

**REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN PREDICAMENT AND PROTEST IN JULIE
OKOH'S *IN OUR OWN VOICES* AND IRENE ISOKEN SALAMI'S *MORE THAN
DANCING***

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BENIN CITY

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AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS(B.A. HONS.) DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE.

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study was carried out by Omoverere Blessing CLARK(MISS) in the department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin city under my supervision.

Dr. Clement Eloghosa Odia

Date

(Project Supervisor)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, the giver and sustainer of life, wisdom and understanding and the grace to eventually complete this project writing and to my beloved parents, Mr and Mrs Clark for their support and steadfastness in prayer.

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To my classmates(class of Elite 2025), thank you. To my friends: Fabian, Mary, Grace, Mulikat, Chisom, Favour, Loveth, Marvelous, Angel, Francis, Benedicta, and peace whom we have been together since 100 level till now(400 level) God bless you all. Gratitude would not be complete if I fail to thank these wonderful friends of mine: Deinfegha Perezidabofa(University of Port Harcourt) and Adams Emmanuel(University of Benin) who has been good/generous to me. I say thank you for all you do for me, God will reward all your efforts.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the representations of women predicament and protest in Julie Okoh's *In Our Own Voices* and Irene Isoken Salami's *More Than Dancing*. This research work adopts the feminism theory to potray how the play represents women. Julie Okoh in *In Our Own Voices* and Irene Isoken Salami in *More Than Dancing* present violence against women and cultural prejudice against women and articulate protest as response against women predicament through mass mobilization, women empowerment, and defiance.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Purpose of Study

This essay sets out to highlight how women are being represented in society and how they fought for their right through mass mobilization, women empowerment, and defiance.

1.2 Scope of Study

This essay is limited to two Selected Nigerian plays: Julie Okoh's *In Our Own Voices* and Irene Isoken Salami's *More Than Dancing*. Both plays are opposite of each other; while one subjugates, the other empowers.

1.3 Methodology

This essay adopts the qualitative method of analysis. That is, it is based on the two selected Nigerian plays. The primary research carried out on this essay is from the text while the secondary research carried out is sought from the Internet.

1.4 Theoretical Background

Feminism theory has always been a critical framework that looks at how society structures gender roles and expectations. It further examines the social, cultural, and economic structures that sustains gender inequality and oppression. Scholars across the globe have said one thing or the other about feminism theory and how it affects women. Below are the scholarly assertions: Haradhan Mohajan defines feminism as Women-based sociopolitical movement and ideology that supports the idea that Women should share equality in society's opportunities and scarce resources(2002). This definition on feminism

emphasizes that feminism is a movement(collective action) and also an ideology(a set of beliefs). It is "Women-based" means it centers around the likes of Women. The term sociopolitical shows feminism operates across both social structures(like family, culture, and education) and political systems(laws, governance, rights). "...that supports the idea that Women should share equality..." Feminism in this point of view is essentially about equality not superiority or separation. The phrase "share equality" means that women should have equal access, rights, and participation alongside men. "...in society's opportunities and scarce resources" this phrase highlights that feminism is not just about abstract ideas but about real-world access like opportunities which encompasses education, employment, leadership, healthcare, etc. while scarce resources such as political power, land, economic capital, safety. This scholar's definition recognizes that feminism must address material inequalities not just cultural attitudes.

However, Laura Brunell sees "feminism as a belief in full social, economic, and political equality for women". This definition frames feminism firstly as a belief system that is a guiding principle or worldview. It is not just a theory but a foundational conviction about how society should be structured. "...in full social, economic, and political equality..." emphasizes that feminism does not settle for partial or symbolic equality. It demands equal treatment and access three major aspects:

Social equality: Equal respect, representation, and freedom in everyday life i.e family, culture, education, and the media.

Economic equality: Fair wages, job opportunities, financial independence, and access to resources.

Political equality: Equal rights to vote, to be voted for, influence policies, and as well as participating in governance. "...for women" this phrase focuses on correcting historical and systemic imbalances that have disadvantaged women. It does not mean excluding Men but ensuring Women are no longer excluded from power and opportunity.

Furthermore, Bell Hooks defines "feminism as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression". Hook's emphasizes that feminism is not just a theory but an active movement. It involves collective action, organizing, education, and advocacy aimed at real change. "to end sexism..." Implies that it is not about elevating women above men but about dismantling sexism; the belief that one sex is superior to another. It targets the root cause of gender inequality not just its symptoms. "...sexist exploitation..." Refers to the ways sexism is used to benefit certain groups either economically, socially, or politically i.e underpaying women, objectifying them in the media or excluding them from leadership roles all are forms of sexist exploitation. "...and oppression". Hook implies that feminism must confront all systems that oppress women including racism, classism, homophobia, and colonialism. It recognizes that women experience oppression differently based on race, class, sexuality etc. Hooks ideology on feminism is revolutionary because it centers on justice rather than identity. It invites everyone into the movement not just Women. It demands structural change not just personal empowerment.

Apart from this, Betty Friedan defines "feminism as the advocacy of Women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes". Friedan's perspective on feminism is advocacy which implies an active push for change not just a belief or identity. It involves campaigning, organizing, and speaking out for women's rights in all areas of life i.e Education,

employment, family, politics etc. "...on the basis of the equality of the sexes". This phrase of Friedan is rooted in the idea that men and women are equal and should be treated as such. It is a call to dismantle systems that treat women as inferior or subordinate. Her focus is on gender parity suggesting equal pay, equal opportunity as well as equal respect. Friedan's work challenges the idea that women's fulfillment could only come from domestic life and motherhood. Instead, she advocated for women's right to education, careers, and self-determination.

Further than this, Judith Butler sees "feminism as a must be; concerned with the social construction of gender and the performative nature of identity". Butler argues that gender is not a fixed biological reality but a social construct; something shaped by cultural norms, expectations, and repeated behaviors. "Feminism must be concerned with the social construction of gender..." This means that what society calls "masculine or feminine" is not natural or inevitable, but learned and enforced. "...and the performative nature of identity" this implies that identity is performative, that is, it is not something we are, but something we do. Gender is performed through speech, dress, behaviour, and interaction. These performances create the illusion of a stable identity. For example, wearing makeup or speaking in a certain tone may be seen as "feminine", but these are acts that reinforce gender norms not expressions of a fixed inner truth. Butler's work challenges gender systems but recognizes the fluidity of identity.

In addition to this, Kimberle Crenshaw defines feminism as "intersectional feminism recognizes how race, class, gender, and other identities intersect to shape experiences of oppression". "Intersectional feminism recognizes..." This signals a shift from traditional

feminism, which often focused primarily on gender. Intersectional feminism is about recognizing complexity. It does not treat women as a single, uniform group. "how race, class, gender, and other identities intersect..." Crenshaw's key insight is that oppression is multidimensional. People do not experience discrimination based on gender alone; their race, class, sexuality, disability, and other identities all interact i.e A black Woman may face racism and sexism simultaneously, in ways that are not simply additive, but uniquely intertwined. "...to shape experiences of oppression" this means that systems of power like patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism do not operate in isolation. They overlap and reinforce each other, creating distinct experiences of marginalization. Intersectionality helps us understand why some women (especially women of colour, poor women, and queer women) face more intense or different forms of oppression than others.

In *Demarginalizing the Intersection Of Race and Sex*, Crenshaw critiques how legal and feminist frameworks often ignore the specific experiences of Black women - "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated".

Also, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie defines feminism as: "feminist: a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes". "Feminist: a person..." Adichie begins by emphasizing inclusivity. Feminism is not limited to women but it is a belief system that anyone can hold. This challenges the stereotype that feminism is anti-men or exclusive to women's experiences. "...who believes in the social, political, and economic equality..." She identifies three key spheres where equality must be pursued: Social equality:

Respect, Dignity, and Freedom in everyday life(family, culture, religion, and relationships).
Political equality: Equal rights to vote, lead, and shape laws and policies. Economic equality:
Fair access to jobs, pay, property, and financial independence. "...of the sexes" this phrase
affirms that feminism is about gender equality, not female superiority. It calls for
dismantling systems that privilege one sex over another especially Patriarchy, which
historically disadvantages women.

On the other hand, Nancy Cott defines "feminism as the belief that women should
not be treated as inferior to men and should have equal rights and opportunities". Cott begins
by framing feminism as a belief system; a guiding principle that informs thoughts, behaviour,
and policy. This makes feminism not just an activism but a conviction anyone can hold.
"...that women should not be treated as inferior to men..." This challenges the historical and
cultural assumption that women are naturally subordinate. Cott emphasizes that feminism is
a rejection of gender hierarchy(the idea that men are more capable, valuable, or deserving
than women). It critiques systems(like patriarchy) that institutionalize this inferiority
through laws, customs, and social norms. "...and should have equal rights and opportunities"
this is the slogan of liberal feminism: the push for legal and institutional equality. It includes:

Equal rights: Voting, property ownership, bodily autonomy, legal protection.

Equal opportunities: Access to education, employment, leadership, and public life. Cott's
definition of feminism reflects the first-wave and early second-wave feminist goals which
focused on: Suffrage, legal rights, workplace access, and educational equality.

Above all, Sylvia Walby defines "feminism as a theory of gender inequality and a movement to end it". Walby frames feminism as a theoretical lens that is, a way of understanding how society is structured. Specifically, it is a theory that explains gender Inequality: the systemic ways in which women are disadvantaged compared to men. This includes disparities in: Power(political representation, leadership). Resources (income, property, education). Freedom(bodily autonomy, legal rights). Cultural value(representation in media, religion, tradition).

Walby's work is known for identifying Patriarchy as a system of social structures that perpetuate male dominance. In theorizing Patriarchy, she highlights six key structures: paid work, household production, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state. These structures interact to maintain gender inequality across both public and private spheres. "...and a movement to end it" Feminism is not just about understanding inequality it is about dismantling it. Walby emphasizes that feminism is also a social movement, involving activism, policy change, education, and cultural transformation. It is a call to action that is, to challenge patriarchal systems and build a more equitable society. Walby critiques earlier feminist theories for being too simplistic. She argues that patriarchy is not monolithic; it varies across cultures, classes, and historical periods.

