ukaegbu. Ukaegbu insists and marries Ekwuluonu. In the urban area (Adamawa) where Ukaegbu and Ekwuluonu reside, Ekwuluonu fights her husband and afflicts him with series of injuries. The trouble they cause in the yard disturbs the whole members of the yard. They go to the police several times. The landlord tells them to pack out of his compound. The police give them a notice to leave the town; this means that they cannot be allowed to live in any township in their life. They then pack to their hometown Obiozara in Umuchintu and settle there permanently. There, Ekwuluonu continues to fight her husband, disrespects him and insults him publicly. She cruelly flogs her stepson, Onwumere, and promises to kill the boy with her hands. Her reason for hating this boy is that, she does not want him, to be her husband's first son (*Okpala*). She wants her unborn son to be the Okpala but unfortunately she has no child. She starves Onwumere. On one occasion, Onwumere runs to Anabaraonye's house to seek protection when she flogs and chases him out. Ekwuluonu goes to fetch Onwumere and Izuchi, Anabaraonye's wife, tells her that the evil she has done to the boy is already enough. She instructs Onwumere to come in and live with her in her own home. In the end, Ekwuluonu leaves Izuchi's house and continues to nurse grievances against Anabaraonye and his wife over the incident.

She is no respecter of anybody, both old and young, neighbours and outsiders. Everybody talks ill of her and her behaviour. She breaks her husband's head inflicting many wounds on his head. When her husband, Ukaegbu, challenges her, she brings into the house some acid with which she intends to harm him. Her cup of evil acts is full and her husband plans with his kinsmen on how to drive her out of their town through the help of the police as she has discarded and aborted all efforts by her husband to send her away.

Later on, she gets to know the intention of her husband's kinsmen. She deceptively persuades her husband that she wants to change to a good wife but for her to do so depends on whether he tells her where they gathered to discuss how to send her away, how many people were there and what they said. Eventually she deceives her husband and he gives her the facts. Immediately she starts to wage war against Izuchi, Anabaraonye's wife, for keeping Onwumere when she wanted to kill him, and for her and her husband to allow people to use their house as a meeting place for discussing her case. As a result, she waits for Izuchi on her way from the market and pours peppery water into her eyes.

She does not allow her neighbours children to play in her compound. She is not happy especially with male children because she has none. When Eringa's son (Eringa is a wife in the same kindred with her husband) goes to pick his ball that falls into to Ekwuluonu's compound, Ekwuluonu flogs him heavily. She has to flog him because she has earlier warned all the children that live around her not to trespass over to her compound as they play. Eringa threatens her and warns Ekwuluonu that her madness should cease at her sight of any of her children or else she would fall out



with her. Eringa also reminds her that she is only jealous of her male children and that if she should treat other people's children like Onwumere she will die. Ekwuonụ replies her by saying that if she (Eringa) Onwumere and Eringa's children are not careful a tragic story would be told about them. She now, out of annoyance goes to Ekwuonụ a mad woman. She later persuades her husband that he should not send her home; after all, there is no home that is free of problems, that it is only those who expose their family secrets whose problems are known, and that after all, all those men advising him to send her away also have problems. With these words, Ukaegbu then declines from inviting the police to send her away.

The other kinsmen see his action as a foolish and an act of sabotage. They all fall out with Ukaegbu. At home, Ekwuonụ quarrels with her husband because he leaks their secrets and exposes her. She also eavesdrops on her husband's discussion with Onwumere that, he, will soon send Onwumere to his grandparents so that he will give way to the evil stepmother, Ekwuonụ. After gathering all that her husband and his son are discussing, she bumps into their discussion and starts to fight her husband. As they are fighting, Bro Paul comes in and separates them. He presents to them a message from their church that the couple has been sent on suspension from the church (p57). Ekwuonụ, showing no remorse or shock about the message, responds that she had been expecting that a long time. She asks Bro Paul whether that was why they sent for her. She continues by asking Bro Paul whether their church is the real heaven. "Ogbako unu o bu alaeze n'onwe ya?" (P 53). Bro. Paul, shocked at her behaviour and response, says that God should forbid bad things. As Ukaegbu sees that the church has rejected them, he goes back to his kindred to withdraw the former declaration made by his mother, that they have dissociated themselves from the kindred meeting. He says that he cannot be alone, not a church member, nor a member of the kindred. The men of the kindred who have already agreed to excommunicate him and his wife, now has pity on him and accepts him, charging him to pay some fine.

Eventually, Onwumere goes to his maternal home. One day, Ekwuonụ, while discussing Onwumere, sees an old woman passing. The old woman who later changes in form to Nlemchi, Ukaegbu's mother, tells her to shut up her mouth. Ekwuonụ, surprised that there is a human being so brave to challenge her in the whole village, indignantly rushes to the old woman and pushes her. The old woman, as she falls, pulls Ekwuonụ along and uses her hands to break Ekwuonụ's eye balls. It is then that she introduced herself to Ekwuonụ as the mother to her husband, Ekwuonụ shouts in pain, calling her husband to help her. Her husband, afraid of all that she is saying, runs out and there he meets Onwumere coming back from his maternal home.

Onwumere narrates to his father that he was sweeping in his maternal home and an old woman came to him. She asked him why he vacated his father's house. He told her and she warned him to go back to his father's house, that his trouble had come to an end. Then, the old woman is still dealing with Ekwuonụ who is already at the point of death shouting in pain, that her heart pains her as if she has broken her heart and lastly she collapses and dies. A voice then steps in and is drawing inferences from Ekwuonụ's life by narrating the type of life she lived and the type of death she faces as a lesson for others to learn from.

(2) **Ihunanya by Odinaka Azubuike**

Ihunanya is a brilliant well-behaved and reasonable girl born to Chief Akudo and his wife Lolo Akudo. Her father, Chief Akudo is a very rich and popular

politician and businessman. He is a chief of Akudo, his town. Her father, because of her good qualities, loves her and calls her "his child". Egenti is the only brother of Ihunanya. He is naughty, unintelligent and notorious. He uses his father's car to carry the son to Lolo Akudo and not his own son because of his bad behaviour. He is fed up with Egenti's life and is no more interested in his future career.

Ihunanya secures admission into the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This highly impresses her father who makes preparations to drop her in his car at the university. In her first year in the university, she meets a friend, Chiichii, who according to her discussion with Ihunanya, already has a business tycoon fiancé who travels to Paris, America, Italy and London so often. On the other hand, Ihunanya is not yet exposed to male relationships. She has no lover and she is not thinking of getting one soon. She only prays that God will crown her efforts in school with a good husband after her graduation. She does not care whether her husband is rich or not. What she wants is a man who will really love her. She does not want to relate closely to her male university mates because she fears that they may mess her up. She loves her studies and endeavours to do her assignments by herself unlike Chiichii who would surrender her body to her male classmates so that they can help her do her assignment. Chiichii does not care for any poor man or boy. All she wants is a rich lover whether he (the lover) loves her or not. What concerns her is that any lover of hers whether a husband or a lover must be a rich person. Ihunanya's views are contrary to Chiichii's; she wants a man who would love her deeply as a husband. She does not like rich men because they misuse women. She prefers a poor person who loves her. Ihunanya eventually discovers a male genius in her class. Although very intelligent, he is a pauper from a very poor background. He wears tattered clothes and wears no shoes, but ordinary slippers to class. In search of textbooks for her philosophy assignment, she meets with this pauper, Ikechi. She later goes to him to borrow other textbooks for assignments because; Ikechi always goes to the library and borrows the best books before others in his class. Borrowing of books brings Ihunanya close to Ikechi. Ihunanya now promises to pay Ikechi a visit just as a classmate.

Ihunanya, on getting to Ikechi's room, meets with his roommates, Okwii, and Chukwuma. These two roommates of Ikechi's could not believe that Ihunanya who has turned down a lot of love advances made to her from both rich lecturers and students from very rich homes could stoop so low to love or visit Ikechi, the most wretched boy on campus who cannot afford enough garri to soak and drink. They are highly irritated by this gesture that they two go outside the room to smoke off their anger. They sum up their assumption by believing that Ikechi must have applied some charms on Ihunanya. As the relationship between Ikechi and Ihunanya develops, Ihunanya begins to love Ikechi for his intelligence, care and love for her. She begins to show some interest and love too to Ikechi; they are always together. Ikechi loves Ihunanya and would want to ask for her hand in marriage whenever he is ready but he is too afraid that the gap between their backgrounds is too wide. He is from a very poor family while Ihunanya is from a very rich family. Ihunanya too does not want to ask him his intentions towards their relationship because she does not want to be involved in asking a man to marry her. Again, she does not know why Ikechi has refused to discuss marriage with her.

Chiichii's business tycoon fiancé drops her and marries another lady. Chiichii is not happy because Ihunanya, her friend, is dating a poor boy who cannot afford to buy her a bottle of Fanta. Ihunanya comments that she does not know why ladies always fall in love with only men who are rich. She does not like such men because to her, they do not really love their wives; they date more than one woman and do not

treat their female lovers with love. She regrets that ladies do not love poor men who love them. To her, they should love such men, and help them to be rich and live up to their standard.

Eventually, Iḥunanya and Ikechi finish their degree examination and are about to go for the National Youth Service Corp programme. Iḥunanya comes in contact with Oriaku Ibe, who was once her lecturer, alighting from her car. She walks closer to her and greets her. Oriaku Ibe, after exchanging greetings with Iḥunanya, asks her what she plans to do after graduation, whether she wants to get married or wants to work for a while, and help her parents before marriage. Iḥunanya replies that her parents are rich people who do not require her money. Oriaku Ibe advises Iḥunanya that it is better for a lady to get her life partner there in school so that they can grow together, that she met her husband at the university when they were both students. She concludes by saying that today she is a professor and her husband is also a professor at the same university. Later on after the story, Iḥunanya opens up to her, telling her that she does not want to marry a rich boy for some reasons: like most of her father's friends, most rich men mess up women. She remembers how her brother Egenti (a rich man's son) deceives ladies. She reassures Oriaku Ibe that she does not want to be subjected to that sort of humiliation and deceitful life. She then tells Oriaku Ibe that there is a poor boy that she is in love with and whom she knows loves her greatly but that she is afraid because the boy is the shy type and so could not summon courage to tell her his intentions about marrying her. To her too, she cannot lead the discussion to suggest that they should be married because it is not Igbo culture that a lady should woo a man for marriage. She also fears that her parents may not want her to marry Ikechi because his parents are wretched people. Oriaku Ibe advises her not to begin to woo Ikechi but that she should go closer to him and engages him in discussions and that he will one day open up and propose to her. As regards whether her parents would accept Ikechi or not, she advises her not to fear, that if eventually that becomes the case, she should be patient with them and let them know that many rich men of today come from very poor backgrounds. She advises her that she should persuade them to accept him.

After writing their final paper, Iḥunanya and Ikechi discuss their future, where they would love to serve the nation and so on. Iḥunanya requests to ask Ikechi a question. Ikechi permits her to go on. She asks him what he would want to do after service. Ikechi answers that he wants to further his education to become a professor but conditions of things around him currently do not allow him to carry out this intention. This is because his parents are paupers; they sold some of their land to train him in school; so he should work and save some money in order to reclaim the land from the buyers. Secondly, their house has a tatched roof so; he would like to first of all build a fine house so that rain will not beat the parents during the rainy season. He also says that as the first son, he would want to help his father in sponsoring his remaining siblings who are already in the secondary school. He concludes that he will work before any other thing.

Iḥunanya asks him that now that he is of a marriageable age, "when does he want to get married?" Ikechi answers that she should know that Igbo people conduct marriage with money. That he cannot talk of marriage until he has actually made it financially, that after acquiring some money, if he happens to come in contact with a very pretty girl, then he can marry her. Iḥunanya asks him whether he must marry a very pretty girl, and if he cannot marry girls as ugly as she is. Ikechi asks her to stop such statements. He packs sand and pours it into his mouth swearing that if he sees any girl as pretty as Iḥunanya he cannot fail to marry her. He then opens up telling Iḥunanya that he actually had wanted to inform her of his love for her but that he felt

that she would say that probably he was going mad. After all, what class are his parents that would make him have the feeling that he can marry a rich man's daughter, like Ihunanya? He concludes by saying that any girl that marries him now would suffer greatly because of his poverty.