Lastly, Oglethorpe Shirley et al defines feminism as: "feminism is often defined from a liberal perspective focusing on Male/Female similarities and equal rights". This phrase "often defined" implies that this is a popular or dominant interpretation, not necessarily the only one. It reflects how feminism is perceived in everyday settings, especially in educational environments. "...from a liberal perspective..." This refers to liberal feminism, a

branch of feminist thought that emphasizes: Individual rights, legal equality, and access to opportunities. Liberal feminism tends to work within existing systems (like law, education, and politics) to promote gender equality. "... focusing on Male/Female similarities..." This highlights a key idea in liberal feminism: that men and women are fundamentally similar in capabilities and worth. It challenges stereotypes that women are naturally less rational, strong, or competent than men. The goal is to remove barriers that prevent women from accessing the same roles and rights as men. "...and equal rights" this is the core of liberal feminism: equality under the law. It includes equal pay, voting rights, educational access, and freedom from discrimination. The emphasis is on fair treatment, not necessarily on restructuring society or challenging deeper cultural norms(as radical or intersectional feminism might).

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship

Patriarchal subjugation has always been the dominant ideology of society implying that women have no say even over their own lives. Society plays a crucial role in backing male domination over the women folks. This has been a recurring issue in the cycle of life for women and scholars overtime has said a thing or two about Julie Okoh's *in our own voices* and Irene Isoken Salami's *More Than Dancing* giving their respective views on both plays as seen below: Okemgbo et al observe that sexual violence/rape against wives is embedded in the male ideology, where the husband will abuse his wife where something is not done to his satisfaction. Okemgbo et al inform that "About twenty-one percent of the respondents surveyed reported having ever been forced to have sexual intercourse against their will and this happened most between the ages 15-49(p. 231). This excerpt shows how

society supports male dominated beliefs over women. The issue of sexual violence is common among married women and about 21% of them is forced into sexual violence against their will; they range between 15-49 in age. This statistics shows that marital rape is a serious issue. It has gained societal influence and is often normalized.

Barbara Berg made comments on Julie Okoh's sense of feminist struggle when she stated that: it is freedom(for a woman) to decide her own destiny: freedom from sex determined roles; freedom from society's oppressive restrictions; freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely into action. Feminism demands the acceptance of woman's right to individual conscience and judgement. It postulates that women's essential worth stems from their common humanity and does not depend on the relationships of her life(cited in Bell 24). This excerpt emphasizes on freedom and self-determination for women. It talks about reclaiming the right to define one's own life, feelings and actions without being tossed around by societal expectations. It talks about the freedom to choose one's destiny, society should not assign roles based on gender, freedom from oppressive cultural restrictions and lastly a woman's value comes from her being human not from her relationship or roles.

Spivak observes, "the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman's caught between tradition and modernity"(p. 242). In this excerpt, spivak challenges how global narratives often fail to truly understand or respect Third world women. She says their image is caught in a violent confusing struggle between two forces: Tradition: Cultural expectations, customs, and roles that may limit women's freedom. Modernity: New ideas,

global influences, and progress that promise change but can also be overwhelming or alienating. The phrase "violent shuttling" suggests the woman is pulled back and forth between these two worlds(tradition and modernity), and that constant tension distorts how she's seen by others. Her identity becomes unclear, misrepresented, or even lost.

Doris Onyemachi(2016) says: It is "a conflict perspective that presents the needs, values, beliefs, goals, and interests of females which go contrary to the functional practices existing in that society"(p. 348). This scholar describes a conflict perspective that shows how women's values, beliefs, and goals often challenge the traditional system and roles that society expects them to follow. That is, society looks at power struggle and inequality but women wants to rise above those limitations of society and make name for themselves but society being an hindrance to women's progress brings about conflicting perspectives.

Mary Wollenstonecraft says: "confined in a cage like the birds they have nothing to do than to plum themselves...to the desire of establishing...the only way women can rise in the world is by marriage"(p. 75). The ideology Mary Wollenstonecraft drafts out here is that, she exemplifies metaphorical imagery by comparing women to birds confined in a cage. That is, society limits women's advancement to pursue purpose and ambition to getting married to elevate ones status.

Nwabueze says: Gender inequality and the marginalization of women in politics are persistent issues in many societies, including Nigeria. Despite progress in democratic governance, women continue to face numerous barriers and prejudices that limit their participation and representation in political leadership roles. The problem at hand is the underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics and the challenges they encounter in

asserting their political commitment and influence(p. 52). Nwabueze highlights the ongoing problems of gender Inequality in politics, especially in Nigeria. Even though the country has made progress in democracy, women are still being marginalized in leadership roles. Social attitudes and systemic obstacles make it hard for women to participate fully in politics because there are very few women in political leadership; which means their voices and ideologies are missing from decision making. This exclusion is evident in the traditional roles assigned to women, where they are primarily expected to serve as entertainers and dancers during political events, as depicted in Irene Isoken Salami's *More Than Dancing*(Salami,23).

Mobolanle(2008) says "the growth of feminism began in Europe and America in the nineteenth century but today women have become conscious of their oppression and marginalization and took steps to redress this oppression"(pp. 2-3). This quote exemplifies the decision of the women being represented by professor Nona Ighodaro to repeat the achievements their foremothers during the colonial period engaged in that brought victory to the women folks. They took steps to challenge and change the system that oppressed them by speaking with one voice and vie for the highest of all position(Presidential position).

Ekpe, Aloba and Egbe(2014) note that: women were considered inferior and their participation at all levels of government, discouraged. In fact, some communities considered it a taboo for women to take active roles in governance. Many qualified women were forced to play minor roles in the margins or were frustrated out of governance(p. 18). This quote highlights how gender discrimination has shaped political systems, especially in places where patriarchal norms dominate. The authors are pointing out that women were

historically seen as inferior and were discouraged from participating in government. In some communities, it was even considered a taboo for women to take leadership roles. Qualified women were sidelined, many were frustrated out of leadership and also cultural beliefs played a big role in shaping the life cycle of women.

Tse (2010) says: *More Than Dancing* is a reflection of the political situation in Nigeria, where patriarchy reigns supreme. In Nigeria, only the men control all the resources available. Women are also under the control of men. Nigerian men do not believe that women too have the potential to rule (p. 119). This quote implies the misogynistic view of the patriarchal structure. It shows men dominates the political system in Nigeria making patriarchy reigns supreme while women are viewed as subordinates. They control the country's resources and opportunities. The deep rooted misogynistic belief is that many Nigerian men do not believe that women are capable of ruling or leading effectively.

Chidinma 2023 says: Political choices are typically made in favour of the men when the majority of a party's executive members are men (p. 22). This quote points out that politics often favour's men especially when most of the party's executive members are male. In other words, the people in power tend to shape political language in a way that reflects their own interests and if they are mostly men, then women's perspectives are often left out. This view brings in gender bias in politics. That is, when leadership is dominated by men, political statements and decisions tend to reflect male priorities rather than balance the equation. In this case, power shapes language that is, the people who holds power also influence how political ideas are communicated.

1.6 Thesis Statement

Julie Okoh in *In Our Own Voices* and Irene Isoken Salami in *More Than Dancing* present violence and cultural prejudice against women and articulate protest as response against women predicament through mass mobilization, women empowerment, and defiance.

CHAPTER TWO

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The violence against women cannot be over emphasised in Julie Okoh's *in our own voices*. Violence is used as a tool to oppress women and it adversely effects the victims. Okoh's portrayal of violence against women includes: sexual abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, forced marriage, and physical violence.

2.1 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse can have a profound and lasting impact on a survivor's mental health, relationships, and overall well being. It brings about a long-term emotional damage to the victim. That is, the victim may not be able to speak out to avoid the wrath or the threat by their perpetrators or even if they speak out, who would believe them? But they would rather be accused of seducing the perpetrator by asking what they were wearing before the incident occurred. Woman I explains the phenomenon of sexual abuse thus: "our neighbour, a sixty years old man, began to show interest in me. He used fetish charms to woo me it didn't work. One day, I was in the bush, collecting herbs for my father he ambushed me and forced himself on me. That happened four times. I couldn't tell anybody because of fear. I am telling you now as I am telling God" (Okoh,72). This excerpt clearly shows sexual abuse. The victim does not agree to the neighbour's proposal and so the neighbour decides to use fetish charms on her which does not work. Okoh uses contrast in age to criticise the Fulani society. This sixty years old man in question is old enough to father the victim/offer fatherly counsel to her in times of distress or even if he has the woman in mind, he can do the the

right thing by going to see her parents to ask for her hand in marriage but no, he does not think first but acts fast.

The society also is not in favour of the woman, any blame and fault is always the woman's, no one blames the man for putting her in such condition, everybody is ready to throw stones at the woman for getting pregnant out of wedlock, even the Court of law whom we feel would be of help in times of problems to settle dispute is standing with the society against the woman. "at age 35, I was sentenced to death, by stoning by a sharia court in Sokoto because I was found to be pregnant outside wedlock. The judge decreed that I should be buried up to my neck in a pit and that only men should throw stones at my head until I die. The conviction was to be executed after giving birth to the baby"(Okoh,71). This excerpt shows the inhumane nature of the law whom we look up to. Woman VII gets pregnant out of wedlock which is a fact and against the Fulani tradition, supported by the Sharia Court in Sokoto. It takes two gametes to produce a baby but why is it just the one carrying the pregnancy being punished? To crown it all, the Court is saying the perpetrator's gender should be the ones to throw stones at the victim which is hypocritical of the court indicating patriarchal rule over morality. The court in defense also uses religion as a blindfold against the victim: "it is the law of Allah. We are just complying with the laws of Allah. So, we don't have anything to worry about"(Okoh,72). The judge uses God to hide the mind of the society over the woman folk saying it is what God wants which is a false statement. God is not biased in His judgement. If He is to intervene in this case, the perpetrator who made her pregnant would also receive his own share of the punishment but in actual sense, it is just a way to subjugate the woman.

Woman VI also has her share in sexual abuse victimization. "The experience made me sexually hyperactive. Oh yes! That is very, very correct. Ha-ha-ha-ha! How did it happen? Yeah, how did it happen?"(Okoh,55). This excerpt shows the consequences of being sexually abused. A naive child at a tender age who does not even know how to bath properly let alone wash her undies is already introduced into sexual activities by her pedophile uncle. This experience is not what one would wish for his or her girl child otherwise the level of bewilderment would be outrageous. "As we were watching television in the sitting room, uncle gave me biscuit and Fanta. After having a sip, I dozed off. Later, I felt a heavy weight on top of me. I struggled to push him away, rose to my feet"(Okoh,56). This excerpt shows the length at which a pedophile can go to have his way with his victim. Just imagine, a very little child whom the pedophile uncle carried when at infancy, he had the mind of deflowering her to satisfy his desires. The notion the victim would have of men coming close to her when she grows to adulthood would not be good. The effect would be downtrodden and anyone would not want to experience such. An uncle she feels she can look up to if her parents are not around now turns into a stranger before her very eyes. "Fear, anger, depression and emotional pain became my companions throughout the evening"(Okoh,56). This excerpt shows how a victim reacts to sexual abuse. In all honesty, a negative impact one is not used to arouses the above. This makes victims of sexual abuse to isolate themselves from the public. The victim in this except has parents who are of no use to her. People whom can protect and nurture her in love are always fighting and abusing one another without knowing such vice influences the child negatively. Some children grow up with the mindset of since my parents are doing it means it is good and so they take upon

themselves the mentality of beating/fighting their spouses in marriage which is unlawful. In this case, the parents were negligent of their child's well-being.

Mother asked uncle Femi to stay with me until Aduke returned. I screamed: "No-o-oh! I don't want to stay with him. Mummy, take me with you to the prayer-house," I pleaded. She said the meeting was for adults, only. "Please mother, don't leave me with Uncle, I'm afraid." "Why are you afraid of him?" She queried: I wanted to explain but I quickly closed my mouth when I remembered the death threat hanging over my mother's head as well as mine"(Okoh,57).

In this excerpt, the mother of the victim is unable to decipher the pleading voice of the tormented victim who consistently refuses to live with the tormentor. The child prefers to go with the mother rather than remain with the abusive man. The mother's preference for the prayer-house underscores her need of divine deliverance or intervention on her family. One should be wise enough in dealing with family affairs like the title of woman VI's story says "shine your eyes":

Woman I as well experiences sexual abuse but in marriage. "After receiving insults from him, I usually rebuffed his sexual advances. But without caring for my feelings or condition, he would assert: "You are my wife. I paid bride price on you. You belong to me. Whether you like it or not, I will have it"(Okoh,11). This excerpt shows instances of sexual dissatisfaction from one's own spouse, emotional negligence and communising a full grown adult simply because a bride price was paid on her head. Marital rape is not what one will

like to experience, even if bride price is paid on one's head, it does not warrant one being ruthless towards one's spouse.

2.2 Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Emotional/psychological abuse involves the manipulation, intimidation, and degradation of an individual's emotions and mental well-being. This form of abuse leaves victims with depression and stigmatization which later turns to isolation. It may not leave physical marks on the individual but it causes severe long-term damage to the victim. Below are instances of emotional/psychological abuse represented in the play:

And the more the abuses increased, became worse any time I got promotion at work. Not only would he telephone some of my colleagues to find out if I was sleeping with any of my bosses, often, he made me feel incompetent and inadequate. He made mockery of me even in public, just to belittle me before friends and relatives(Okoh,11).

This excerpt shows public humiliation on woman I by her so called "affable, genial and good natured husband" (Okoh,6). This act alone is emotionally demoralising. The husband at every instance suspects his wife over infidelity due to her promotions at work. The husband, lacks trust for his wife, he always feels insecure about her success. He prefers disgracing her in public by abusing her in presence of friends and relatives. At every promotion, he calls her colleagues and bosses to find out if his wife have been sleeping around to earn her promotions and this makes the wife feel incompetent. To her, it is

heartbreaking and depressive. If the husband can insult her publicly, he can do worse in private. One should prayerfully be careful in the dealings of marital bliss, watch with the eyes and pray to God for the unseen, do not cover red flags. When one speaks up they know where they stand not when one have entered the marriage one will begin to see what was overlooked. "In the early stage of our relationship, I saw warning signs. But, I didn't attach any importance to them" (Okoh,6). This excerpt agrees to the fact that woman I ignores the warning signs before marriage and did not speak up then perhaps love blinded her eyes or she just want to be in the league of married women to shame her single friends as a result of not communicating an ill behavior of her partner, she got the result in marriage. A spouse ought to be one's confidante not the weapon fashioned against one as it is the case in the excerpt above:

The abuses really appeared after I've had my first child. He wanted to take full control of my life. I must account to him every movement I made and every action I took but, playfully, playfully, I resisted. Then, his possessive and controlling behaviors slowly intensified as the relationship grew.... Liar, cheat, the sky tortoise, wicked woman.... 'You dunce, you idiot, you "yeye" woman!'....
You swine!(Okoh,7).

This excerpt shows the authoritative nature of patriarchal rule. A husband should not use derogatory words on his wife who he claims to love. As a matter of fact, She bears him children. All she wants is his love and affection towards her which fosters cordial relationship between mother and child other than passing aggression to innocent child/children who is/are ignorant sometimes of what is going on and may not have the mind

of fighting for their mother. Such words pierce directly one's heart, it in all honesty hurts one's feelings. No one would like to be hurt with words, even if strangers do it, it will not hurt unlike when it is coming from a closest person one have shared mutual conjugation with. Emotional maturity should be one of the criteria one looks at before accepting to get married. Okoh uses the tone of the husband to depict patriarchal rule and that the woman should keep shut while the man is talking for the husband is always right, his words are final and there is nothing the wife can do because she is under his authority.

Woman III also has her share of emotional/psychological abuse as shown in this excerpt: "You stink awful! Please go to your hut", he mutters why won't I stink? Answer me, why won't I? You know very well about my health condition. Yet, you embarrass me, just to torment me. "But you smell very awful? I can't stand it", he grumbles" (Okoh,25). This scene clearly portrays the level of emotional torture which women from the remote part of northern Nigeria undergo. First, a teenager at eleven is already betrothed to an old man in her grandfather's age bracket. The old man shamelessly goes ahead to abuse her sexually to the point of impregnating her without considering any biological rebound. The old man who is responsible for the pregnancy cares less about the state of the health of the little girl he has forced into his household as a wife, he complains she stinks, he does not want to be held accountable for her ailment. The question Alhaji Musa should be asking is if it were to be his own daughter, how would he cope? Not "you smell awful? I can't stand it"(Okoh,25). The victim did not put herself in such condition, Alhaji Musa did so he has to take full responsibility of her. Vesico vaginal fistula(VVF) is a common syndrome rampant in the remote part of northern Nigeria. No one would like to be said to that you stink not only stink but awfully stinks, it hurts no doubt.

Woman III as well was verbally abused in the excerpt below:

My mother in-law, her attitude suddenly changed. I dreaded her visits. Any time she came, she taunted me, called me awful names: "old boy, how can two adult men live together in one house?" "I am not a man", I protested. "Prove your womanhood! Give me an heir! You have been married for how many years now?" She demanded(Okoh,36).

This excerpt is a damage to woman IV's being. Her inability to become pregnant is not her fault but due to ignorant parents of an evil tradition. As a responsible husband who met his wife being chaste not promiscuous should know better to see his wife through such condition not joining his mother to ridicule his wife even going as far as bringing another woman into the house to bare children for him. No woman would like to be bruised like this. It takes process to achieve an aim, he should have sought for medical advise other than scattering his home by allowing his mother take control of his home and also bringing another woman into the house that is a slap/insult to his wife. It shows he does not respect his wife but revered his mother over her. Third party most times in a marital union is a no, no. Having issues in marriage, one should seek a mature therapist or better still talk to God in secret. This mother in-law in this excerpt maybe envious of the love her son has for his wife and in her heart wished her own husband had done same to her but because of the wife's inability to reproduce, she now has a way to attack her by bringing in conflict into the marriage, where there was no error before or what the husband do not see anything reasonable in to talk about, this mother in-law would begin to point flaws out in other to frustrate the wife in the marriage.

2.3 Forced Marriage

Awareness in this kind of marriage is not known as one's opinion does not count, it is later on one would realize they have been given out in marriage. This kind of marriage is a contract marriage as seen in Okoh's portrayal of forced marriage in this excerpt:

I was about 11 years old when my father took me to Alhaji Musa's compound to be helping his wife for she was heavily pregnant.... My father had gone to his farm. Only my mother was at home when I arrived. I narrated to her Alhaji Musa's strange behavior. It was then she explained to me that my father had borrowed some money from Alhaji Musa. Since he couldn't pay back when it was due, Alhaji demanded my hand in marriage in lieu of the debt(Okoh,26,27).

In this excerpt, woman III is unaware that she is married already, if not that her mother calmly explained to her how her father had used her as a collateral for a debt he could not pay back, she would not have known. Poverty is truly a disease. If woman III's father had been buoyant enough to cater for his own needs he would not have sold his daughter into a marriage she does not want. For fear of what Alhaji Musa is going to do by dawn if he had not taken his daughter by himself to Alhaji, he warned his daughter against coming to his house. "Alhaji was full of smile when he saw us. Before leaving, my father warned me sternly never to let him see my feet in his house again unless Alhaji Musa permitted me"(Okoh,27). Just imagine the audacity of a father over his teenage daughter. A home she has always known to be peaceful and entertaining now turns to a restricted building. Every

action taken always have a consequence, the result of forced marriage on woman III became vesico vaginal fistula which claims thousands of life, it was just in her favour she did not die during the child birth but went home damaged internally.