Ihunanya keeps quiet and both gaze at each other for about two minutes. Ihunanya inquires from Ikechi that if she gets her parents to help him solve most of his problems, build him a house and pay his debts and get him a good job what would be his thought of marriage. He answers that he would be so happy but that such things do not happen. He also says that if such can happen and a girl like Ihunanya agrees to marry him he would marry her. With this statement, Ihunanya and Ikechi exchange their addresses and disperse for their youth service programmes.

Ihunanya makes a second-class division in her result. She is posted to Benin for her youth service. She announces her result to her parents. Out of joy, her father quickly disowns Egenti, claiming that it seems that girls take after their fathers while boys take after their mothers. He says that Egenti is a dunce who is not interested in education; and he is lazy. He vows that he will not allow Egenti to share out of his will. He says that if he eventually adds his name as one of the benefactors of his wills he will not give him the ownership of his property. He adds that, as Ihunanya has proved herself worthy like a man does, he would reward her as men are rewarded. He would give her a fine car after her youth service and also offer her a lucrative job in his company in Ala Owere.

Ihunanya thanks her father for his promises and tells him that although those things (as he promised) are good, there is another burning need that she has. She then informs her parents of her intention to marry Ikechi, the boy from Alabama and son of Ikeketeorie and Utediya. Her father does not want to hear about her marrying a poor man's son. He sends her away and tells her to wake him up early the next morning and repeat what she has just said. To him Ihunanya must be drunk or so. The next morning, Ihunanya wakes him up early and repeats the same story. He becomes indignant at her and does not want to hear Ihunanya speak about the marriage. Ihunanya quietly convinced him by reminding him that, after all, he (Chief Akudo) used to tell them that he too came from very poor parents. Chief Akudo thinks of his past and accepts that they should get married. He tells Ihunanya to go and invite Ikechi to come and see him. Ihunanya sets off to Ikechi's house, chauffeur-driven.

As they stop at Ikechi's house. Ikechi is seen picking palm nuts in the front of their house. He sees Ihunanya and begins to shout. His mother Utediya is attracted by his noise and comes out from the backyard. Ikechi sends her to go and call his father that they both should come and see Ihunanya, the lady he had discussed with them. Ikeketeorie and his wife join Ihunanya and Ikechi in the house to receive Ihunanya but they later leave them alone to discuss. As they continue to shout and rejoice, Ikechi's parents, thinking that they are fighting, run out of the backyard where they are farming. On seeing that they are not fighting, they sit down. Then, Utediya welcomes Ihunanya again, asking her whether she will accept to join them and live in a thatched house. Ihunanya replies her that that does not mean anything to her; after all, her grandparents lived in a thatched house. Utediya asks her again whether she would allow Ikechi help in the training of his two other siblings if they eventually get married. She answers yes. Utediya continues by asking her whether she can exercise patience for about two years for Ikechi to give him time to build a house and acquire some money with which to carry out her marriage requirements. Ihunanya answers her by saying that money is not their problem, that God will provide for them that the most important thing is that Ikechi and her have agreed to get married. She adds that whenever God provides money for them, they would get married. Utediya asks her to

open her palms to her. She spits into Ihunanya's palms, saying "Chukwu gozie gi" (God bless you). Then Ihunanya bids them farewell and enters the car and the driver takes her home.

The discussion between Ihunanya and Ikechi is based on what the feelings of Chief Akudo looks like. Ihunanya says that although she finds it difficult to persuade Ikechi to pay him (Akudo) a visit on the fifteenth of December. Ikechi is still scared, thinking that it must be Chief Akudo's trick to trap him down. She begs Ihunanya that she should know that he has no other close friend except her that should her father imprison him; let her not fail to bail him out. Ihunanya gives him some money with which to take care of himself and reminds him that he must dress fine while coming.

Ikechi comes to meet Ihunanya's parents. After a brief discussion Chief Akudo's advice to Ihunanya that marriage is something contracted once and not twice, and that he would not want her to come home and say that their marriage has failed, she has to make a final decision. Ihunanya promises that she will marry Ikechi and that their marriage can never break. Chief Akudo advises Ikechi to go and inform his parents that he has found a tree along the way, and that they should provide the machete with which to cut the tree. They entertain him and Ihunanya sees him off.

Ikechi informs his parents of the outcome of his visit to the Akudo's. The father takes his "Umunna" (male kindred) with some kegs of palm wine to the Akudo's. Chief Akudo invites his own Umunna too and the marriage between Ihunanya and Ikechi is sealed traditionally, by finally giving Ihunanya a cup of palm wine to sip a little and give the rest to her would-be husband. This she does, and all the people rejoice, drink, and wine together, before departing home.

Later on, Chief Akudo organises a wedding for Ihunanya and Ikechi. He finances the wedding. On the wedding day, he offers them a 505 Peugeot car, makes Ikechi the manager of his companies while he makes Ihunanya his secretary. He also offers them some money with which to start their own family. Other people who attend the wedding present their gifts to them and everybody goes home from the wedding arena.

### (3) **Adaaku by Obioma Mogbofu.**

In the play *Adaaku*, the principal character, Adaaku, has a classmate at the university, Chukwusolu (a young man full of intelligence). Adaaku and Chukwusolu reach an agreement that they would get married after graduation from school. Emeribe Adaaku's father rejects Adaaku's intention to marry Chukwusolu because he is from a poor background and is a jobless graduate. He would rather have his daughter marry a husband of his choice who must be a very rich person who would be able to restore all the wealth that has wasted in training Adaaku in school and raise him up financially. Adaaku's mother, Nwejimalu has a different opinion. To her initially, their daughter should be allowed to make her choice of a man. But on realizing that Chukwusolu is jobless, she advises her daughter against her wish.

Adaaku, even forcefully married to Chief Ibekwe, has no atom of love for him; she maintains her love relationship with Chukwusolu and has a daughter (Uwadijgwu) through him, unknown to Ibekwe her husband. When a neighbour discovers her adulterous relationship with Chukwusolu, and he sets out to investigate the truth behind the allegation, Adaaku gives him rat poison through food and he dies. Adaaku by so doing commits an abomination, according to the culture of the land (Atijere). Nwekedu (Ibekwe's sister) cannot bear the pain. Ibekwe visits her in the dream and tells her that his death is not from God; she goes to find out the cause of

her brother's death. Ezedibia reveals the secret behind Ibekwe's death and makes Adaaku to confess. Her confession attracts a large crowd, including Eze Afurukwe (the king of Atiere) who passes judgement upon her and commands the boys to drag her out of the town and she is banished from her town.

(4) **Ajo Obi by G.I. Nwozuzu**

Ajo Obi is a feminist text describing the agonies and the helpless situation of some Igbo married women. Ezenwata and Onyema are very close friends and are into partnership in business. They share so many things in common that people in the environment appreciate how they so love each other like blood brothers. Ezenwata marries an undergraduate, Ojageli, and introduces her to his friend, Onyema. He tells his wife to receive him the way she would treat him (her husband) because they are close friends and business partners. Their phone rings and when Ojageli picks it to answer the call, which she notices later comes from Onyema, Ezenwata suspects that it is their method of keeping dates. As Ojageli celebrates her birthday, Onyema, due to his high regards and love for his friend Ezenwata, presents Ojageli with a golden bangle as a gift. Ezenwata, infuriated by the friend's action, misinterprets this kind gesture and says that Onyema gives Ojageli the bangle to strengthen their love escapade. He explodes and tells Ojageli that he has already alerted his parents of the relationship going on between her and his friend Onyema; he has informed his parents that his life is in the hands of both Ojageli and Onyema.

At home, he rains abuses on his wife over her supposed relationship with Onyema. In the office, he exchanges words openly with Onyema, warning him to let his wife be. Onyema is confused because he never nurses such a feeling towards Ojageli. Later on, Ezenwata pretends that he has cancelled his suspicion of his wife and his friend. He pretentiously organises a party where he apologises openly to both of them for the damage he has done to their personalities through his false suspicion. In the party, he takes Ojageli by hand, stands her beside Onyema and snaps them a picture. He snaps them another picture when Onyema enters the party room and is going round greeting people. As he steps near Ojageli, Ezenwata snaps both of them.

After the party, he announces that he would be travelling with Onyema to conclude the party with their business partners in Lagos that night. On the way he pretends to have forgotten something. He gets down from the car, moves some steps ahead and shoots himself dead. Onyema, greatly confused at his suspicious suicide, rushes to the body, wraps his wound and carries him back to his house that same night. Onyema camouflages in one of Ezenwata's suits found in his briefcase, he knocks on the door of Ezenwata's house; Ezenwata's maid opens the door still feeling sleepy and unable to recognise that it is Onyema. Onyema cuts off Ojageli's inquisitive questions on why he could not proceed with the trip. He enters Ezenwata's room and locks himself inside. Late in the night, he uses the back door to pack his car, which he uses to carry Ezenwata's corpse into Ezenwata's garage. He later carries Ezenwata's corpse up to his bedroom, drops a cup of wine on his side stool and puts his gun, which he used to kill himself in his hands and goes back to the garage to take his car off to Lagos.

The news gets to Lagos that Ezenwata is dead. There is no need to suspect him as he claims that Ezenwata dropped on their way to Lagos claiming that he forgot something at home. He pretends not to have known the cause of Ezenwata's death. Several investigations are carried out to know the cause of Ezenwata's death but there is no clue to the source of his death except that they suspect Ojageli and Onyema whom Ezenwata's mother claims have killed her son so that they can go ahead living as lovers. After some years, the police inspector who is in charge of the case find

Obiageli and Onyema innocent of the allegation. He marries Obiageli while Onyema also gets married to another lady. As all these go on, Okwuchi (Ezenwata's mother) and Nwando (Obiageli's mother) engage in women's battle (exchange of words and gossips) each defending her child's actions.

(5) **Ugomma by Godson Echebima**

This is a story about a girl Ugomma, who is good but later changes into a bad girl in primary five after she has met a man called Alozie. He woos her but she rejects him because he is a C.M.S (Anglican Church) member while Ugomma and her parents are Catholic Church members. She is a member of a society in the Catholic Church called the legionary. She takes permission from her mother to allow her go for confession in the church for her legionary activities, only for her to divert her movement and branch off to her several lovers. One particular friend of hers is Obioha (a cobbler). She lies to her mother that she goes to collect her shoes from this cobbler. She goes to the market and comes back late when her mother notices her changing character, and queries her actions; she does not want to exchange words with her mother.

As time goes on, she becomes pregnant for Obioha. Obioha rejects the pregnancy and escapes from town to another place, which is not known to Ugomma. Ugomma goes in search of him to no avail. She faces the insult and humiliation meted out to her by her fellow daughters of the town who forbid the action of one being pregnant while unmarried. As an abomination, they raise a mob action, take fresh leave branches and match to Ugomma's father's house (Maazi Obinna) singing war songs. They display the green leaves in Maazi Obinna's house. They match Ugomma to the village square where she must be sanctified of the sacrilege she has committed. Ugomma is made to carry a ritual earthen pot on her head. She is made to kneel down at the centre of the girls who have already formed a circle around her as they sing. Later on, the king of the town and all the villagers gather at the square to judge her case. The king, through his interrogations discovers that Ugomma has up to four male lovers; the boys all deny responsibility for her pregnancy. Obioha agrees he only met her once. Okorie says he met her once. Okoroafo accepts that he is her lover but since she has other lovers, he is not responsible for her pregnancy. The three male lovers of Ugomma's are asked to swear or take an oath in the name of Otamiri, Iyiafo and Amadioha their deities and God (Chukwu Abiani). Before the elders could bring the deities so that they can swear with them, the three boys have run away. That judges the case. No particular person is caught responsible for Ugomma's condition.

The king (Eze) finally advises that the daughters of the land should have mercy on Ugomma. He encourages them to pray for her to Igwekala so that he will forgive her and allow her deliver her baby in peace. Ezemmuo pours libation to the gods and gives them kolanut asking for mercy over Ugomma. A lady beats Ugomma's body with a live chicken. When she becomes unconscious and static, showing possession by the deity, according to their culture, the ladies rejoice that the ritual has been accepted and completed. Simultaneously, the 'Ijionaris' (Ugomma's society members), in the Catholic Church where she worships, kneel down by the other side praying for her. They pray that God should forgive her sins and accept her back as His child.

(6.) **Ojimba (traditional written drama) by Anosike Ubanji**

Ojimba forgets his flute in the farm. He goes back to collect it only to meet some spirits. He blows the flute for them and it thrills them. They invite him to their kingdom and present him to their king who also listens to the flute and is made happy.