2.4 Domestic Violence

The intention of causing harm, injury or fear to another person is what result to domestic violence. "It has been observed that it is not always easy to tell at the beginning of a relationship if it will become abusive. This is largely because many abusive partners may seem absolutely perfect in the early stages of a relationship. Possessive and controlling behaviors do not always appear overnight, rather, emerge and intensify as the relationship grows"(National Domestic Violence Hotline). "Domestic Violence includes the use of physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse and economic deprivation "(Nigeria Delta Journal of Gender, peace and conflict Studies,400). Okoh's portrayal of domestic violence are seen in the excerpt below: "My husband, when you see him you'd think he could never hurt a fly.... In the early stage of our relationship, I saw warning signs. But I didn't attach any importance to them"(Okoh,6). This excerpt shows pretense in marriage. The husband puts up good character in public but when at home, the beast in him evolves. He pretends to be who he is not just to frustrate his wife. He cannot work on his anger issues but unleashes it at every instance on his wife. If the husband disfigures her face, she would not be as pretty as she was when he first saw her. Some men just marry women who tolerate their bad behaviors and call it peace of mind over the ones that corrects them of their unruly behaviours. There are always warning signals before the journey of marriage, but if one ignores them in courtship, it would result to domestic

violence in marriage because the person would be the one to dance to the tune of the music they allowed to play out while in courtship. Ill behaviours one do not confront while in courtship, one would learn to deal with it when in marriage. "He wanted to take full control of my life. I must account to him every movement I made and every action I took.... Before giving me money for shopping, I must itemize what I wanted to buy and how much each item would cost"(Okoh,7). Accountability is good and the utmost priority of a marital union but if it coerces, it simply means the relationship is not built on trust from the beginning. Woman I's husband displays immaturity. The husband forces the wife into doing things he wants. He expects her to obey his orders without objecting. Whomever loves gives because it is from within. Okoh portrays the husband as a miser. Do not be surprised this same man spends lavishly on women outside knowing fully well that his wife is suffering financially in marriage. In such marriages, one will hear things like the husband has built a house somewhere from a stranger and the wife may not know because the husband she married is stingy with his finances/orientation about life or may even have another family somewhere and on hearing, the wife is just dumb founded when the news gets to her. He just sees the wife as a baby factory and a cook anything other than these two is none of her business. "I was so scared. I wanted to pack my things and leave. But when I thought of our children, I changed my mind"(Okoh, 9). This mindset of if I leave the marriage what will happen to my children have sent many women into early graves. Those children woman I is thinking about would move on as soon as possible. The victim is financially capable not that she is a stay at home mum, she can cater for her children why can she not leave the marriage with her kids and seek redress from the court other than wallowing in a marriage the society she is looking at would say a thing or two once she leaves the marriage will still say when it became toxic,

why did she not leave? One should learn to love oneself more and prioritize mental health and peace of mind over a failed marriage. It did not work out, one would know they did their best. In response to domestic violence, Okoh says "domestic violence puts strain on our society as well as on our national economy for, the violence occurs in varied forms in thousands of households across the nation. In the homes of the poor as well as of the rich. In the rural areas as well as in the cities women are suffering women are dying everyday. Rivers of blood flows ceaselessly under the crushing weight of violence and it is affecting all types of women"(Okoh,5).

In Okoh's statement, she frowns at domestic violence stating women are suffering and dying everyday, she insist on speaking up against any form of violence one is going through. By speaking up, one would get help, if woman I had not spoken up to her parents about her marriage, the husband would not have been arrested for attempted murder and she may die in the process and everyone would move on like nothing happened. violence against women comes in various forms as seen by the excerpts Okoh uses to depict patriarchal rule over fairness.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURAL PREJUDICE AGAINST WOMEN

In many African societies, cultural traditions have long served as a tool to suppress women. Cultural prejudice have in several ways been gender biased. According to the EBSCO Research starter on cultural prejudice and discrimination, cultural prejudice and discrimination refer to the negative beliefs and actions directed at individuals based on their cultural, racial, or religious identities. Cultural prejudice has caused more harm than good. It has revealed itself in different forms towards the female gender. Cultural prejudice according to the playwright reflects in the following ways: Widow's ordeal, Circumcision and Girl Child Marriage.

3.1 Widow's Ordeal

The challenges, hardships and emotional struggles Widows from the Eastern part of Nigeria go through are disheartening. Widows are often accused of crimes they do not commit simply because they are Widows. The Widows experience different sorts of ill treatments. Woman V narrates her experience from her late husband's family:

My husband died suddenly. When he was about to be buried, his family sent an emissary to our house in Owerri to accompany the corpse from the mortuary to the village. That morning, before leaving our house, they went from room to room, took an inventory of everything, then, locked up the house, and gave the key to the oldest among them(Okoh,47).

This excerpt shows the actions taken against a widow whose Husband left properties before his demise. The excerpt arouses pity in the mind of the reader towards the victim. The tone of the speaker is the pain of ejection. Her mood is of emotional instability. She speaks with grief in her heart. Her husband has not been buried yet but tension from his family members is killing her silently. Firstly, it is sending an emissary, secondly, it is checking from one room to the other and lastly, locking the house and giving the key to the oldest among them. The excerpt further implies that the house now has new owners and new policies thereby restricting Woman V from entering the house.

The family gathered as soon as we arrived. To my great amazement, I became the primary suspect of my husband's death. They sat me on the bare floor facing the elders of the family and they asked me to explain when and how my husband died... They claimed they were not satisfied with my explanations that it is strange for a healthy man to die on his way to work. So, I should confess what I did to him before he left the house(Okoh,48).

This excerpt mirrors the imagery of criminal prosecution to Woman V. Firstly, she is seen as the primary suspect of her husband's death, secondly, the members of her husband's household makes her sit on the bare floor just like criminals are coerced. They question her to explain on how and when their brother died giving the details chronologically to appease them. They compel her to confess to all that she knows on the ill fated event that happen to their brother. This interrogation strips Woman V of her dignity ridiculing her to a common criminal. This excerpt makes use of metaphor, indirectly comparing Woman V to a criminal.

They insisted that I must take an oath to prove my innocence. They led me to the room where they laid his corpse on a bier. They scrubbed his body, squeezed the water into a bowl and gave it to me to drink, saying that if I die during the one year mourning period, that would confirm me guilty of his murder, which is an abomination(Okoh,48).

This excerpt creates a mental image of a court room. Woman V is compelled to take an oath to prove her innocence of the allegation hanging over her head. The oath requires drinking the water squeezed into a bowl that is scrubbed from her husband's corpse. This is a condition placed on her without conscience and human sympathy. This oath taking places her in a labyrinth that cannot be escaped.

I tried to explain what bacterium is. But they would not listen. They claimed that I was trying to evade taking the oath. "That is not true", I replied. They insisted that I must take the oath, if not, my husband's corpse would not be buried(Okoh,48).

This excerpt shows emotional threat on Woman V. The late husband's family members try to blackmail her saying she is trying to evade the oath by explaining to them what bacterium means which may cause her harm if she takes the water used in washing her husband's corpse. They add that her husband will not be buried if she does not take the oath and this will make Woman V a mockery because society will speak against her saying she does not permit her husband to be buried properly.

Soon after putting my husband in the grave, I was put into widowhood. The Umuada, daughters of the clan led me to an open compound, without any privacy. Surrounded only by the Umuada, I was stripped naked... From there, I was led to my place of seclusion, A dingy room without any furniture, But with just an old mat placed on the floor, on which I was to sit and sleep throughout the wailing period(Okoh,49).

This excerpt evokes raw visual imagery "stripped naked", "open compound" and "dingy room". It gives the audience a sensory experience of shame, exposure, and neglect. This imagery shows the Widow's humiliation and suffering, making her emotional state pitiable. Her nakedness symbolizes vulnerability to the public and loss of social status. The dingy room signifies deprivation of comfort. The tone of the speaker is somber and mournful. The first person narrative is used in this excerpt. Woman V speaks from an emotional point of view making the audience to undergo catharsis. The Umuada symbolizes traditional power structure of the Igbo culture.

My food was prepared separately from the family meal by Widows. The food was cooked in old broken earthen pots. And also served with old broken plates. I was not allowed to eat with a spoon nor drink water with a decent cup. Neither was I allowed to wash my hands after eating nor take my bath during the period. And I was to wear the same sack clothes for the 40days. At the end of the wailing period, all the

utensils used for preparing my food, the mat on which I slept and the clothes I wore during the wailing period were bundled together and put on my head, to go and throw into the evil forest(Okoh,50).

This excerpt speaks of social alienation. From the word "separately", Woman V is socially excluded from dining with other members of the household. "Broken earthen pots" and "plates" symbolizes not just material poverty but emotional brokenness. They strip the Widow of dignity and pride. The "evil forest" connotes rejection, fear and social discard. Throwing her belongings into the evil forest marks her ritual pollution and perceived danger to communal purity. The use of "old broken plates", "dirty cups", "utensils" and eating with bare hands creates a sensory imagery of degradation. The tone is oppressive and ritualistic indicating systemic form of suffering. The first person voice draws the reader into Woman V's private world of mourning. The excerpt exposes how rituals reduces the Widow to symbolic impurity rather than honouring her grief. The role of other Widows in enforcing the ritual process suggest a complex system of oppression within the culture.

On our return, I uttered the final wailing. After that, the final rites of purification were performed before I could come out from my place of seclusion. Then, they asked me to provide a white goat, a basket of cocoa yam, 40 litres of palm oil, and two jars of palm wine for the Umuada who had been attending to me during the period of seclusion(Okoh,50).

This excerpt shows situational irony. One would expect the mourning Widow, someone grieving and emotionally vulnerable to be cared for and supported by her community. Instead, she is asked to pay tribute gifts of food and livestock to the very group that enforced her isolation and ritual suffering. The tone is ritualistic and solemn reflecting the gravity of death and mourning rites. The mood leans towards emotionally heavy resignation, as the speaker follows deeply ingrained customs. The "white goat" symbolize purity and sacrifice, items like "cocoa yam, palm oil and palm wine" symbolizes transactional form of cleansing. "Final wailing" represents a symbolic farewell, deeply rooted in cultural expressions of grief.

The evening before my departure from the village, they called a family meeting during which I was asked to indicate which of the five brothers I would like to marry as tradition demands. I told them i was not interested in any of them. I don't love any of them at all. Not at all! They said, in that case, I must surrender to them every document relating to my husband's bank accounts, investments and landed properties. They delegated three men to accompany me to Owerri to retrieve every document that was in my possession(Okoh,51).

This excerpt exemplifies patriarchal power over fairness. The demand for bank documents and properties symbolizes the material consequences of resisting patriarchy. These assets becomes token of power and control. Marriage to one of the brothers symbolizes the continuity of lineage of a kinsman in traditional Igbo culture. The tone of the speaker is defiant, resisting patriarchal control over emotional stability. The repetition of "Not at all!"

dramatizes emotional tension and highlights the victim's inner rebellion against traditional exploitation. There is conflict between tradition Vs independence. Woman V is pressured to perform customary obedience, but she asserts her emotional truth. Emotional blackmail disguised as cultural expectation is starkly exposed. Woman V displays assertiveness, emotional intelligence and resistance to coercion. Her refusal to enter transactional marriage deepens her moral strength and individuality. The excerpt uses situational irony. The Widow is expected to show loyalty to tradition by marrying a man she does not love, and her punishment for refusal is forfeiting her late husband's properties. The tradition that should provide communal support instead strips her of dignity and security.

When I entered our house in Owerri, I was shocked to find it completely empty. Every movable object had been removed. I asked my in-laws for an explanation. They claimed that every asset in the house belonged to their late brother. So, they had moved the things to the village. I told them that was a wrong assumption. For, we both contributed to the family asset...(Okoh,52).

This excerpt begins with the tone of the speaker in shock. There is a quiet underlying rage wrapped in formality, the speaker is not just surprised but witnessing an act of erasure. The phrase "completely empty" paints a visual picture of loss, both physical and emotional. The emptiness becomes a symbolism for absence not just of the speaker's partner, but of fairness and support. There is clear external conflict between the Widow and her in-laws. But beneath that lies a more systemic conflict: tradition Vs truth and entitlement Vs equity.

"Moved to the village" symbolizes returning assets to ancestral male control; a gesture loaded with cultural symbolism around ownership and inheritance. The house itself becomes a battleground, no longer a shared sanctuary but a contested place against Woman V's peace and her in-law's agitations. The use of situational irony is expressed. The Widow returns to a place of supposed emotional refuge only to find herself robbed not by strangers but by family. It underscores the betrayal that can be embedded within cultural customs. This excerpt is a metaphor for how patriarchal systems can erase even shared histories. It is a cry for justice wrapped in a domestic scene.

3.2 Circumcision

Female Gender Multilation (FGM) is a harmful practice involving the removal or alteration of female genitalia performed for cultural or traditional reasons with the aim to allegedly limit promiscuity. Woman IV shares her plight through this excerpt:

In the village of my birth, they used to tell us: "Don't let any man touch you, or else you become pregnant. Don't let any man step across your legs or else you become pregnant. Don't do this, don't do that, or else you become pregnant. You must keep yourself intact until marriage. For when a woman is virtuous, it is easy for her to conceive." So I kept myself intact and pure until my wedding night...(Okoh,35).

In this excerpt, the rhythmically repeated commands "Don't let" and "Don't do" Mirror oppressive instruction and psychological conditioning. It reveals how cultural beliefs are

impacted into young girls, almost like a mantra. The tone begins with a cautionary voice, almost threatening("or else you become pregnant"), but subtly shifts to reflective compliance. The phrase "step across your legs" pictures a visceral imagery of intrusion and taboo. The bodily metaphors highlights how a Woman's physical autonomy is treated as sacred yet monitored. The emphasis on being "intact" and "pure" evokes purity as both spiritual and physical. The narrative voice is a first person narration. It allows the reader to hear a personal history shaped by communal dogma. Her obedience is not painted as heroic but as tragic compliance giving the excerpt emotional depth. Situational irony is evident in the excerpt. The intense control over the speaker's body is framed as protective, yet it stems from fear, not care. The belief that purity guarantees fertility is presented without question, which deepens the dramatic irony. "Intact and pure" symbolizes the societal obsession with virginity and how it defines a woman's worth. Purity is not just a physical state but a currency in the marriage economy.

Years later, one of my nieces, a student nurse, came to spend her vacation with me. One evening, in the middle of our discussion, she asked: "Aunty, have you ever tried to find out the cause of your barrenness?... "It is circumcision," she averred. "Circumcision?" "I can't see the connection". By the way, why did you agree to have it done. I was pressurized. By my grandparents, parents and relations. So, due to immense family pressure, I accepted to have it done, together with the other young maidens in our compound. Some of us were healed after a couple of weeks. Some of us were sick for a very long time.

Others died after a long illness. Personally, I suffered from different type of illness...(Okoh,43,44).

In this excerpt, the narrator is painted as a product of her environment. Obedient, pressured, and ultimately harmed. Her niece represents modern insight, questioning tradition with a scientific lens and empathy. "Barrenness" symbolizes both physical loss and emotional emptiness; a void created by ritual. The pressure from family mirrors society's insistence on conformity at the expense of individual well-being. The narrator participates in a tradition meant to ensure virtue and belonging, but suffers illness and infertility. What is perceived as honourable ends up inflicting lasting harm. The tone begins with calm reflection, but quickly shifts into somber and confessional tone. The niece becomes a catalyst for revelation, highlighting the gap between generational knowledge with medical awareness.

3.3 Girl Child Marriage

Giving the girl child in marriage in the remote part of Northern Nigeria means nothing to the members of her household. As the saying goes, a Woman's place is in the kitchen. Woman III narrates her ordeal as she is too young to be a mother in this excerpt:

My father had gone to his farm. Only my mother was at home when I arrived. I narrated to her Alhaji Musa's strange behavior. It was then she explained to me that my father had borrowed money from Alhaji Musa. Since he couldn't pay back when it was due, Alhaji demanded my hand in marriage in lieu of the debt...(Okoh,27).

In this excerpt, the narrator is thrown into a crisis: childhood innocence shattered by adult reality. The father is absent, defined by debt and silence while the mother is the bearer of truth, though she too is trapped in complicity. The excerpt exemplifies situational irony. Woman III expects family protection but discovers betrayal. What is meant to be a sacred union is manipulated into a debt repayment tool. Marriage as repayment symbolizes how tradition can strip Women of agency. Alhaji Musa becomes a symbol of patriarchal authority. His demand reduces marriage to a transaction. There is a sharp external conflict: debt Vs daughter's independence. The internal conflict rests in the speaker's realization of being treated as currency. The tone shifts from confused and innocence to shock and betrayal.

.... The doctors struggled for many hours to save my life. But, when they finally brought out the baby, it was lifeless. What! Lifeless! How can my baby be lifeless? After all my sufferings! My enemies must have a hand in this... Dispelling my superstition, the nurse explained that the doctors said I was too young to have a baby. My pelvis was not yet well developed for a baby to pass through easily. And that a Woman's birth canal matures with age. Besides I arrived at the hospital too late... The nurse told me to stop crying and be grateful to Allah. For, VVF claims thousands of life every month in this country...(Okoh,31,32).

In this excerpt, the speaker's voice boosts emotional immediacy and authenticity. Readers are drawn into the physical and psychological pain of a young mother experiencing loss. Her

question "How can my baby be lifeless?" reveals psychological trauma and denial, making the grief visceral. The tone transitions from shock disbelief to somber resignation. There is a quiet emotional breakdown beneath the nurse's calm explanation, a contrast that deepens the tragedy. "Struggled for many hours" and "lifeless" paints a bleak, medicalized picture of childbirth gone wrong. "My pelvis was not yet well developed" uses anatomical imagery to highlight the consequences of early pregnancy. The lifeless baby symbolizes shattered hope and the cost of systemic neglect. VVF (Vesicovagina Fistula) becomes more than a medical term but symbolizes an invisible suffering experienced by thousands of young girls. The use of dialogue is evident. The nurse's calm statement contrasts emotionally with the narrator's shock, providing a dual perspective: emotional response Vs clinical explanation. The element of situational irony is visible. Pregnancy often celebrated as life-giving here, leads to death and permanent injury. The very act of becoming a mother results in both loss and suffering.

Cultural prejudice against women remains a deeply embedded force that shapes lives, denies agency, and perpetuates systemic inequality. From ritual practices that commodify women's bodies to societal expectations that silence their voices, tradition often becomes a mask for control rather than a vehicle for unity. These biases not only distort perceptions of womanhood but also restrict progress, dignity, and justice. To confront them, society must critically re-examine inherited norms, amplify women's narrative, and foster cultural renewal rooted in equity and empathy. Only then can tradition evolve into a force that protects, empowers and honours every human spirit.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROTEST

As days turn into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years, women have begun to gain ground in the field of politics thereby moving motions to attain political positions. According to the Oxford Handbook of politics and performance, protests are contentious actions that pose claims to other parties. Protesters seek attention and voice or demand that a third party act (or stop acting) in a way that prompts grievances or causes suffering to the protesters or others. However, protest according to the playwright has brought a shift from the norm. Through sharp dialogue and bold characters, Salami explores protest through the following medium: mass mobilization, women empowerment, and defiance.

4.1 Mass Mobilization

The coming together of individuals to achieve a common goal is what births the success of an aim. The excerpts below show the engagements which instigate mass mobilization:

Bisi: The reason I called you all today is for us to appraise yesterday's incidence. I am told that our actions did not go down well with some party officials.

Garos: I like that! That is marvelous. Up mama UPLP!

Omozele: Madam Bisi, I must commend you for your bold action yesterday. It is high time someone told the men to their faces that

enough is enough. I think it is a positive step in the right direction.

You have my support and loyalty.

Azira: And mine too.

Alero: Same here(Salami,7).

This excerpt acknowledges the attributes of a good leader. A good leader carries its party members along in the decision making for the party's growth. The first speaker's opening line sets the tone. She is reflective in her utterance yet assertive, acknowledging the opposition from the party's officials dominated by male counterpart while positioning the women to examine their collective action. The accolade from the third speaker(Omozele) to the first speaker(Bisi) indicates how her direct challenge to Patriarchal control aligns with other women seeking change. The affirmation "You have my support and loyalty", "And mine too", "same here", echoes the chorus of solidarity. This vocal unity contrasts sharply with the mere roles women are typically assigned in Nigerian political body.

Aisha: very good! Do you know what their reaction will be?

They will send for chief(Mrs) Bisi Adigun; dialogue with her and send us fifty thousand naira; five bags of rice; two bags of salt; two cartons of Maggi cubes and ten wrappers to placate us. They will then expect us to share them amongst ourselves and be content, without realizing that they have brought over our mandate. Enough of that! We will produce a candidate no matter how weak she is!

Nona: Nona, I am with you. We have allowed ourselves to be used for too long. Now is the hour of decision. We either act now or remain political footstools forever...(Salami,8).