In return, they give him different types of gifts, which he takes home. On getting home, his father's second wife sees what happened and sends her son to forget his flute in the farm and blow it to those spirits. Her son does the same but is too stubborn and arrogant to the spirits. He is rather killed by the spirits.

Two Igbo weeks that follow Ojimba's achievement, on an Eke day, is the wrestling match between his village, Eziqha and another village, Umudara. The Umudara boast of their vigour in wrestling and put fear in the young men of Eziqha. On the wrestling day, all the young men wrestlers from Eziqha defeat all their counterparts from Umudara. The most important thing is that Ojimba defeats Umudara's greatest wrestler. It is a very big surprise. His town, Eziqha, asks him to take any girl that appears to him to be the most beautiful amongst the girls of Eziqha. He chooses a maid to a wicked woman called Nkemdijim. The girl's name is Ekemma. She escapes death from her mistress who is jealous of her beauty and the good it might bring to her. Ekemma becomes the wife of a renowned man in the town.

(7) **Ezinne by Chika Anyasodo**

This story is about a man called Ezeji and his two wives: Ezinne and Ureonu. The first wife, Ezinne, who is a good woman and is so loved by her husband, has no male issue for her husband. She only bears him a daughter. For the love she has for her husband, she does not want him to remain without a male child. She implores her husband to take a second wife. He succumbs and marries Ureonu, who bears two children for him, which includes Obinna (a boy). Ureonu is a very bad woman; every word that comes out of her mouth is insulting, abusive or evil. She insults Ezinne and, in most cases, provokes her. She reminds her of her inability to bear a male child. She discriminates between her children and Ezinne's daughter and her adopted son, Ebere.

Ezinne, on the other hand, is a good mother, when her husband invites her and her co-wife to follow him to the farm and carry some tubers of yam home; Ureonu refuses to go to the farm. She cooks for the whole family without being bothered that her co-wife is idle. Onukwubiri sees Ureonu idle when her family members are away to the farm and abuses her, saying that she should be ashamed of herself. One day, their husband invites them to come and drink some palm wine. He calls Ezinne first. This action irritates Ureonu and she begins to abuse Ezinne, as usual, saying that their husband loves Ezinne more than her (Ureonu). Ezinne appeals to her to drink the wine before her. Ezinne also invites her children to come and drink too.

At home after bringing the yam tubers home with the children, Ezinne cooks and shares the food to all the children. She also offers some to Nne Elewechi (an old widow) who depends on alms for living. As Nne Elewechi goes home, she meets Onukwubiri, who is carrying a pot of water on her head. Nne Elewechi complains to her that she needs both drinking water and bathing water. Onukwubiri follows her to her home and pours the water she carries for her. On the way, they discuss Ureonu's bad and ill-mannered behaviour.

One day, Obinna and Ebere play 'Okosso.' Ebere defeats Obinna and he sustains a slight pain, as Ebere tries to show his victory by playing the 'Okosso' into his hands. A little misunderstanding arises between them. Ureonu intervenes and rains abuses on little Ebere and her adopted mother. She reminds Ebere that he is not born of her husband. Ezinne discerns that she is about to cause trouble in the family; she calls all the children of the family including Ebere. She advises them not to watch them (wives) who are already adults; that they must be one because they are of one blood. Ezeji invites Ureonu and advises her against her bad manners. Ureonu interprets Ezeji's moves, as one of those signs to show that he does not love her. Ureonu interferes in a little quarrel between her daughter (Ukaamaka) and Ezinne's



daughter (Nwaamaka). Ezinne's daughter discourages Ureḡu's daughter from having a lover whom she says her mother Ureḡu has chosen for her.

Ureḡu goes to a witch-doctor to get a local love potion so that her husband will love her more than Ezinne. The love potion turns out to be a food poison. She poisons Ezeji's food when she is left alone in the house. As Ezeji is about to eat the food, Nne Elewechi comes in and stops Ezeji from eating the food. She requests that Ureḡu must eat the food before Ezeji can taste it. Ureḡu refuses to eat the food. Nne Elewechi explains how she goes to the witch-doctor and how he reveals to her that Ureḡu came to collect a love potion from him and he mistakenly gave her a food poison. Ezeji insists that Ureḡu must leave his house. Ezinne appeals to her husband to forgive Ureḡu.

Later on, the children go to the stream to fetch water; Obinna (Ureḡu's son) gets drowned, a sign that the deity Oriogwe has taken him. Ezeji and his family members weep greatly. Ezeji's friend helps to seek for a solution. They consult a witch-doctor who tells them that the only way Obinna can be released is only if his mother Ureḡu is exchanged with her son. Ureḡu rejects the idea, runs to her father's house. Ezeji, their husband, too is reluctant to submit himself in exchange to Oriogwe. Ezenne summons courage against her husband's wish; she enters into the forest, submitting her life to save Obinna. The deity, having observed her courage and love for her husband and Obinna who is not even her own biological son, refuses to kill her but releases both her and Obinna. Ezinne comes home with great joy.

(8) *Otu mkpisiaka* by J.C. Madḡekwe.

This is a story about a notorious young girl Qḡageli. She is more beautiful than her elder sister, Nwamaka, who is wise and very hardworking. All the time Qḡageli is on the way; she dresses weirdly and goes in company of her male lovers. Her elder sister keeps an eye on her more than her parents and brother. She complains bitterly about the shame and disgrace that Qḡageli brings to the family. Their mother, going by Nwamaka's advice tries to curb Qḡageli's excesses. Qḡageli clashes often with her sister because she feels that Nwamaka blocks her way to enjoyment (promiscuous life). Her father also tries to discipline her but Qḡageli does not listen.

One day, Uḡoḡa, her father, sends her to go and call Chikwe, her brother. She diverts to see two of her lovers: Okechukwu and Afam. Unknown to her that Chikwe has gone home through another route; she continues to discuss with the boys. As the discussion goes on, Nwaamaka sights them, invites her brother Chikwe, and their mother to come and watch Qḡageli with her lovers. Eventually, she comes home only to lie to her father that she has wasted time searching for Chikwe. Her father gives her some flogging and declares that he will no more train her in the college.

Later on, Nwamaka promises to send her back to school provided she remains of good behaviour. Qḡageli goes back to school. As a student, she writes her parents complaining that she lacks new clothes and new wristwatches, which other students have. Nwaamaka, on the other hand, loses the money with which she runs her business to fraudsters. Qḡageli later runs with a man who already has a wife. She becomes pregnant for the man. The man abandons her because her pregnancy as an uncircumcised woman is an abomination in their town. Her co-wife (Ubuwen) reports the abomination that Qḡageli commits to their townspeople. Where Qḡageli lies down abandoned, she delivers a baby boy.

Qḡageli's friend, Nwakaego, gives a letter written by Qḡageli to her parents. She explains to them that Qḡageli has eloped with a man. Nwamaka, Nwakaego and Chikwe go in search of Qḡageli. On getting to her new home, they see her almost dead. Her co-wife goes to look for cola for Nwamaka, Chikwe and Nwakaego. Then;

Objageli narrates her ordeal to them and tells them not to cry if she eventually dies. After the story, she gives up the ghost. Nwaamaka raises the idea that they should steal Objageli's son away now that her co-wife is away. They take the child away. On their way home, thunder strikes and kills the child. They all cry home.

(9) **Oguamalam by Chike Osita Gbujie**

Oguamalam Okemkpi, an only child, is a nephew to Ikekwem Okpuruka. Their fathers shared their landed property in their lifetime in the presence of some elders of the land. After the death of the two brothers, Okemkpi and Okpuruka, Ikekwem becomes envious of the nephew's landed property as he is the only one to use the land his father left for him, while Ikekwem's family is a large one because he had two wives: Nwaijari and Objageli, and two sons: Ukadike and Amadi. Oguamalam has only one son, whose mother has died. His name is Chibunna.

Ikekwem and his wives go to the land in question (Eze-ala-agu) to cut palm-nut. Oguamalam and Chibunna also go to the same land to cut palm-nut. Both families meet on the land and start to fight over a bunch of palm-nut already cut down by Ikekwem. A serious fight ensues. Oguamalam and Chibunna defeat Ikekwem and his wives and carry the palm-nut home. Ikekwem and wives go to Oguamalam's house to carry the palm-nut and another fight is about to take place. Some elders intervene and organise that they both should swear at Agbara but Oguamalam says that if Ikekwem can swear for him let him own the land. Ukadike advises the father not to swear that all his investigations show that the land belongs to Oguamalam. His father says he is a fool by backing out while he is there fighting for him and Amadi, his brother. Ukadike rejects Ikekwem's actions and told him that he will never support him in any evil act. Ikekwem, not happy that his son knows the truth, out of pride, refuses to surrender to Oguamalam. His wives sheepishly follow him to the Agbara. There he lies that after their father's had shared their land, they agreed that their children would re-share the land when they grow up, that when he suggested this to Oguamalam, he rejected the idea of sharing the land especially the Eze-ala-agu. He concludes his story and swears by the Agbara. He dies instantly, with his wife, Nwaijari. Objageli does not die instantly but sustains a serious wound on the leg because she does not support her husband and she is forced to accompany him to Agbara because her husband did not listen to her suggestions. This is because; according to him women are to be seen and not to be heard. Ikekwem's sons do not die because they backed out and refused to join him to do evil. Their townspeople could not bury them because Agbara killed them and Ikekwem was stubborn. He did not listen to the several voices of truth and the advice given to him. People advised him not to swear but he refused to give the land to the rightful owner, Oguamalam. He is greedy and dies out of greed and stubbornness.

(10) **Okwe agaala by I.U. Nwadike**

In this story, Chinyere a university undergraduate and a beautiful girl has a fellow student boyfriend called Ozuruigbo. Chinyere is not interested in her studies. She goes to one of her lecturer's (DR. Emezina's) office, seduces him into establishing a sexual relationship with him. The relationship goes on and Ozuruigbo, having clashed with Dr. Emezina in Chinyere's room, now knows that both Chinyere and Dr. Emezina are in love. Dr. Emezina reveals his degree examination questions to Chinyere. Chinyere does well in the examination while Ozuruigbo who is a well-known intelligent boy fails his course. Ozuruigbo is aware that Dr. Emezina purposefully failed him because he is going out with Chinyere. Ozuruigbo reports his problem to the university senate. When the case is settled at the University senate

meeting, the Vice-Chancellor recommends that Dr. Emezina's salary should be stopped until his case is taken at the court.

The university registrar takes the case to court. Dr. Emezina begs for forgiveness because according to him, his parents died seven years ago. The Chief Justice passes his judgement: Dr. Emezina is to be imprisoned for two years, and his appointment at the university should be terminated; Chinyere's degree exams are to be cancelled while Ozuruigbo's examination scripts should be remarked.

(11) *Ogbu mmadu ndu na-agu* by Ben Igbokwe

In his story, Obioma from Umuekpu a young boy falls in love with Amarachi. Amarachi, being a worker, helps him financially and he becomes rich. Obiageli, another girl, finds her way diabolically into the life of Obioma. She fights with Amarachi when Amarachi comes to visit Obioma. She goes to her mother who is an evil woman, tells her that Amarachi wants to send her out of Obioma's life. Her mother (Ogbenyeanu) prepares a charm for her in order for her to hold Obioma tightly to herself and for Obioma to always obey her commands.

In the village, Amarachi reports the new development to Mama Obodo (Obioma's mother). Mama Obodo intervenes; asking Obioma never to marry Obiageli because she is evil. Obioma turns deaf ears to her command. After a while, Obiageli sends Obioma's sister and brother living with them away. Osondu, her own brother, moves into their home, helping her to perpetrate her evil acts and sap Obioma's wealth. Obiageli, Osondu and their mother plan to kill Obioma so that all his wealth will become theirs. Ogbenyeanu gives Obiageli a food poison and she poisons Obioma's food. Obioma eats the poisoned food and becomes terribly ill. He sends for his brother and sister and says that a traditional doctor should be invited to come and help him. Obioma apologises to his siblings and tells them that it was his wife Obiageli who poisons his food and finally gives up the ghost.

As he dies, his spirit begins to torment Obiageli and her brother Osondu until they both die. Their mother comes to visit them and sees the corpses of her two children.

(12) *Nka di na nti* by B. E. Okoro.

Njoku is born to his family as a second son. He is sent to Aba to begin a business. His business flourishes and he uses his money extravagantly on his friends (males), prostitutes (females) and lovers. He is very close to Ezinwaanyi who is a secondary school girl. Ezinwaanyi does not love Njoku although he sponsors her education. One day, Njoku's house and all his life savings at Aba, get burnt in a fire outbreak. He struggles to survive at Aba after the incident but could not. His friends (males) deserted him saying that his misfortune is as a result of the evil way through which he made his money. They comment that he looted people's property when the Aba market got burnt some time ago; he sold the loot and began his business with the money realised from the loot. When the son of a friend to his parent's dies, Njoku's father begins to feel that supposing he is the one in such a position, Njoku, his son, or his elder brother who lives in the North would have died without any offspring. He then sends for Njoku to come home and arrange for a wife. Njoku tells them about his relationship with Ezinwaanyi but both parents disagree with him, saying that he must not marry a woman from the waterside (Mbammiri). Njoku abandons them for years because he does not want them to continue to discourage him over marrying Ezinwaanyi.

When he has his misfortune and goes to Lagos to begin a new life, Ezinwaanyi marries another man. Njoku comes back to Aba as a rich man with a car because he later gets money at Lagos. He goes in search of Ezinwaanyi; he finds her and lures her to come back to him. Ezinwaanyi refuses but agrees that they should continue their relationship; she suggests to Njoku that since her husband travels often, she will always inform him so that he will come over to her house and meet her. On a fateful day, Njoku goes to see her with a food poison. He deceives Ezinwaanyi, telling her that it is a love potion that it will make her husband love her more. He advises her to put it into her husband's food that he will not discover. Ezinwaanyi worried that she needs Njoku's love more than her husband's, now that he is richer, decides to test the potency of the medicine. She adds some into Njoku's food. Njoku eats it and dies right there in Ezinwaanyi's marital home.

(13) *Obidiya* by Enyinna Akoma

A land dispute comes up between a rich man, Oriaku, and Onuma, a poor boy who just came from abroad. The case is settled in the court in favour of Onuma. Oriaku rejects the judgement and decides to kill Onuma and take the land. Oriaku feels that Onuma has nobody except his wife (Obidiya) a barren, woman, who to him would not be able to avenge her husband's death. Obidiya suggests to her husband that they will go to thank the magistrate of the court with three tubers of yam, one cock and a bunch of plantain. She warns her husband that she dreamt that her husband just finished taking his bath and was combing his hair when three men came in and hit him with a big branch of tree and disappeared and he died. She warns her husband not to move out of their compound for one week. He refuses to heed to her advice, suggesting that it is only a dream.

The king (Oriaku) invites Gogo, his messenger, and sends him to go and call some hired killers (Ogbuu, Omeife, and Djoğu). He pays twenty shillings for the job of killing Onuma. Oriaku demands that they should take an oath. They drink blood and wine as a covenant-taking ritual called *Igba ndu*. Later on, when Obidiya had gone to the market that evening, the killers above go to her house, meet her husband and hit him with a club. He dies and they carry his corpse away so that people will not begin to suspect them if they find out that he is murdered. Obidiya comes home, searches for him and sees some traces of his blood and the wrapper he was tying before she left for the market. She weeps profusely. She is advised to go to the court but she rejects it on the basis that they delay justice. She tells them to go and represent her rather. She begs the spirit of her husband to enter her and make her fight back his killers like a man. She vows to her late husband to avenge the family of his killers.

The killers, led by Ogbu, use a white cock and a keg of palm-wine to perform a ritual to silence Onuma's spirit so that his spirit will accept it and never accept any other after from any other person who may want to probe his death. The ritual is also done to calm the innocence of Onuma's death so that his spirit will not come after them. They kill the chicken and prepare it. Before they start to eat it, the man who cooked it in his house had to first of all taste the water of the chicken to prove to the colleagues that there is no poison in it (*Igwa nsi*). Obidiya later goes to the king and explains her predicament. He advises her to leave the matter in the hands of the police. She makes up her mind to revenge by any means. Obidiya goes to Akakaaka a (*dibia*) traditional doctor to seek advice. Akakaaka wants to join his evil powers and those of the killers in the destruction of Oriaku so that people will believe that the gods have done it. Akakaaka brings 'ofọ na ogu' (objects of covenant taking). They all touch them as objects of covenant binding their agreement to destroy Oriaku's family and they swear never to reveal this secret.

Later, the king and the villagers sing to Oriaku's house to give him a chieftancy title for the good things that he does in the town. As Oriaku is dancing to the tune of the music, one of the killers (Ogbu) while praising him uses a mysterious white handkerchief to wipe away sweat from his body. The following night, Oriaku calls his wife, Ugadiya, and pays all his children's school fees and says that he will travel abroad (Oklohoma) to see his first son that is schooling abroad and also to show the white men that black men also have money and can spend it. The next morning, he could not wake up from sleep. He dies at night without any form of sickness.

The towns deity, Ozuzu, is consulted to find out the cause of his death. It is said that he killed people for money ritual, killed Onuma, was also involved in all forms of charms, had a gang-of robbers that used to bring their returns to him. The villagers agree that it is their tradition not to bury an evil man like that. The villagers abandon his corpse and Gogo (his housemaid) and his brother, Ugwumba, bury him. Although Ugwumba buries him, he complains that they were not in good terms before his death and that he never helped him even with his money because he always cautioned him over his nefarious acts. A message comes from abroad that Chima, his son, also slept one night and did not wake up the next day. Three of his other children: Obian'ujunwa, Omenuko and Adamma, got drowned on their way to Opobo to see where Jaja was buried during an excursion which they were told to embark on by their school principal. Ugwumba runs out of the house, Gogo and his wives also run to their various homes without taking any of his things. It is only Ugadiya who makes away with Oriaku's property. Obidiya, Onuma's wife, rejoices over her successful vengeance on Oriaku's family and says that when it is her turn to die, that they shall all be judged in heaven. Umụ Nnadi ends the play by commenting on the happenings and the evil reward that accompanies evil acts.

(14) *Nwata rie awọ* by Goddy O. Onyekaonwu.

Aworo, a young wrestler, defeats Akotosi in a wrestling match. Out of her lust for Aworo's vigour and fame as a wrestler, Obioma, a young girl, rejects her suitor, Anene, and runs away to Aworo's home. She says that she wants to spend all her life with Aworo who, on his own side, does not love her or have any feelings for marriage for her. Aworo's parents, watching the situation of things, say that they cannot send somebody who ran to them away. They persuade their son to marry her which, he does reluctantly but just to obey his parents.

After the first issue of Obioma, which is a baby girl, Aworo hates her the more. He confesses to his friends and others openly that he never has any form of love for Obioma, and that she forces herself on him and now, instead of bearing him a baby boy as the first issue, she delivers a baby girl. Aworo manages to send Obioma and her child away from his home and makes sure that they are sold as slaves. He spends fifteen years after this unmarried and wasted his time as a Casanova. Later on, as slaves, Obioma renames her daughter Qdinchefu (is it forgettable?). Qdinchefu, Obioma's daughter is resold to a blacksmith at a town called Utonkom. The blacksmith takes her as a maiden to help him and his wife in taking care of their children. They leave their home for Amangwu (Aworo and Qdinchefu's town) seeking for a living. Aworo after the fifteen years of lustful life is unable to recognise Qdinchefu as his child and marries her as a wife. She could not bear him any child and is very sick. Her sickness and barrenness leads Aworo to the witch-doctor that gives him a solution to his problem and the fact that he must find and bring back his first wife Obioma. He warns him that her return will bring a lot of happiness to the family but something evil will happen.

It takes Aworọ a whole year to locate and bring back his first wife Obioma. Good things started happening in Aworo's household (Ọdınchefu is pregnant and almost due. Out of joy, Aworọ invites the men of the town to come and rejoice with him and witness the arrival of his first wife who first stopped on her way back to see her parents since two days. He complains then that the only source of his sorrow is his only daughter whom he could not find. After a short time, Obioma comes and is heartily welcomed by the crowd and her husband who holds her by hand and introduces her to her fellow women and her co-wife (Ọdınchefu). It is then that she realises that Odınchefu's face is familiar. Ọdınchefu too recognises that she is her mother and bursts out: "this is my mother". The mother too bursts out "this is my first daughter". The whole crowd becomes confused and unhappy. People shout that it is an abomination for Aworọ to have married his daughter, having as his wives his daughter and her mother. Aworọ too is confused, and ashamed of what he has done. He quickly kills himself with a knife.

(15) *Ọkọ ọzọ daa ibube* by Goddy Onuyekawu

At Isuebu there is a mishap of thunder that takes so many lives. The people think that their god is not happy with them because of some aspects of their culture which they have abandoned: killing of twins and people that develop swollen stomach, which is a mark of evil doings. They stopped these practices because of the coming of the white men and Christianity that came along with them. They believe their deity Ọdụga is hungry; he has not had food in form of human rituals so it caused the thunder so that people would die and he would have plenty of food.

Later, they agree to take Mgbọgọ (a mother of twins) and Ekweribe (who has a swollen stomach) to the evil forest of Odụga. The white men hear of this action and send men to go and bring Mgbọgọ and Ekweribe out of the evil forest to them while they also send some court messengers to go and arrest in the town meeting, all men who are involved in such a devilish act. As the court messengers arrive at the meeting arena to arrest the people, one of the men, Ụkaọha, who is the ringleader of the traditionalists, kills two out of the eight messengers sent by the white men with his machete. The villagers see this and know that there is trouble. They all flee from different angles. The court messengers manage to catch the king of Isuebu (Ọmaliko), Ụkaọha, and the chief priest and some cabinet members who could not run.

The white men pass a death sentence on Ụkaọha and send the king (Ọmaliko) and his wife who carries her first pregnancy to Potoki where they are to stay for twenty years. The chief priest is imprisoned for five years and the cabinet members are released to go home. They appoint a rich man, Mazi Ugonna, to take charge of Isuebu until a new king is elected. Mazi Ugonna achieves a lot for the town, hoping to be made the next king. As the whites are pleased with his leadership, they sponsor his first daughter, Mma, abroad to Potoki (Portugal) for further studies. She meets with Ezenwa (the child of king Ọmaliko). Ọmaliko's wife carried his pregnancy when they were sent to Potoki). Both agreed to get married. Mma insists on the rule in their town that Ezenwa must accompany her to see her father before the marriage rites should be performed.

At Isuebu, Mazi Ugonna accepts them and receives them as they come to see him during one of the holidays. On introducing himself, Ezenwa is discovered to be a son of the former king (the king he Ugonna is representing) whom he wants to replace permanently. He then is afraid that if his town's men should know that Ọmaliko has a son (because he died at Potoki) before his death they would want to be ruled by the son instead of by him. For this reason, he plans to eliminate Ezenwa that night before people would know that he is around. Ezenwa is saved by Okwudjwa, a maid to

Ugonna who overheard the evil plans of Ugonna and his wife, Ugbokwu to kill Ezenwa. He warns Ezenwa to run for his life back to Potoki and make sure that he goes back to the town's election of another king. Ezenwa takes the advice, joins a ship back to Potoki. When Mma has cried and wandered why Ezenwa behaved the way he did, she later goes back to Potoki but Ezenwa refuses to tell her why he had to behave that way. They later wed and live together at Potoki not minding the fact that Mazi Ugonna did not support their plans to marry.

Before the day of the election, Mazi Ugonna completes all the things he has promised to do for the Isuebu people so that he would win their hearts. On that day, Ezenwa comes back too to Ugonna's surprise. The people follow their tradition and say, since the kingship is the right of Omaliko's family and he left a son in his stead, they would want the son to rule them not minding all that Ugonna has done for the town. On hearing this, Mazi Ugonna collapses on his chair and faints. After six months of the election, the people of Isuebu did a great ceremony and crowned Ezenwa king of Isuebu. There, Ugonna receives Ezenwa as his son in-law and gives them his consent to go on and get married.