In furtherance to the women's disapproval from the male counterparts, they discuss among themselves the form of bribery the male counterparts offers them in order to divert their minds from attaining political positions. In this excerpt, Aisha breaks down the systemic patterns in which the male politicians use in pacifying the women's group with gifts such as fifty thousand naira, food items and wrappers. These gifts serve as the tool the male politicians use in buying silence and obedience to aid erasing the women's political aspirations. Both speaker's assertiveness towards the male politicians evokes a shift from lack of initiative to political self determination. The gift meant to appease the women actually exposes the male counterpart's shallow mindedness of the women. The gift also symbolizes gender appeasement, where Women's worth is measured by how well they perform ceremonial support rather than wield actual influence. In addition to the above excerpt, the male politicians discuss means to end the Women's aspiration of mass mobilization.

Sani: You see, I warned us about nominating a wise Woman like Madam Bisi as Woman leader. That Woman is too intelligent for us. Now, see what we are faced with; she is turning the table against us(Salami,31).

Terna: We did not call this meeting to sympathize with Women or to readjust anything; we called this meeting to distract Women from desiring to participate. We

succeeded in the past we will succeed again. They demand for political space, we want them to know that there is no vacancy(Salami,34).

In the first excerpt, the speaker's lament reflects male anxiety towards female competence. Referring to Bisi as "too intelligent" is not a complement but a warning. It implies that intelligence in a woman threatens male power ranking. The phrase "turning the table against us" implies disruption of the status quo, where women are expected to be symbolic not strategic. The element of irony is exemplified here. Bisi is nominated as the woman leader; in like manner, a token figure, yet she defies expectations by using her intelligence to navigate through political deception. Madam Bisi becomes a metaphor for intellectual revolt, challenging patriarchal contentment not with confrontation but with strategy. The excerpt reveals real frustrations within political systems where intelligent women are sometimes deliberately underestimated, only to later reshape the narrative when given room.

In the second excerpt, the phrase "we called this meeting to stop women from contesting for presidency" reveals patriarchal fear and control. The words of the speaker is bluntly oppressive, reinforcing how power holders actively scheme to exclude women from leadership. It also shows political strategy not as a competition of ideas but as control, where access to governance is denied based on gender. The meeting indicates that resistance to Women's advancement is not incidental but systematic and strategic rooted in fear of change. The phrase "there is no vacancy" metaphorically means that political space already belongs to Men and Women's desire to participate is seen as intrusion. The speaker's words reveals deep anxiety about power being redistributed and uses forceful speech to maintain the

existing order. These assertions from the male folks calls for the urgency of female political activism. The more vocal and competent women become, the more patriarchal structures sit to rethink.

Sonsare: My friend stop patronizing us. What contributions do Women make to our economy? Is it our fault that they are not represented? If they are not participating, it means they do not deserve to(Salami,35).

In this excerpt, the speaker blames women for their absence in government rather than confronting the barriers created to keep them out. The barriers include political financing, systemic discrimination, and cultural norms that discourage leadership aspirations. The tone of the speaker is condescending and authoritative, indicating an active desire to restrict political and economic spaces. This reflects how dominant groups often define "deservingness" based on proximity to existing power not merit, contribution, or potential. The rhetorical question "what contributions do women make to our economy?" is not seeking truth but invalidating women's efforts and presence in economic life. The excerpt sets up a perfect antagonist voice; one that the play's female characters actively defy through mobilization, leadership, and political awakening.

Sani: Which Woman? Which inspiration? On how to cook? Women are not as smart as you think. This world is a Man's world. We control the destinies of nations, the destinies of Men and of Women. We are the cocks and they are the hens. Remember that when the cock crows, everyone is up on his feet(Salami,38).

This excerpt exemplifies masculinity contempt and reduction. The speaker dismisses the notion of female inspiration by reducing it to domestic skills, implying that women's value lies solely in household roles. His ideology that "Women are not as smart as you think " echoes an internalized misogynistic belief, used historically to justify exclusion from leadership, education and decision making. The assertion "this world is a Man's world" is a declaration of hegemonic male entitlement, with an assumption of complete control over societal structures and even individual destinies. The assertion further implies that it is an effort to erase female agency, by declaring that men not only lead but define the purpose and momentum of everyone else. The excerpt uses animal metaphor and patriarchal symbolism. The metaphor of "cocks and hens" pictures men as dominant initiators and women as passive followers. The phrase "when the cock crows, everyone is up on his feet" is symbolic of male voices being triggered for action, while the women are portrayed as silent, dependent, and reactive.

Nona: My Women, I am overwhelmed. Not just for the donations, but also for your large turnout. I am indeed very grateful. Posterity will remember your sacrifices. If we continue to be united this way we will go a long way. There is power in unity. There is power in number. Let us stand together. Men believe we can never unite. Let us bury our differences for once and surprise them. My going to the presidential villa, is for the children, for the blind, for the deaf, for the lame, for the rich, for the poor, for the sick. Together we shall make our country great. We shall make our country a haven of peace, a country where no Man, no Woman

and no Child is oppressed, where equality and equity are exhibited in all spheres of life. A country where corruption is perpetually seen only on the obituary pages. Thank you all. Thank you, my mothers, thank you, my friends and thank you, my sisters(Salami,52).

This excerpt serves as a rallying cry for political inclusiveness and collective resistance to oppression. The speaker's emphasis on "power in unity" and "power in number" directly counters patriarchal notions that Women cannot organize themselves effectively. It is a strategic declaration that solidarity is resistance, especially in context where division is used to weaken movements. Her call to "bury our difference" acknowledges that internal diversity can be an obstacle but it is also a strength when harnessed for collective action. Her statement redefines leadership not as power over others, but service to all. By refusing to speak only "for Women", she positions herself as a transformational figure, capable of uniting across divisions and advocating for systemic reform. The aspiration to make Nigeria a place "where corruption is perpetually seen only on the obituary pages" is metaphorical and provocative. It frames corruption as a social disease that must die out completely. This phrase reflects a revolutionary tone, envisioning a future where justice prevails and institutional decay is no longer normalized. The speech's emotive appeal "I am overwhelmed... Posterity will remember your sacrifices" gives voice to a character who is deeply moved, relatable, and visionary. The speech also leans towards a sense of purpose and possibility.

"Madu: Women have no right being on politics. They are our wives. Let them remain at home. That is their duty post"(Salami,54). The statement of the speaker in this excerpt reflects a deeply rooted belief that women's identities are defined by their relationships to Men. "They are our wives" rather than an autonomous individuals. The phrase "duty post" militarizes domesticity, implying that a woman's role is fixed, assigned and non-negotiable. By asserting that women "have no right being in politics", denies their citizenship and voice reducing politics to a male only domain. This exclusion is not based on merit or capability, but on gendered assumptions about where women belong. The speaker's view mirrors real world attitudes in many societies where women's political ambitions are met with resistance, ridicule, or outright hostility. The quote also critiques how cultural norms are weaponized to maintain male dominance in public life.

Terna: Gentlemen, I want to inform the house, that we are underestimating our Women. They are seriously mobilizing themselves. Contributions from Women across the country pour in each day at our National Secretariat. A Woman is stationed at their desk there to collect the money(Salami,69).

In this excerpt, the tone of the speaker is cautionary. He alerts his male peers that women are no longer passive observers but they are organizing, fundraising, and asserting influence. The phrase "seriously mobilizing themselves" acknowledges a grassroots movement that is gaining momentum and challenging the status quo. The mention of "contributions from Women" highlights how financial autonomy is being used to fuel political participation which counters earlier claims in the play that women contribute little to the economy or

politics. Here, their economic power becomes a tool of resistance. The phrase "A Woman is stationed at their desk" represents institutional presence implying that women are not just outside the system but they are embedded within it. It also suggests organization and structure, reinforcing that this is not a fleeting protest but a sustained movement. The statement of the speaker reveals a crack in the patriarchal organization. The men who once dismissed women as politically irrelevant now feel threatened by their coordination and resolve. This movement shifts the narrative from ridicule to strategic concern, showing that women's activism is forcing a reevaluation of power dynamics. The quote affirms that funding and unity are key factors in challenging exclusion. It also shows how awareness of Women's strength begins with acknowledgement even if reluctant by those in power.

Solo: Wa ne ne ku ke so?

Chorus: Professor Nona Mike so

Nona Le Le o ovbiyemwen

Chorus: Nona Le Le

Oha khon reu e si Le Khan ye 'gbe

Solo: Nona le le

Nona le le ovbie 'rhamwen

Chorus: Nona le le

Ogha Khon rue e si le ivie y 'gbe

Chorus: Nona le le

Solo: Tani kadigbe fun

Chorus: Nona LA o digbo fun

Nona na you biko

Professor kpa t'a kpa t'a

Na you biko, professor kpa t'a kpa t'a

Nona you win o o

You win o o (Repeat)

Dandaura you win o

You win o

Madam Bisi you win o

You win o.

Nona o o o

Nona

Nona o o o

Nona.

Nona you don't win o

Nona,

Nona you go win forever Nona

Nona(Salami,98,99).

This excerpt represents a climactic movement of communal awakening of celebration. The act of singing and chanting by the women becomes a form of protest and unity unlike when women were seen as mere dancers at political rallies. Their singing and dancing reflects endurance from long struggle for recognition and equality. The lyrics of the song represents solidarity. The mood reflects elation; that is, a huge formidable victory is on its way for the woman aspirant. This excerpt shows the sudden realization to some of the men that the women they look less and asserts that they are only good at dancing becomes a threat to the patriarchal structure that has long been created.

Femi: Don't mind them. They can't do anything. We own them and their votes. They can only cast votes where, when and for whom we tell them to.

Jeta: Don't underestimate the power of Women. They are more politically minded than you think.

Terna: All my wife says when we discuss political issues is "it is well, then she keeps singing "we shall overcome, we shall overcome someday eee..." Or "God will make a way where there seems to be no way" now it makes meaning. Let us give these happenings a thought. They are not mere coincidence. I suspect

these Women are planning a coup; they are planning to overthrow us(Salami,100).

In this excerpt, the first speaker's statement reveals political control and objectification. To him, women are possessions whose votes are dictated by male authority. To him, Women are seen not as citizens but as subjects told what to do and how to do it. His statement reflects patriarchal agency is actively suppressed. The phrase "we own them" reveals how patriarchal structures are maintained through intimidation and entitlement. The second speaker's voice calls the first speaker's assertion to order. He acknowledges that Women now has political awareness and are capable of strategic thinking. His statement introduces doubt to the patriarchal mentality that the patriarchal structure is vulnerable to disarray. His assertion also implies that there is a rise of female agency and resistance. The third speaker's reflection shifts from mockery to distrust. The singing and chanting of the Women that was once dismissed as harmless singing and fantasized optimism now appears as stealth rebellion. The song from the third speaker's wife shows how her expressions become tools of political hope and undermining. The word "coup" from his statement suggests women's mobilization is no longer symbolic but threatening to their established structure. The atmosphere of the scene is of tension between patriarchal self satisfaction and women's wokeness. The contrast of voices of the first speaker's egotism, the second speaker's discernment and the third speaker's anxiety creates a form of dynamicism revealing how women's uprising power makes the patriarchs of the party unsettled. The entire excerpt illustrates how women's political consciousness is underestimated until it becomes undeniable.

Sonsare: Madu, Sani, Terna, we are finished. The women have mobilized the entire nation. They are on national television, radio,... All Bawa's posters have been replaced with Nona's posters. Right now they are at the national stadium celebrating Nona's victory. Imagine. We have less than twenty four hours to election. What do we do?(Salami,101).

This excerpt reveals total disruption of the established order. The phrase "we are finished" tells the patriarchy is in panic and defeat. It shows the power that was once with them has slipped away. The replacement of Bawa's poster represents a symbolic overthrow of patriarchy. The mention of women seen on national television, radio, and the whole town symbolizes that Women are no longer background figures but are everywhere commanding attention of the public. The women gathering at the national stadium symbolizes triumph and victory over patriarchal suppression that they were once under. The mention of time frame "less than twenty four hours" adds tension to the atmosphere implying that the patriarchal elites has run out of time to make a change of movement. The women's mobilization is not just symbolic but strategic, timely and effective showing that with sincere solidarity one can outsmart the existing protocol. Nona's rise represents the realization of women political aspirations. She stands out as a symbol of collective Empowerment. The excerpt summarizes the play's central message that women are not just dancers but leaders, changemakers and strategic thinkers.

"Madu: Chineke me eee. This is all a ploy. We called them coconut brains; we thought they were daft, foolish, ha! Women have truly come of age. See how they have fooled us"(Salami,102). This exclamation from the speaker captures a moment of stunned realization as patriarchal assumptions are shattered by the strategic brilliance of Women. The phrase "coconut brains" reflects the deep rooted misogynist mentality that has long dismissed Women as unintelligent and incapable. He further exclaims "Women have truly come of age" which marks a turning point of grudging acknowledgement that Women have fought their way through politics intelligibly. There is sharp irony in this excerpt. Those who were mocked as "daft" have coordinated a power shake up revealing that the real foolishness lies in underestimating them. This reversal is central to the play implying that patriarchal figures are forced to confront their own veiled perception while Women rise as agents of turn around. The shocking statement from the speaker "see how they have fooled us" implies that the strategy of the Women was deliberately underestimated making them to work strategically with their mind. This moment confirms the play's central message that Women's intelligence, resilience and unity are powerful tools to make political upheaval. The use of the exclamation "Chineke me eee" creates a sense of cultural resonance. It reflects shock and surprise as the speaker witnesses a historical shift.

Terna: we have been marginalized we better hurry up and join the others, if we don't our seats in the house will be endangered also.

Sani: Are we dreaming? Please someone tell me. How did they do it? Even our wives said nothing to us. This is discrimination. This is real exclusion.

Madu: The table turned so fast. Yet, they say I am the party secretary? I never got wind of anything.

Jeta: Who knows? I can't trust anyone now.

Sani: (rushing out) Gafara, gafara, don Allah.

Terna: Well, if we want to be relevant in Nona's government we better move fast(Salami,102,103).

This excerpt reveals role reversal and irony. The patriarchs who suppress women's political aspirations now find themselves on the outside looking in. The word "marginalized" is ironic. It is a term used in time past to describe women's exclusion, revealing how power shifts feels threatening to those who held it. The phrase "even our wives said nothing to us" reveals the strategic deliberation of the women's progress. Their silence reveals discreet maneuvering allowing them to organize their intentions without obstruction. This moment reveal how dismissal and domestic assumptions blinds the men to grow resistance in their own homes. The statement from the second speaker mirrors an inflated self importance. He deciphers the loss of dominance as oppression to patriarchy. The quote marks a moment of reckoning for male characters who must now confront the consequences of their arrogant attitudes. The quote "The table turned so fast" reflects shock at reversal of political fortune in the statement of the third speaker. His position as "party secretary" is meaningless now

because he was excluded from the critical advancement which brings about his loss of control as the party secretary. The statement of the fourth speaker "I can't trust anyone now" signals a rupture of political alliance and personal relationships. The repetition of words from Sani shows panic and desperation. It appears he is trying to meet up with the new political turn around implying that men now feel marginalized and vulnerable. The lines in between presents a shift of character; from egotism to surrounding to the current policies. The statement from Terna "if we want to be relevant in Nona's government we better move fast" is realistic. He recognizes that power has shifted and now survival depends on adapting to the new system. The word "relevant" suggests that their previous status no longer makes impact neither suggest influence that they must strive to earn a new position with the current administration. The quote invites reflection on how exclusion feels when experienced by those who once excluded others. It assesses the fragility of male political structure reflecting how quickly they crumble when a Woman rise to power.

4.2 Women Empowerment

Women Empowerment is more than a social movement. It is a transformative force that reshapes communities, economies, and futures. It involves granting women the freedom, resources, and opportunities to make decisions, pursue ambitions, and lead with confidence. In a world where gender inequality still casts long shadows, empowering women means challenging systemic barriers, dismantling stereotypes, and amplifying voices that have long been silenced. From education and entrepreneurship to political participation and personal agency, women empowerment is not just a goal but a catalyst for inclusive progress and lasting change. Below are the excerpts that links to women empowerment.

Hakeem: ...taking into cognizance the gendered perspective and involving women and men in decision making process is a Hallmark of any genuine democratic framework. This is why democracy by definition cannot afford to be gender-blind. It must strive to achieve equality and representation of Women and Men in any decision making process.

Terna: Mr Hakeem, what is all this talk about? If women want votes then they should be prepared to pay for it just as we do.

Hakeem: Where do you think they will get the money?

Balat: We should ask you because you seem to be very conversant with their challenges and limitations. Do you expect me to give the weapons of war to my enemy?(Salami,37).

This excerpt presents a powerful ideological clash between Democratic ideas and entrenched patriarchal resistance. Through the voices of Hakeem, Terna, and Balat, the dialogue explores the tension between gender inclusion and political gatekeeping. Hakeem speaks of a progressive inclusive vision of democracy, emphasizing that gender equity is foundational to legitimacy in governance. His argument reflects modern political theory which recognizes that excluding women from decision making Leads to policies that failed to reflect the

realities of half the population by stating that democracy must not be "gender-blind". Terna's statement exposes politics as a commodity that can be bought with financial power asserting that the women should be prepared financially in order to attain the political agenda they are striving for. It reveals how economic exclusion reinforces political exclusion making it almost impossible for the excluded groups to break through. Balat's use of metaphor "weapons of war" contextualizes women's empowerment as a threat and not a right. It reflects a deep fear of losing control as to where inclusion is seen as surrendering. The word "enemy" used to describe women tells of the perception the male politicians have of the women. This mindset is a major barrier to democratic progress, as it personalizes systemic change, turning it into a battle rather than a shared evolution.

Balat: I pray so. You see, why I am suspicious of these Women is that; they have chosen an acada Woman. Professor Nona may be calm but she is very intelligent. You cannot easily manipulate her. She is the daughter of a one time political giant in this country. So she is politically aligned(Salami,40).

This excerpt reveals that education is one of the factors a woman should have in order to aspire for positions in politics. The speaker referring to Nona as an "acada Woman" suggests both admiration and nervousness. Her intelligence is framed as a threat to patriarchal control and because of that, she cannot be easily manipulated. This brings about the social tension where educated women challenges traditional gender roles especially in politics. The speaker's suspicion comes from Nona's independence and the ability for her to be

unpredictable. Her calmness is like to strategic intelligence implying that quiet strength can be more loud than assertive aggression. Her connection to "a one time political giant" gives her institutional credibility making it hard to undermine her. The tone of the speaker reveals deep anxiety with empowered Women especially those who combine intelligent, calm demeanor and political expertise. Nona represents a shift from tokenism to an authentic leadership. The quote underscores how female competence is often met with fear rather than celebration in patriarchal institutions.

Uyi: Darling, if I were you, I would be so thrilled and jump till my hand touches the sky.

Nona: It's easy to say when you are not the one directly involved.

Uyi: Not directly involved? What a thing to say? What do you mean? Both of us are one remember. Don't you know that I am going to receive the worst blows? Any decision you take as the president is going to be attributed to me.

Nona: Why?

Uyi: That's our society. Every Woman under a man does only what her husband tells her to do. It is believed that Women cannot take decisions without due consultations with their partners. When a Woman is elected, it is assumed that two people have been elected.

Nona: Uyi that's not fair. This is twenty first century for heaven's sake.

Uyi: It is not me. I am only re-echoing the society. So don't get yourself worked up unnecessarily. I will always be there for you(Salami,43).

This excerpt reveals Patriarchal attribution of female success. Uyi's statement that "any decision you take as the president is going to be attributed to me" reflects a societal tendency to undermine female agency. It implies that a woman in power is not truly autonomous and that her decisions are either influenced or dictated by her male partner. The myth of dual leadership is evident in this excerpt. "When a Woman is elected, it is assumed that two people have been elected". This myth exposes a bias mindset that a woman cannot lead without a man's input. It reduces the Woman's role to a representative suggesting that she is merely a vessel for her husband's will. Nona's response "That's not fair. This is twenty first century for heaven's sake" is a call to modernity and progress challenging outdated norms. Her tone reflects frustration and disbelief that such views still persist especially in this twenty first century era that claims to value equality. Uyi's final statement "I will always be there for you" symbolizes emotional support as a spouse. It suggests that despite societal constraints on women empowerment he will always support his wife emotionally. This makes Nona to be optimistic about the political aspirations because she knows her husband is solidly behind every decision she makes.