(16) *Eri mara ngwugwu* by Goddy Onyekwunwu

Oriaku Okwundu, a mother of two: Okoto (son) and Uduaku (daughter) exposes her husband's nefarious activities: stealing, selling people to slavery, killing and selling human parts to money ritualists. She explains to her children, who want to know whom their father is and why she does not live with him that when she discovers that he is keeping late nights, and at times spending few days away, that she becomes suspicious of his activities. She later discovers that he is committing all those crimes mentioned above. The worst is that one day as she opens the big box in their house, she notices something tied and wrapped inside the box. She unties it and sees a human head, tongue, eye and finger. She is shocked and immediately goes to report to the police who later jail the husband for twenty years. Since then, her husband, Okwuike Ogbunajo, vows to his friends that, as soon as, he is released, he would kill Okwundu. She says that was why she took them away from their town, Iduma, to Iguedu for their safety. She does not stop at that; she changes their surname from Ogbunajo to Okwundu so that people will not reveal their whereabouts to their father when he is released. She tells her best friend, Ikodi, her plans. She explains to her children that she heard that her husband has been released and had been preparing to come to Iguedu in search of them. Then, somebody comes and informs her that there is one man in town from Iduma searching for his wife and children who run away from Iduma to Iguedu. Immediately, the woman informs her children that there is problem. The fearless son, Okoto, immediately takes his machete and goes in search of the man (his father) to kill him before he kills their mother. On the way, he meets another stranger to the town and thinks that he is his father and kills him. When they least expect their father, he locates their house and kills their mother when they had gone out. Okoto and Uduaku bury their mother. Later, Ndubuisi marries Uduaku traditionally. Their marriage is engineered by Okoto who helps Ndubuisi, his friend. The marriage is against Uduaku's wish because she does not love Ndubuisi; rather, she falls in love with a Casanova, Ochoyanooko who, due to his handsomeness, fame and position in the society wins her heart against her husband's wish. Ndubuisi plans seriously for their forthcoming English wedding. He spends so much money on the arrangement not knowing that the wife has the plan not to wed him but to elope with Ochoyanooko, her new lover, and travel abroad.

On the wedding day, the church is full of people; Ndubuisi and Uduaku (bridegroom and the bride) appear. Before the priest could join their hands, she excuses herself, to go and ease herself. There she sneaks out and joins Ochoğanooko abroad. They wed abroad and live there for fifteen years before coming to Ochoğanooko's family at Ikpangwu. Before then, they have already had two girls is pregnant again, the husband reminds her that, if this turns out to be a girl, he will abandon her and marry another woman. This makes Uduaku to arrange with the nurse that works at the hospital where she will put to bed, to exchange the baby if it happens to be a baby girl, and replace her with a baby boy. She pays her some money. The same day that she delivers a baby girl, another woman (the wife of Okpala Okwuolisa from Umuofọ) has a baby boy in the same maternity. The nurse exchanges their children as planned when Okwuolisa's wife is sleeping. The boy's name is Tagboo. He grows as Tagboo Ochoğanooko, goes to a university at Otamkpa. The girl's name is Nneka. She grows as Okwuolisa's daughter and becomes a teacher at Iguedo. Tagbo and Nneka, as youths, become friends and are exchanging letters. Ochoğanooko (Tagboo's father) not aware of their relationship and unaware too that Nneka is his flesh and blood becomes Nneka's lover. Tagboo and Nneka agree to marry each other. When Ochoğanooko finds out the relationship that exists between his son and Nneka (his lover) he refuses to support the marriage because he already has a relationship with Nneka.

The nurse is retrenched because she slaps a commissioner's wife when she is in labour. She goes for prayers in a prayer house, where a pastor advises her that her only saviour from death is confessing the way she exchanged some children years ago. She is told to make this confession before the parents of the children. After her confession before both parents, Uduaku runs away to her father's house (Okwuike's house). Ochoğanooko realises that the son he so much loves and invests so much on is not his son and that the lady (his mistress) is his own biological daughter. The member and kindreds of both families agree to settle the matter without making it a police case. They agree that, to make both family ties stronger, Tagboo should go ahead and marry Nneka. They also reach the agreement that Tagboo should pack to Okpala's house (his real father) while Nneka should pack to Ochoğanooko's house (her real father). Furthermore, they agree that Okpala's father should go and marry Nneka from Ochoğanooko's family, and that Uduaku Nneka's mother should be brought to her husband's house.

Already Ochoğanooko has told his people at Iguedo that Uduaku has died and they are arranging for her burial ceremony when her father Okwuike brings her into the house because he too wants to trace Uduaku's brother, Okoto, through Uduaku. As soon as Okoto sights his father, he, recognises him and realises that he is the man who killed his mother. He immediately takes his machete and kills him. Ochoğanooko is not happy that Uduaku is back after he has lied to the people that she has died. He quickly runs into the house and uses a rope to commit suicide because his tricks and atrocities have been exposed.

(17) *Akwa nwa by Anelechi B. Chukwuezi*

Akwa Nwa is a story about Chimma, the fifth wife and currently the last wife of Eze Akujuobi of Umuḍala. She is barren for two years after her marriage with Akujuobi. As a childless woman, she asks Nkiru the daughter of her husband's first wife (Ihudiya) to help her to put yam into the mortar while she pounds the yam. As Nkiru helps her put in the yam, her mother Ihudiya calls her, comes to where she is



pounding yam for Chimma, drags her out, warning her that she has told her never to go to Chimma's corner, and that if she sees her there again she will be in trouble. Chimma tells Ihudiya to leave Nkiru and allow her to help her but Ihudiya refuses and continues to drag Nkiru. Chimma now holds Nkiru, insisting that Ihudiya should leave her alone. Ihudiya rains abuses on her telling her proverbially that she should go and bear her own child. (See, p1 last speaker). Ihudiya drags Nkiru, insulting Chimma, saying she should leave her child alone (see P2). They abuse each other and fight.

Eke (the leader of Ozo-titled men of Umuḍala) enters and meets Chimma in torn clothes and crying. He asks her what her problem is. Chimma explains to him that Ihudiya abuses her and reminds her that even her husband Akujuobi does not want her and that all her co-wives hate her; she regrets accepting to marry Akujuobi. She complains that, initially, she rejected him and told her father that she would not marry him but her father forced her to marry him. She continues by saying that before her marriage to Akujuobi, she never knew that she would not be able to bear him a child. According to her, her mother went to Chukwu-Aro to ask for a baby, which came as herself. Her mother and her sister bore many children; her sister has ten children. Eke consoles her and tells her to cheer up, that she will bear children. Eke asks Chimma what her husband has done to help her barren situation. She says that they have been to different traditional doctors and that she has battled with different herbs and drank different medicinal roots but there is no hope yet. She says that Akiriḱa, her husband's traditional doctor, has said that she cannot bear any child again. To worsen things her husband, Eze Akujuobi, has said that he will send her home to her father. Eke comments that it is not traditional for Akujuobi to send her home because she is barren unless she has committed another offence. He says that their town, Umuḍala, will never allow Akujuobi to do so because nobody is above Umuḍala. It was there before they were all born and it will be there when they will all depart to where they all came from (dead). Eke suggests that there is an English doctor called Onuḱa that has just come from abroad. He says he is the best doctor for barren women, he helped Duru's brother's wife, Chinyere, who was barren for three years and she became pregnant. He advises her to see him the next day so that he would show her to his house.

Eke goes in to meet Akujuobi. He asks Akujuobi about the forthcoming Ahanjoku festival (new yam festival). He says as he was coming in, he met Chimma whom he claims he heard crying because Akujuobi wants to send her home. Akujuobi assures Eke that Chimma must surely go home. Eke tells him that it is not their tradition so he should not do that or he may be offending the gods; after all, he has five wives including Chimma and still is about to bring in the sixth wife. Akujuobi refuses, saying that what makes a man rich are the number of wives and children that he has and that Chimma is barren; that Akiriḱa has said so. Therefore, she must go because her womb has refused to bear children (see P 8). Eke suggests to him that he should not send her away, that she can still bear children but Akujuobi refuses saying that a woman who cannot bear children is like a tree that does not bear fruit which is supposed to be cut down (see p 8).

Eke advises Akujuobi that he should be satisfied with his five wives and his numerous children (twenty eight in number), that, these days, it is not good to bear many children. Akujuobi tells him that if he stops bearing children now, who will help him in his many acres of farm, arguing that it is a man whose waist is sharp who answers the name he is given (a fulfilled man). He goes further to say that such men marry many wives. He tells him to go away with his advice. He later tells Eke that he will soon bring in his sixth wife, and warns him to leave him to manage his family the way he wants it.

Finally, Eke reminds him that he should send Aduba his messenger to go and find out from Chukwu-Aro, the deity, whether they should proceed with the festival or not because their enemies may want to prevent it. Chimma goes to see Onuoha (Dkt). Eke sends to Onuoha and implores him to help in Chimma's case, only for Onuoha to respond that he has already seen Chimma, that she is very normal and will soon begin to bear children. Onuoha advises Eke not to use the same cup with people to avoid infections and also that it is necessary for one to wash a cup before use. Eke tells him that that is for him, after all, he drank wine with the same cup with Onuoha's father and nothing happened to them, that no disease afflicts him.

Later, Eke took Onuoha to Akujobi to persuade him to take to Onuoha's advice not to send his wife away that she will soon be pregnant, that Akujobi was the cause of her inability to be pregnant because he has many wives and does not give Chimma enough time which she deserves, and that he meets her at the wrong time. Akujobi does not want to listen to Onuoha. He sends him and Eke away, accusing Onuoha of befriending his wife, Chimma. He refuses to heed Onuoha's advice, saying that he will only listen to *dibia* (traditional doctor). Onuoha too confirms that since Chimma came to consult him in his hospital, there is rumour that they are friends which is not true. In the presence of Onuoha, Eke and his other wives, Akujobi sends Chimma home accusing her of being a concubine to Onuoha. His fellow wives mock her as she goes.

Aduba comes back from Chukwu-Aro deity reporting that the deity says that unless Akujobi brings Chimma back to his house, there shall be no Ahanjoku celebration, and that evil will befall the Umudala community. He also reports that there will be hunger and death all over the town, Chimma will give birth like her parents did. He adds that Chukwu Aro entered into a covenant with her parents that the child he is giving them will also go in search of children, for a longer time than her parents did. That Chimma is facing the same situation now but will surely bear children. Akujobi says it is over his dead body that he will bring Chimma back. He sends Aduba to Igwekaala. Igwekaala says the same thing and he calls for Akirika his traditional doctor who repeats the same message from the gods.

At Ebeiri, Chimma's hometown, Chimma falls terribly ill. A woman, Ndidi, visits her mother, Udo. Udo tells her ordeal with Chimma and her husband. She encourages Udo to take heart, claiming that Akujobi has done evil, since Chimma is not God who gives children. She advises Udo and Chimma to go and see the doctor after her husband had refused to take her back to his house. Chimma reports to her that she has already seen Onuoha but her husband almost cut off her head over the news. She reports that he even accuses Onuoha of being her lover and, for this reason, he sends her packing. Udo says that she does not blame Akujobi because it was her husband Ochiguo who forced Chimma to marry him because he needed money. Now he has invited many problems to her and he is now late. She complains to Ndidi that Chimma fell sick that very day she steps into their house. Ndidi invites Chimma, who says that she has headache and stomach ache. She asks her whether she has seen her menses; Chimma says she has not seen it for this month. Ndidi suggests to Udo that it seems that Chimma is pregnant. She advises Udo to send her to her husband so that he can do the traditional rites performed before a woman sent home goes back to her husband.

It is here that Aduba comes from Chukwu Aro and delivers his message of doom for Umudala, saying that if Akujobi refuses to bring Chimma back, the community will witness a serious doom. Eke comes to inquire from him the result of the message to Chukwu Aro. Akujobi tells him. Eke advises him to bring Chimma back to save his people from suffering. He refuses and says that they should suffer; he

is not bothered. He invites Akirika who repeats the same message from Chukwu Arọ. While he is still annoyed over Akirika's message, Ugo comes to deliver another message to him that Udo his mother-in-law asks him to come and take his wife that she is at the point of death. Akujuobi rains abuses on him and sends him away. Aduba, his messenger, advises him to change his mind. He says no.

Ihudiya, his first wife, encourages him never to bring Chimma back, that Chimma has been gossiping in town that he is too old and can no longer bear children. Akujuobi gets irritated and swears never to bring Chimma back. Ihudiya tells him that bringing Chimma back is like bringing a bag of bees into the house to scatter them. Akujuobi promises her the best thing for him is to cut off Chimma's head so that all these trouble will be over. After saying this, he turns and sees Chimma's spirit by the corner of the house. Believing it is the real Chimma, he runs to fetch his machete with which to kill her and the spirit disappears. As he shouts going to cut off Chimma's head, Ihudiya holds him, surprised that Chimma whom he wants to kill is nowhere in the house. She is disturbed thinking that the deities are disturbing him. Akujuobi tells her that Chimma was there and has just run away. When Akujuobi is seated thinking about Chimma and the trouble she has caused him, he hears the sound of Ikoro the drum; he becomes afraid. Later, he hears the voice of Ikoro alone; out of fear, he asks Ihudiya why the Ikoro is beaten. Ihudiya says that she does not hear any such sound. He now asks Ihudiya why she is weeping. She tells him that Dike, their only son after the death of their second son, is sick.

Eke pays him another visit telling him that he must change, that he is only worried over his son that is deadly sick and the several deaths that have occurred in town. Eke says he has been sent by Uṃṃdala town members to inform him that he should go and take Chimma back before tomorrow evening; if he fails, he will have himself to blame. He claims that his son's sickness is beyond cure by either Akirika or Onuṃṃha, and that Chimma, after all, is pregnant and has been exonerated. Akujuobi receives the news with shock and, says that probably her stomach has swollen of '*ito afo*' (a disease that swells the stomach) or that Onuṃṃha has impregnated her, since a goat does not bear a cock. To him, it is impossible for Chimma to be pregnant. As the torture and plague in the town become too serious, he has to surrender. He performs the traditional rites for taking back divorced wives and takes Chimma back with her pregnancy, as the townspeople present Chimma back to him. He receives Chimma with a changed heart while she smiles with joy as they dance away. The members of the town rejoice and dance on.

(18) *Onye kpaa nkụ ahụhụ* by I.U. Nwadike

Amaka, one of the chief characters, is in love at the university with Ikechukwu who promises to marry her. She becomes pregnant and reports her current situation to Ikechukwu. Ikechukwu accepts the pregnancy at first, suggesting to her that they will go ahead to inform their parents immediately. Later, Ikechukwu discusses this problem with Chijioke, his friend, who advises him not to accept the pregnancy, that he may not continue his education if he does, because his father would stop paying his fees and ask him to settle down as a married man. He advises him not to allow Amaka into his room any more and that he should reject the pregnancy. Ikechukwu does like he is advised and sends Amaka out of his room when she visits him. He tells Amaka that he does not know her let alone impregnating her. He rains abuses on Amaka, as Amaka wants to leave his room. She curses him, saying that she accepts to suffer and bear the shame of being pregnant at home but that so long as Ikechukwu rejects a gift of God which is very rare to come by (the foetus in her womb), he Ikechukwu will never hear the cry of a baby in his house no matter whom he marries.

Amaka goes home and tells her mother her condition and the situation of her relationship with Ikechukwu. She suggests to her mother (Ukaachi) that she would abort the baby. Her mother says that she should not commit an abomination (killing). "*I chere na a na - azuta ya. n'ahja*" (that babies cannot be bought in the market), "*Onye tere im, e egbuola ochu*" P 15 (she who aborts has committed murder). She solidly stands by Amaka and tells her to bear the child. This Amaka does and has a baby boy whom she calls Chikwado Ikechukwu.

Ikechukwu marries Nnenna and, for fifteen years of marriage, they do not have any issue. Nnenna is so disturbed. Ngozi her friend hears of the man of God who has come to their town, Umuebu, at the All Saints and Angels Church. She visits Nnenna and tells her about the prophet that she should go and see him. She says that the prophet has helped a barren woman that she knows and she now has children. Nnenna accepts to see the prophet. On discussing her intentions with her husband, he rejects the idea of seeing the prophet. Nnenna insists and writes a letter inviting the prophet to their house through Arisa, their househelp. The prophet comes to the house and tells Nnenna that the root of her problem is the curse placed on her husband, by his ex-lover Amaka, at the university, over 20 years ago. Ikechukwu meets the prophet in his house, challenges him of having love affairs with his wife in his house. He then sends the prophet out of his house. Nnenna tells him that the fault is due to his wickedness to one Amaka 20 years ago, that according to the prophet's saying, he should go to the Amaka and ask for forgiveness before they can begin to bear children. He refuses to go, saying that he cannot bear the shame of standing before Amaka that he would prefer to be barren rather. Nnenna agrees to accompany him to apologise to Amaka before he now accepts to go.

On the other hand, Amaka's son, Chikwado, demands from his mother to know who his father is so that he can join his friends in telling stories about their fathers in school. His grandmother Ukachi tells him that his father is in "Fanandapoolu." His mother, Amaka, tells him that his father is dead. He rejects any food from his mother until he is told the truth. The mother begins to tell him some truth about his father that he lives but could not live together with them because he has not done the traditional rites on her. Here, she begins to cry.

Nnenna and Ikechukwu come to Amaka's house. Amaka offers them chairs. They refuse to sit down and begin to beg Amaka for forgiveness. Amaka tells Chikwado to leave them alone. He refuses to go, insisting to know what the strangers have got to do with his mother as the mother's face changes. She now introduces Ikechukwu to Chikwado as his father. Chikwado hugs his father Ikechukwu and his father weeps. Amaka faints. Ikechukwu and Nnenna try to resuscitate her. She wakes up and begs Ikechukwu and his wife Nnenna to please help her to take care of Chikwado. Meanwhile, she refuses to forgive them. She confesses that she cannot live to bear this type of shame. She turns down her head and dies. Nnenna remains barren for a sin she did not commit.

APPENDIX II

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN  
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND AFRICAN LANGUAGES  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN  
IMAGE OF WOMEN, MAGINALIZATION, OPPRESSION, AND  
EXPLOITATION OF IGBO WOMEN AND VIOLENCE AGAINST IGBO  
WOMEN

Dear Madam,

This questionnaire is designed to elicit information from women about the maginalization, subordination, and exploitation of Igbo women and the violence Igbo women experience in their individual homes, communities, and Igbo society at large. Information supplied shall be used for research purposes only.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

ONUEGBU, MARTINA C. (MRS)

SECTION A

PERSONAL DATA:

INSTRUCTION: Tick right  in the box appropriate to your response to the following questions.

- (1) Marital Status: Single [a] Married [b] Divorced [c] Seperated [d]
- (2) How old are you?  
1-18 [a] 19-30 [b] 31-40 [c] 41-100 [d]
- (3) What is your educational status?  
Illiterate [a]  
Primary education [b]  
Secondary school [c]  
Secondary School dropout [d]  
N.C.E / O.N.D holder [E]  
First degree – Phd holder [f]  
Higher institution dropout [g]
- (4) What do you do for a living?  
Petty trading [a]  
Teaching [b]  
Medical doctor [c]  
Engineer [d]  
Seamstress [e]  
Nursing [f]  
Other government work [g]  
Manage my husband's business [h]  
Full time housewife [I]
- (5) Why did you drop out of school?  
Nothing [a]  
Finance [b]  
Marriage [c]  
Sickness [d]  
Premature pregnancy [e]

- (6) State of origin:  
 Abia [a]  
 Anambra [b]  
 Ebonyi [c]  
 Enugu [d]  
 Imo [e]  
 Igbo Delta [f]  
 Igbo Rivers [g]
- (7) Local Government Area  
 Fill this by yourself.
- (8) At what age where you married?  
 10-18 [a] 19-30 [b] 31-40 [c] 41-100 [d]
- (9) How old is your marriage now? 1-10 [a] 11-20 [b] 21-30 [c] 31-100 [d]
- (10) At what age was your husband when you married him?  
 10-18 [a] 19-30 [b] 31-40 [c] 41-100 [d]
- (11) Are you happy in your marriage? Yes [a] No [b] Not yes not no [c]
- (12) If yes why?  
 My husband beats me [a]  
 My husband has a concubine [b]  
 My husband takes my salary [c]  
 I do so much domestic work [d]
- (13.) If no, state why?  
 My husband beats me [a]  
 My husband has a concubine [b]  
 My husband takes my salary [c]  
 I do so much domestic work [d]
- (14) Who amongst your in-laws gives you the most trouble?  
 My husband's sisters [a]  
 My husband's brothers [b]  
 My husband's father [c]  
 My husband's mother [d]  
 My husband's uncles [e]  
 My husband's aunts [f]
- (15) Are you divorced?  
 Yes [a] No [b]
- (16) Why where you divorced?  
 I had no child [a]  
 I had no male child [b]  
 I was caught in adultery [c]  
 My husband married another wife [d]
- (17) Are you a widow?  
 Yes [ ] No [ ]
- (18) As a widow, were you allowed to inherit your husband's property?  
 Land, Cars, Houses, Money. Yes [ ] No [ ]
- (19) Which of the properties did your husband's people take from you as a widow?  
 Land [a] Cars [b] Houses [c] Money [d]
- (20) Why did they take the property from you?  
 I am childless [a]  
 I have no male child [b]  
 All my children are women.[c]

- (21) Were you told by the Umuada to carry out some widowhood practices?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
- (22) Which of the widowhood practices did you carry out:  
Shave your hair [a]  
Lie on a mat [b]  
Wear black cloth for some time [c]  
Stay indoors for some time [d]

### SECTION B

**SOCIO-POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL SITUATION OF WOMEN:** Tick right  in the box appropriate to your response to the following questions.

- (1) Do you have a woman king?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
- (2) If yes, what is her name?
- (3) Have you ever had a woman king in your town?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
- (4) What is her name?
- (5) Do you have a traditional Chief Priest in your town?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]  
Name them please,
- (6) Do you have women representatives in your Eze's cabinet?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
- (7) Do you have any goddess in your town?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
- (8) What is the name of the goddess?
- (9) What is the name of your town?
- (10) What types of food are women prohibited from eating in your area? Name them.
- (11) In your area, between man and woman, who has more power in the society?
- (12) Is there any past women warrior in your town?
- (13) What is her name?
- (14) Do you think Igbo men exploit Igbo women?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
- (15) If a boy impregnates a girl in your town, what happens?  
He denies the pregnancy [a]  
He marries the girl [b]  
Nothing is done to the boy if he denies the pregnancy [c]  
The girl is left to suffer alone [d]
- (20) Which of the violence against women is common in your area?  
Rape [a]  
Denied premature pregnancies [b]  
Wife battery [c]  
Divorce and abuse of barren women [d]  
Circumcision of female children [e]
- (21) How does your husband regard you?  
Equal to him [a]  
Above him [b]  
Lower than him [c]

- As nothing [d]
- (18) How do Igbo men regard Igbo women generally?  
Equal to men [a]  
Above men [b]  
Lower than men [c]  
As nothing [d]
- (19) Can you challenge a man / husband when he is talking?  
Yes [a] No [b]
- (20) If no, why?  
He will slap me [a]  
He will beat me [b]  
He does not like it [c]  
I can't challenge him it is not cultural [d]  
The people will call me a bad woman [e]
- (21) Which of this type of marriage are you involved into?  
Love initiated marriage [a]  
Forced marriage [b]  
Bethrotal [c]  
Polygamy [d]  
Female husbandship [e]  
Any other type [f]



### APPENDIX III

#### A1) DIALOGUE BETWEEN MARRIED COUPLES.

Below are some of the dialogues between the married couples in this study. They are referred to as married couples because they are traditionally, religiously or legally united on permanent basis. They belong to the institution of marriage in the society of the plays. Such dialogues are:

#### (1) UGOMMA BY GODSON ECHEBIMA DIALOGUE BETWEEN OBINNA AND ENYIDIYA

Obinna: *Enyidiya*

Enyidia: *Nna m ukwu. (23)*

*Enyidiya*

*My Lord.*

Enyidia: *Obinna di m ihe ajogbuola onwe ya n'oge ugbua.  
Ihe nile adagbuola onwe ya n'onu ahia.... (23)*

*Obinna my husband, things are so bad.*

*Things are so expensive ....(23)*

Obinna: *Aha! Unu bu umunwanyị ga-ejisi ike  
tunyetu onu n'okwu a, unu bu ndi  
na-ego ihe n'ahia (23)*

*Aha! You women should do something*

*About that, it is you (women) that buy things from the market.*

Enyidiya: *Obinna di m, ihe a bu uwa mmebi... (24)*

*My husband Obinna. This is evil.*

Obinna: *(n'olu ike). Mechie onu gi!*

*(In a high voice) Keep your mouth shot!*

Enyidiya: *(n'olu iwe) Hapu Ugomma aka! O ga aluta di di mma.... (24)*

*(in annoyance) Leave Ugomma alone!*

*She will marry a good husband. (24).*

(2)