Aisha: I quite agree. In different parts of the world Women have made giant strides. Look at South Africa, which is next door here, in 1994, out of the 490 members

of their National Assembly, 117, were Women, 109 in house of representatives and 8 in Senate. A Woman as the speaker of the National Assembly. In Sweden, both Men and Women influence the legislative process equally as 45% of the parliament are Women. In Finland, Denmark, Norway and New Zealand Women's participation in the House of Assembly ranges from 30% - 40.4% that means for every 10 Men there are 5 Women(Salami,50,51).

This excerpt shows women that are empowered. This empowerment further makes them to be visible to the public taking responsibilities by holding positions the male counterpart denies the Women in United people's liberation party of. By showcasing this statistics, the speaker by implication critiques the societal notion of women not taking leadership roles.

Garos: Nona, our Women have brought this donation to empower you so that you can win at the polls. When you emerge victorious, don't forget, your mission shall be to protect the Interest of Women.

Nona: My Women, I am overwhelmed. Not just for the donations, but also for your large turnout. I am indeed very grateful. Posterity will remember your sacrifices. If we continue to be united this way we will go a long way... We shall make our country a haven of peace, a

country where equality and equity are exhibited in all spheres of life. A country where corruption is perpetually seen only on the obituary pages. Thank you all. Thank you, my mothers, thank you, my friends and thank you, my sisters(Salami,52).

This excerpt evokes gratitude and recognition. After women from all walks of life have donated money, Nona expresses deep appreciation not just for material support but for collective solidarity. The statement "There is power in unity. There is power in number. Men believe that we can never unite". Suggests unity as a political weapon. Nona identifies disunity among women as a perceived weakness and flips it into a call to action. The phrase "men believe..." Introduces a gender challenge implying that patriarchal domination thrive on division among women. Nona's speech also evokes inclusive leadership vision. "My going to the presidential villa is for the Women, for the youths, for the children, for the blind, for the deaf..." this implies that her candidacy is universal and compassionate for all not gender focused. It positions her as a servant leader committed to serve the masses not for selfish interest. Her speech also envisions a utopian society "A country where corruption is perpetually seen only on the obituary pages" this implies that she wants to create a society whereby corruption is dead and buried not tolerated. Her tone is empowering. She speaks with conviction rallying Women to believe in their collective strength.

Balat: It's too late. You can't stop them now; the Women have fooled us. In fact the chairman, some governors and some other members of the National Assembly are there with them

in the stadium. Ambassador Odaro is solidly behind his wife again. He is the one fanning and cheering her up(Salami,102).

This excerpt captures a moment of irreversible political transformation where the women's movement once dismissed and underestimated has gained widespread legitimacy and elite support. The speaker's opening line "It's too late. You can't stop them now", marks a turning point; a reluctant acknowledgement that the women's movement has succeeded beyond expectation. The phrase "the Women have fooled us" reflects how patriarchal arrogance blinded the male politicians, causing them to underestimate the strategic depth and unity of the women. The presence of government dignitaries "the chairman, governors, National Assembly members" at the stadium indicate that the movement has moved from grassroots level of activism to the main political sphere. The support from the government dignitaries makes valid the Women's actions making it politically and socially influenced. The support from Ambassador Odaro is symbolic. It represents a reversal of traditional gender roles where an influential male figure becomes a visible supporter of female authority. This act challenges the norm of male dominance and suggests a new model of partnership and political unity. The setting of the stadium triggers mass mobilization on the empowerment of women and celebration contrasting the previous actions of the Patriarchal figures marginalizing the women. The tone of the speaker is of emotional resignation stuck with the disbelief that the women actually became victorious.

"Ohio: Too late Alhaji! Too late! The chairman has already declared Nona as our presidential candidate. It is being covered live. Pressmen from all over the world are there"(Salami,102). This excerpt marks a climactic moment of public political affirmation of

Nona as the presidential candidate. The repetition of "Too late!" evokes a sense of irreversible change. It implies that the means to cause disruption is no longer possible. The chairman's declaration of Nona as the presidential candidate marks her formal entry into the highest level of political position. This support received from high ranking government officials transforms her from grassroots symbol into a national nominee championed by influential/renowned authority. The mention of "pressmen from all over the world" highlights the international significance of the event. It implies that Nona's victory is not just a local one but a global reality. The phrase "covered live" boosts the storyline that it is a moment of historical documentation for it would forever be remembered that a Woman emerged as the presidential candidate endorsed by political elites/godfathers. The tone of the speaker adds emotional weight suggesting the moment of ratification for the Women's movement and a loss to those who resisted it. The excerpt also affirms that strategic mobilization, institutional support and media visibility are key factors to disabling patriarchal obstructions.

4.3 Defiance

A bold refusal to yield, a fierce assertion of will in the face of authority, oppression, or expectation is what is referred to as defiance. It is not merely rebellion for rebellion's sake but a conscious stance, often born from conviction, Injustice or the desire to reclaim autonomy. Whether expressed through protest, silence, or speech, defiance has shaped revolutions, challenged norms and given voice to the unheard. It is that spark that ignites change, the posture of those who dare to stand when others bow. In its purest form, defiance is courage wrapped in resistance. Below are the engagements leading to defiance:

Sani: The reason we called you is that we feel there is need for us to discuss and arrive at a solution to the threatening political crisis in our party. Already, our opponents are using it to campaign against us. What do you have to say, Madam Bisi?(Salami,91).

The tone of the speaker is urgent and practical. He perceives the party is experiencing a political crisis which has become a liability in the public sphere. This marks a shift from the dismissive attitudes of the men towards women now the women are being sought for in moments of the crisis the party is facing which signifies the recognition of Woman power/strategic planning. The question "what do you have to say, Madam Bisi" asked by the speaker is not necessarily a progressive inclusion but a question driven by desperation rather than genuine respect of opinion from the women leader. The mention of opponent "using it to campaign against us" suggests how internal dysfunction becomes the political ammunition in competitive environments. This scene serves as a turning point where patriarchy must confront their own limitations and seek help from those they previously marginalize. It sets the stage for Madam Bisi's potential rise, positioning her as a problem solver and political thinker. The excerpt reflects how women's leadership often brings crisis, challenging the ideas that they are only suited for ceremonial roles. It also criticizes how patriarchal system only value women's input when their own authority is threatened rather than as a matter of principle.

Omozele: what an insult? Madam Bisi, let's be out of here.
Did you call us here to insult us because we are Women? Mazi

Madu and company, I want you to know that the Women of today have come a long way. You cannot intimidate us anymore. Women, let's find our way out of here immediately(Salami,91).

This excerpt exemplifies female defiance, dignity and unity in the face of Patriarchal disrespect. The speaker's annoyance reflects a refusal to accept symbolic gesture or disrespect even in spaces where women were invited. Her rhetorical question "where we called here to be insulted because we are Women?" exposes the fundamental gender bias in political and social interactions where women's presence is often looked down on. The statement "Women have come a long way" is a reminder of the Historical struggle for gender equality. It affirms that women are no longer passive or silent they are now informed and empowered and also ready to act. It also serve as a warning to patriarchal figures that old tactics of intimidation no longer have effect. The speaker's call to leave is not just physical but symbolic. It represents a withdrawal of consent and legitimacy from spaces that refuse to treat women with respect. The act symbolizes a form of protest and empowerment showing that women will not remain in environments that belittles them. The scene also serves as a mobilization process where women move from being reactive to proactive. It also critiques how gender disrespect is normalized in political discussions and challenges women to reclaim their right.

"All the Women: we no go gree o, we no go gree! Great Women, we no go gree, great Nona we no go gree!(Repeat)"(Salami,94). From this excerpt, the women's chants declares a bold and rhythmic declaration of resistance to patriarchal control. The phrase "we no go gree" is

an expression of defiance and refusal to be silenced or marginalized. The repetition of it reinforces unity and determination showing that the women are united and unwilling to compromise. The phrase "Great Women and great Nona" echoes the celebration of female leadership putting Nona as a symbol of collective vision. This act also affirms that women see themselves reflected in Nona's rise. The use of pidgin English reflects how organized movement often use local language to build identity, inclusivity and emotional connection. The chant serves as a climactic release of collective energy. It transforms the women from passive characters into active agents of change, using voice and rhythm to assert their power. It also serve as a public rejection of marginalization and a demand for recognition. It as well implies that women has revealed a point of mass mobilization, where individual voices merge into a unified force.

Protest emerges not merely as a reaction to injustice but as a transformative force that redefines power, voice, and visibility. Through chants, silence, strategic mobilization, and symbolic acts, the women in the play reclaim agency in a system designed to exclude them. Their protest is multidimensional and it challenges both institutional and interpersonal oppression. Ultimately, protest in the play is not just about resistance, it is about reconstruction of identity, leadership, and democratic space itself. It affirms that when the marginalized rise in unity, even the most entrenched structures must yield.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This Essay carefully examines the representations of women in Okoh's *In Our Own Voices* and Salami's *More Than Dancing*. Okoh looks at how patriarchal structure subjugates women, reducing them to nothing as their words hold no weight. In her work, she exemplifies that patriarchal structure comes with domestic violence, commodification, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, false accusations and sexual violence. The Women utterly have no say as culture, government workers, and some family members supports male superiority over female's well being. These are harsh realities Nigerian women face in a patriarchal society of injustice giving no credit to women as all they do is under the check of a male figure(their husbands). On the other hand, Salami writes to counter the ideologies of the patriarchs saying "Women are capable of thinking and organizing themselves in unity to produce effective result". In her work, she exemplifies that leadership is not gender based but with collective effort and a strong determination to bring positive results, leadership can thrive from any gender. She shows how the women in her play exercises Victory by working in silence and unity to dismantle patriarchal assumptions about women. She proves that through mass mobilization, defiance, and women empowerment declaring that women's place in politics is earned, deserved, and unstoppable unlike the former where even some of the women are educated but they are still unable to break free from the shackles of patriarchal domination. They are rather subdued even with their exposure in education.

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