**EZINNE BY CHIKA ANYASODO  
DIALOGUE BETWEEN EZEJI AND EZINNE HIS WIFE.**

- Ezeji: *...Ezinne! Ezinne! Ezinne o n'okwa ya e?*  
Ezinne! Ezinne! Ezinne is she there e?
- Ezinne: *Nna anyi ukwu, Ezeji nwa Ubawuji, anọ m ya o!*  
*(O ghabata, kpuru nkirisi azu o na-ata n'usoekwu ya n'onu). Lekwa m,*  
*nna anyi. Nke a I na-akpo m olu*  
*ike olu ike udo o di kwa?*
- Our lord, Ezeji the son of Ubawuji,  
I'm around o. (she runs in with a piece of fish which she was  
Eating in the kitchen).  
Here I am our Lord. This one your are calling me with a raised  
Voice, is all well?
- Ezeji: *Udoka, enyi m nwoke, o butere m mmanya anyasi?*
- Did Udoka my friend bring the night palm wine for me?
- Ezinne: *Nna anyi, o nwetara mmanya*  
*Ntakiri, si ka e dewere gi. O si*  
*Na ngwo ya agbajughi ebele nanyasi a... (3).*
- Our Lord, he brought a small quantity of  
Palm wine to be kept for you. He siad that his rafia palm wine could  
not produce enough to fill the calabash this night.
- Ezeji: *O bu ginị ka i na-atufu oge? Jee butee*  
*Nke o wetara ka m mesatu... (3)*
- Why are you wasting time? Go and bring the one he  
Brought let me take some of it ... (3)
- Ezinne: *Nna anyi, lekwa mmanya gi,*  
*O rughidi okara ebele.....*
- Our Lord, here is the wine, it is not  
Even up to half the calabash.....
- Ezeji: *..... Ezinne! Ureonu! Biana nurutu mmanya.*  
*.....Ezinne! Ureonu! Come and take some wine.*
- Ezinne: *Nna anyi, a ga-enyetukwa umu ntakiri ka ha nutu nke nta.*  
*... Our Lord, will you give the children small to drink.*
- Ezeji: *Gaa noro odu, o bu mmanya m ji*  
*Ezu ike ka I ga-eji azu umu? I choo*  
*Inu mmanya, .....i nuchaa, gi ejee sie nri*  
*Nye umu ntakiri ....(5).*

Go and sit down, is it the wine that I want to  
relax with that you want to use to  
train children? If you want to drink wine.....  
When you finish drinking, you go and prepare some food for the  
children... (5)

(3A): **NWATA RIE AWỌ (Ọ JU ANỤ) BY GODDY O. ONYEKAỌNWỤ**  
**DIALOGUE BETWEEN OKWUKỌGỤ AND UDUĘHI HIS WIFE.**

Okwukọgụ: ...*Ahujọla m anya!*  
*Eriela m ariji!*  
*Nwa emenyuọla m anya.*  
*Ọ buruła m na ya n'ụlọ a.*  
*Ọ buru na ọ purughị m*  
*Aga m apuru ya ....E-e-m,*  
*Uduehi Uduehi!*

I have seen wonders!  
I have suffered!  
This child has dealt with me.  
We shall see in this house.  
If she does not pack out for  
Me, I will pack out for her  
.. E-e-m, Uduehi Uduehi!  
(36).

Uduehi: *O-e, Nna anyi (Uduehi abiarute)*  
  
Yee-e-s-our Lord (Uduehi comes nearer)

Okwukọgụ: *Obioma ọlughachitela n'ụlọ ahụ?*  
  
Is Obioma back to the house?

Uduehi: *Nna anyi, kemgbe unyaahu ọ gbapuru*  
*Mgbe Anene na ndi be/ha biara*  
*Ruokwa n'ututu a,*  
*Ejibeghi m anya m abuo kesi ya (36).*

Our Lord, since yesterday that she ran  
Away when Anene and his people  
Came here till this morning, I have  
Not set my eyes on her.

Okwukọgụ: *Ya gbaawanu ...mgbe aka m kpaara*  
*Ya bu eze dum, o kwuo onye*  
*Chiwere ya.....*  
*Ndi biara ilu ya wee bia...*  
*Nwata a wee mebọọ m ....pg37*

Let her run ....when I lay my

Hands on her the king of all,  
She will tell me who coronated her (who empowered her)...  
Those who came to marry her came ....  
This girl has disgraced me... (37).

Ud̄uehi: Nna m ukwu, okwu a ab̄ukwanugh̄i ihe a ga-ar̄uwara  
Oḡoḍo, oḍuḍu okwu ad̄igh̄i ya, ihe anyi ji bu anya.  
.....our Lord, this case does not require much talking ....  
We are all eyes.

Okwuk̄oḡu: Okwu ḡi kwu oḍo, oriaku m n'ih̄i na o d̄igh̄i ... (38).  
Your opinion is straight forward, my wife  
Because nobody that does not like good things .....(38).

Ud̄uehi: Biko di m si were ya otu ah̄u .... (38).  
Please my husband let things remain  
The way they are ....(38).

Okwuk̄oḡu: Ud̄uehi! Ud̄uehi!  
Ud̄uehi: Oo, Nna anyi; (Ud̄uehi ab̄ia)

Yees our Lord (Ud̄uehi comes)

Okwuk̄oḡu: I matara na oge nd̄i ga-ab̄ia  
N'ul̄o anyi ga-eji b̄ia eruola  
Ya bu meenu ihe ah̄u unu na-eme  
Os̄o os̄o.

You know it is time for our  
Visitors to come.  
That means you should do  
What you are doing urgently.

Ud̄uehi: Nna anyi, anyi emechaala ihe  
Niile ..... ha emechaalari laa,  
M n̄oḗzie na-asachasi ihe e jiri si nri.

Our Lord, we have finished doing  
All the things .....they have finished and have gone. I am carefully  
washing the things that they used to cook.

Okwuk̄oḡu: Ahaa! Ezigbo nwanyi, unu emeela  
Kedu maka Obioma, o sokwa  
Unu wee mee ihe nd̄i ah̄u?

Ahaa! Good woman, you people have  
Done well. How about Obioma  
Did she join you in doing those/work?

Uduchi:

*O soro nno anyi wee mehasi ihe nile.  
Ugbu a o na-asa ahụ jji wee  
kwadowe maka ndi obia ahụ ..(45).*

She actually joined us to do all the things  
Now, she is taking her bath  
In preparation for those our visitors ... (45).

(3B): **NWATA RIE AWỌ (Ọ JU ANỤ) BY GODDY O. ONYEKAỌNWU  
A DIALOGUE BETWEEN AWỌRỌ AND HIS WIFE ỌDINCHEFU (A  
NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE).**

Awọrọ:

*Ọdinchefu! Nchefu! Nchefu! Mụ ọ!*

*Ọdinchefu! Nchefu! My Nchefu o!*

Ọdinchefu:

*Oe, di m. Ana m abia o...*

*Yes, my husband. I'm coming...*

Awọrọ:

*Achoputara m na obi adighi adikwa  
Gi mma ma oli. kwa uchichi, gi na  
Akwa. I hukwara na i chuchaala?  
..... Biko ezigbo m, meghepu obi gi  
Wee kooro m. Nne biko kwube.... (63).*

I have found out that you don't feel  
Happy any more. Every night you  
Cry. Can't you see you have lost your colour?... please my dear,  
Relax your mind and tell me  
Mummy please speak on ... (63).

Ọdinchefu:

*(na mwute na mgbaru ihu -in annoyance and a frowned face)  
Ezigbo di m, ariri erielam  
Ndu m di adikwaghi uru o bara  
Onwu kaara m mma...  
A mụọ e jighi eji... o dighi  
Nwa m ji ...? (63).*

My dear husband, I have suffered  
My life is worthless, death is better for me...  
To give birth and not to have the child (miscarriages).....  
I have no child ... (63).

Awọrọ:

*Ọdinchefu, Nchefu nwa mma, ugboro  
Ole ka m rioro gi si gi wepu uche  
N'ihe ahụ na o bughị ihe a ga-achụ  
N'ike .....(63).*

Qdinchefu, Nchefu the beauty, how many  
Times will I beg you to forget?  
About that thing that it is not  
A thing to be rushed over .... (63).

Qdinchefu: *Di m, I kwuru eziokwu, ma i  
Na-eche na o kaghi mma ka i  
Gaa luru nwanji ozo hu na  
E sitere n'aka ya zotagodu  
Ngwuru a?... (64).*

My husband, you have spoken well.  
But don't you think that you  
Should go and marry another wife  
and see that we secure this compound through  
Her ....-(64).

Aworo: *Chineke Ekwela; o buru ogwu o gahi ere.... (64).*

God forbid, I reject it .... (64)

(4) **OBIDIYA BY ENYINNA AKOMA**  
**A DIALOGUE BETWEEN QNUMA AND HIS WIFE OBIDIYA.**

(N'ulo Qnuma ebe ya na nwanji ya na-eri ihe –in Qnuma's house where he is  
eating with his wife)

Qnuma: *Enyi, nke a bu ya.*

My friend, this is so sweet.

Obidiya: *O bu otu m si eme.*

That is my usual way.

Qnuma: *Nke taa ka ibe ya. Pg4.*

Today's own is sweeter than the others

Obidiya: *Mma mma, aga m emekari nke a oge ozo.*

Good, I will do better than this next time.

Qnuma: *Anyi ga-ekele Chineke maka olu ya niile .....(5).*

We shall thank God for his deeds.

Obidiya: *..... Echefula m ikoro gi otu nro m roro  
Nwanne echi gara-aga.*

.... I have forgotten to tell you the dream I had two days ago.

- Onuma: I rorọ gini? *What is the dream?*
- Obidiya: *Ọ na-eme m ka ọ bụ na mmadu, ka o bụ na-nro..... (6).*  
It is to me as if it is real or in a dream ... (6).
- Onuma: *Nro a di njo ....(6).*  
This dream is bad .... (6).
- Obidiya: *Ọ bụ ya, ọ bughị ya. Enyi, anyi  
Ga-akpachara anya n'izu a.*  
Whether he is or not. My friend,  
We have to be very careful this week.
- Onuma: *Chineke nyere m gi abughị onye ewu  
Ma ọli. Ọ na-ewuta m nke ukwu ma  
Inodu dika onye na-eru uju.*  
God that gave you to me is not a fool at all.  
It annoys me so much when you look sad.
- Obidiya: *E nyekwala onwe gi nsogbu.  
Ama m na ọ na-ewuta gi ....(12).*  
Do not worry yourself.  
I know it borders you.... (12).
- Onuma: *Agwala m gi banyere echiche nwa  
I kwere n'ihi ya na-anwu n'ime obi.*  
Onye gara egbu onwe ya maka enweghi  
nwa bụ mụ onwe m ....(12).  
I have warned you over thinking of  
Lack of child but because of it you  
Die silently. I am the one who should worry over the  
Lack of a child ....(12).
- Obidiya: *Anula m. I ma na nwa di mkpa.*  
I have heard you. Remember, child is a necessity.
- Onuma: *Ama m. Ebe anyi na-enwetabela nwa  
Anyi ga-egbu onwe anyi? Oge Chika.... (13).*  
I know. Now that we have not had  
Any child yet, shall we kill ourselves?  
God's time is the best .... (13).

See pg 19, 20 and 21.

(5A) **OKU UZU DAA IBUBE BY GODDY ONYEKAONWU  
A DIALOGUE BETWEEN MAZI UGONNA (A KING OF  
ISUEBU) AND HIS WIFE UGBQAKU IN HIS HOUSE:**

Mazi Ugonna: *Ugbqaku! Ugbqaku! Aku mu o!!!*

*Ugbqaku! Ugbqaku! My wealth o!!!*

Ugbqaku: *Oe! Ogbuehi. Aku gi na-abja  
Di m, nke a ihu gi na-awa ka anyanwu.  
Obi buru gi so mmu nnu,  
O nwere ihe gara?*

Yes! Chief! Your wealth is coming-o.  
My husband this one that your face is shining  
Like the sun.  
You are over Joyed  
Is any thing the matter?

Mazi Ugonna: *...N'abali ka m noduru nnoo  
Wee gukochaa ihe oma niile  
Na-abjara anyi  
Wee hu na n'eziokwu,  
Na Chineke agbaarala anyi ekeresimesi, (42).*

In the night, I sat down  
And counted all the blessings  
That have come our way  
And saw that God has celebrated Christmas for us

Ugbqaku: *(Gbakwuru di ya, makuo ya)  
Di m I mere ya ..... I mere ya o o o!*

(runs towards the husband and hugs him)  
My husband you did it ...you did it o o o

Mazi Ugonna: *Ma otu ihe foduru o ga-abu  
O buru na o rute m aka  
A mara na m enwetazuola ihe nile.  
M choroo na ndu m.*

But one thing remains that  
If I get that then I will know that  
I have gotten everything that I need in my life.

Ugbqaku: *Di m ebe I mutala nze, muta okoro,  
Nwee aku na uba, nwee ahụ ike, ...  
I na-akowa na o nwere ihe ka di gi mkpa. (44).*



My husband, you have given birth to male and female  
Children. You have wealth and good health  
..... Do-you mean that there is some thing that you still desire?

Mazi Ugonna: *Nwanyị oma m, ....*  
*Achọrọ m ibu eze ndị Isuebu.*  
*Nke a ruo m aka uwa ezuorola m .....(45).*

My good wife .....  
I want to be the king of Isuebu.  
If I can succeed in getting that, then  
I am a fulfilled man.

Ugbọakụ: *Di m o mere ka o kwuru;*  
*Nwoke teghete! Gaagaa n'ogwu*  
*Anụ kpọrọ nkụ na-eju onụ; ... (45).*

My husband he that says it and does it.  
A man worth nine men,  
The dry meat that fills the mouth ... (45).

See pgs 50 and 51.

Read other dialogues in *Ọkụ ụzụ Daa Ibube* by Goddy Onyekakonwu:

**(5B) ỌKỤ ỤZỤ DAA IBUBE BY GODDY ONYEKAONWU**  
**A DIALOGUE BETWEEN ONYEMAIZU AND MGBOGO HIS WIFE IN**  
**PG 20, 22, 23.**

**(A2 DIALOGUE BETWEEN CO-WIVES AND THEIR HUSBANDS:**  
In this section, we want to consider the speeches of women married in poligamous homes and their husbands

**(1A) OGUAMALAM BY CHIKE OSITA GBUJIE**

Nwanyịugbo, Uloakụ (co-wives) and Njokụ their husband in *Oguamalam*: See pages 9 and 10.

**(1B) OGUAMALAM BY CHIKE OSITA GBUJIE**

Nwaijari, Obiageli (co-wives) and Ikekwem in *Oguamalam*: See pages 11 and 12.

**(B) MALE LOVER TO FEMALE LOVER**

In this section, we want to display the speeches of some female lovers and their male lovers and from them determine the ones that are deficient, dominant and different from the other. Such speeches are:

**(1) UGOMMA BY GODSON ECHEBIMA**  
**DIALOGUE BETWEEN ALOZIE AND HIS LOVER UGOMMA.**

Alozie: *Ahuru m gi n'anya karichaa. I ma ya nke oma?*

I love you so much. Do you know that very well?

Ugomma: *Ya aburu gi ni? Ee. Ama m ya nke oma. Na ekelekwá gi maka ya.*

Why not? Yes. I know that very well. I also thank you for that.

Alozie: *Anwula Ugomma. Obi di m utu inu ihe I kwuru....*

Live long Ugomma. I am happy to hear your comments....

Ugomma: *Otu ole?*

How?

Ugomma: *Biawa o buru na o masiri gi.*

Come if it pleases you.

Alozie: *Oo! Ugomma, enyi m oma, I meela... Ugomma... Ugomma... Ugomma mba-o.*

Ugomma, my good friend thank you..... Ugomma ... Ugomma... Ugomma. No-o.

Alozie: *Oo! Ugomma. Ugomma m. Igolo nke m. Anyanwu ututu. Igwa gi ezi okwu, I riela m obi. Mma gi emebika m isi. Ile gi anya naani na-eju m afo. Mgbe m na-eche maka gi, aguu anaghikwa agu m....*

Oo! Ugomma. My pretty Eagle. My own beauty. The morning sun. To tell you the truth you have eaten deeply into my heart. Your beauty has scattered my head. Looking at you alone gives me enough satisfaction. When I think about you, I do not feel hungry.....

Ugomma: *Oo! Dee Alozie, i na-eme ihe na-atu mmadu ochi.*

Oo! Brother Alozie, you make me laugh.

(2) **IHUNANYA BY ODINAKA AZUBUIKE  
DIALOGUE BETWEEN IKECHI A MALE LOVER AND  
IHUNANYA HIS GIRL FRIEND.**

Ikechi: *(In a low voice) (N'olu Nwaayo)  
Kedu ihe o bu? Juo m ajuju obula I choru.*

What is it? Ask me any question that pleases you.

Ihụnanya: *O buru na I fecha a ala nna gi ginị ozo ka I ga-eme?*  
When you finish your youth service, what else will you do?

Ikechi: *Achoro m igu akwukwo, buru okammuta, ma, ka ihe si kwuru ugbua...*  
I want to study futher, and become a professor, but, the way things stand now... (34).

See p. 35 and 36

Ikechi: A.....a..... ahuru m gi n'anya. Chineke bu onyeakaebe m I.....I.....I love you. God is my witness.

Ihụnanya: (Chia obere ochi)  
Chineke bu onye akaebi gi. Onye akaebe ginị?  
(Smiles)  
God is your witness. What witness?

Ikechi: Bu akaebe m si na ahuru m gi n'anya. Achokwara ilugi, ma o buru na i ga-ekwe... (44).  
Is my witness that I love you? I want to marry you if only you will agree... (44).

Ihụnanya: Agwala m nne na nna m gbasra gi.  
I have told my parents about you.

Ikechi: Eziokwu?  
True? (44)

(3) **ONYE KPAA NKU AHUHU BY I.U.NWADIKE**  
**A DIALOGUE BETWEEN IKECHUKWU AND AMAKA HIS**  
**LOVER**

Ikechukwu: ... Amaka, (Amaka)  
Oo ginị? (what is it?)  
Kedu ka ihu gbachara gi Uka? (Why are you not cheerful?)  
Amaka, (Amaka)  
Odinnobi, (my heart throbe)  
Koro m (tell me)

Amaka: Goolu gi agaala. (You have given your goal)  
Adi m ime. (I am pregnant)

Ikechukwu: (N'obi nlupu, o chakasija anya (in surprise, he becomes aggressive)  
I si ime ka i si ginị?(Did you say preghancy or what?)  
Kedu ka o siri mee? (How did happen?)

- Amaka: Ya buru egwu kwusikwa ya (if it is a joke stop it)  
 ! na-ajụ m ka osiri mee (are you asking me how it happened)  
 Abụ m meri nne Jizọs (Am I Mary the mother of Jesus)  
 Na-adịrị ime n'akpaghị aka? (That becomes pregnant without sex?)  
 ! kpara nkwa aka (You beat the drum)  
 O were kwuonu (and it sounded)  
 O kwa agwara m gị agwa. ... (2) (Didn't I warn you?)
- Ikechukwu: ...Biko, si ebe a pụọ (Please go away from here)  
 Tupu iwe ewee m (Before I get annoyed)  
 Biko (Please).  
 Pụwa apụwa ka m kpochie ụzọ... (Start going so that I can shut the door)
- Amaka: Lee anya... (Look...)  
 Kwusikwa ya... (Stop it ...)  
 Asị m ka m bịa (I said that I will come)  
 Ka anyị kpazie mgbe (To discuss with you when you)  
 ! ga-abịa ka gị na nna m ha (Will come to discuss with my father about Ourmarriage)
- Ikechukwu: Alụm gini? (Marry what)  
 Lugbuokwa onwe gi na di. (Marry yourself to death... (7)  
 See pgs 8, 9, 10, and 11

(4) **NKA, DI NA NTI BY B.E. OKORO.**  
**A DIALOGUE BETWEEN NJOKU AND HIS LOVER GIRL**  
**EZINWANYI**

- Njoku: Nne nnọọ (Girl! Welcome.)
- Bata ka i nọrọ oche? (Come inside and have sitted)  
 Ezii, i mere oļia? (Ezii, how are you?)
- Ezinwanyi: Ugbua ka m bụ Ezii gi? (Is it now that I am your Ezii?)  
 O kwa I kpọrọ m nne maka (But you called me girl because)  
 Enyi gi nwanyị di ka añaraana (You did not want that you're dried  
 Stockfish like girl friend)  
 Okporoko eweere gi iwe (To be annoyed with you).
- Njoku: O bụ ihe I chere? (Is that what you think?)  
 O nwekwaghị ihe jikoro udele na baba. (There is no relationship  
 Between her and i)
- Ezinwanyi: Gini? What?  
 O nweghị ihe jikoro unu gi nọrọ pee If there is no relationship between  
 Ya ana-ahio gi aka n'ahia? (You and her why did you allow her to be  
 Touching you romantically in the market?)  
 A na-ejikwa oku ele afọ ime onwa asaa? (One does not need to look at  
 a seven months pregnancy with the light)

- Nke a m hụrụ n'anya ọcha ka ị na-agọ agọ .... (17) Is it this one that I saw with my naked eyes that you are denying...? (17).
- Njọkụ: N'ezi okwu, nani ahja ka ọ na-azụ m.  
Truly she only buys things from me.
- Ezinwanyị: Ọ na-abụnụ ọ zụrụ gi ahja.  
Gi azurukwa ya nke ya.  
So it means that when she buys from  
You, you also buy from her.
- Njọkụ: (ya ewelite afe zi ya) (He picks a dress and shows it to her)
- Ezii, lee afe m goteere gi (Ezii, look at the cloth that I bought for you)  
Afe a na-ewu ewu na Legosị ugbua. (This cloth is in vogue in Lagos  
now.
- Ezinwanyị: Ewoo!(Ahaa!)  
O nwerè nwa akwukwọ anyị ji afe (One of our students came back  
a lota ọlìdee. Ọ sị na ya zụrụ (from the holidays with this cloth. She  
said that she bought  
ya naira iri ise na Legosị. (it for fifty naira at Lagos)
- Njọkụ: O kwuru ezi okwu.  
She said the truth.
- Ezinwanyị: I meka oo (o jee mekuo ya.)  
Ezigbo m, mma mma. Daalụ..... (18).  
You have done well (she hugs him)  
My dear, I wish you well. Thank you ... (18).
- See pages 54, 55, 56,57,58,60,62,64,65.

Furthermore, the two major classifications of the couples involved in the dialogue above are further categorized according to their educational and economic empowerment and mood as follows:

- (i) **Dialogue Between Traditional uneducated women versus traditional, uneducated but economically empowered husbands:**
- (a) *Ihụnanya* by Ọdịnaaka Azubuike :dialogue between Chiifu Akụudo (husband) and Ịọlọ Akụudo (wife).
- (b) A dialogue between Mazi Ugonna (a king of Isuebu) and his wife Ụgbuakụ in his house
- (c) *Ugomma* by Godson Echebima :dialogue between Maz ị Obinna and his wife Enyidiya
- (d) *Obidiya* by Enyinna Akoma: a dialogue between Ọnụma and his wife Obidiya.
- (e) *Adaakụ* by Obioma B. Mogboğụ. (Emeribe and Nwejimalu the wife)

- (f1) *Nwata rie Awọ* (Ọ jụ anụ) by Goddy O. Onyekaonwụ: a dialogue between Obidike and his wife Nwamgbọgọ
- (f2): A dialogue between Okwukọgụ and Ụdụchi his wife.
- (f3): A dialogue between Awọrọ and his wife Ọdinchefu (a newly married couple).
- (g) *Nka dị na ntị* by B. Emeka Okoro: a dialogue between Ọji and his wife Ikodie.
- (h) *Ezinne* by Chika Anyasodo: a dialogue between Ezeji and Ezinne his wife.
- (I) A dialogue between Nwanyịugbo, Ụlọakụ (co-wives) and Njọkụ in *Oguamalam*.
- (J) A dialogue between Nwaịbarị, Ọbịagelị (co-wives) and Ikekwem in *Oguamalam*.

**(ii) Dialogue between Modern, Educated but dependent Women Versus Modern, uneducated but economically empowered husbands.**

The dialogues in this class are those between:

- (a) Adaakụ and Chiifu Ibe
- (b) Ugomma and Alozie in *Ugomma*.
- (c) Ezinwaanyị and Njọkụ in *Nka Dị Na Ntị*
- (d) Ekwuluonu and Ukaegbu in *Ajọ Nwa a Na-eku N'eku N'ikpere*.

**(iii) Dialogue Between School Lovers where both partners are educationally empowered but are dependent on their parents.**

- (a) Ihunanya and Ikechi in *Ihunanya*.
- (b) Ozuruigbo and Chinyere in *Okwe Agbaala*.
- (c) Amaka and Ikechukwu in *Onye kpaa Nkụ Ahụhụ*.

**(iv) Dialogue between Educationally Empowered But Dependent Females versus Educationally Empowered and Economically Empowered males. An example of such a dialogue is as bellow:**

- (a) Nnenna and Ikechukwu in *Onye kpaa Nkụ Ahụhụ*.