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## Women and the Quest for a New Narrative in Contemporary Nigerian Drama: An Examination of Irene Isoken Agunloye's *Sweet Revenge* and Tracie ChimaUtoh-Ezeajugh's *Nneora: An African Doll's House*

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This paper seeks to examine the presentation of the images of women in Nigerian drama. Many female playwrights in Nigeria believe that women are misrepresented in plays written by men. Their claim is that the images of women as presented in the literary works of most male playwright are not true reflection of women in real life. In the early Nigerian drama, mostly written by men, women were usually portrayed as weak, inferior, and unimportant personalities. The women are generally quiet and subdued and their primary functions revolve around the family. Even in contemporary times, most plays written by men present women only in relation to male protagonists rather than as individual. Our focus in this work however, is on selected works of two distinguished Nigerian female playwrights namely Irene Isoken Agunloye and Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh.

**Methodology:** This paper adopts a textual analytical method in the sense that data for analysis are sourced from the two selected texts for this study. The texts are *Sweet Revenge* by Irene Isoken Agunloye and *Nneora: An African Doll House* by Tracie ChimaUtoh-Ezeajugh.

**Findings:** Textual analysis of the plays has revealed that, as a result of the negative portrayal of women in male authored plays, female writers have taken up the challenge of re-writing their story, by creating a new narrative in which women are presented in a very positive way.

**Unique Contributions to Theory, Practice and Policy:** This work is premised on the womanist theory which seeks to improve the image of women and engender the principles of justice, equity and fair play in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Drama, Playwrights, Protagonists, Images, Women, Equity, justice.*

## Introduction

Over the years, women have made significant contributions to the development of their various communities across the nation. Economically, the traditional African woman contributes to her family budget. In Agriculture, she weeds and tends the crops, often growing vegetables and crops (Chukukere, 1995:2). In political sphere, there are glaring records of achievement of women in the traditional Nigerian society. For instance, there have been great women political figures like Queen Amina of Zazzau who ruled over a vast empire and vanquished the great part of Hausa land; Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, who was able to unseat the reigning Alake of Egba land; Emotan of Benin who equally unseated the Oba that usurped the throne from his brother, and Madam Tinubu who at a time determined who should be the Oba of Lagos (Methuselah,2010:151).

But in spite of these significant contributions, the imaging of women in most male authored Nigerian literary drama has remained negative. Some of the male playwrights who played down the role of women, especially in their earlier works include Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark (Bekederemo), Ola Rotimi, to mention just a few. These playwrights have, in many instances, imaged women in not too complementary and positive light. In other words, they portray women negatively or in their subordination to men. The women are generally quiet and subdued and their primary functions revolve around the family. A man's honour lies in his possession of wives, children, huts and barns of yam. A woman's honour is in her ability to submit to her husband and in the number of children she has. She has no right to question the authority of men.

In Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, for instance, Iyalola is the head of the women and mother of the market; the square in which Elesin is expected to commit his ritual suicide. This means that she has the right to say no to any happening in this square. But tradition forbids any protest from her. Similarly, in the play *Imaguero* by Evbinma Ogie, dealing with the subject of polygamy, Ogie presents Oliha, a Bini royal chief being caught in a deep web of love. This is very unusual in the African society. As Oba Ewuare in the *Queen Sisters* says,

Love is not an experience for a wise man, it is meant only for women (P. 85).

Some of the African male writers have also depicted the African woman as complacent as she continues to play the role in which she is cast. They have portrayed women as mindless, jealous, irrational, materialistic, envious, ruthlessly exterminating their rivals and enemies by the use of poison, charms and witchcraft. When portrayed as workers, they are either secretaries, teachers, nurses or clerks. These nurses are mean and try to seduce the doctors, the clerks are rude and the secretaries are jealous and always girlfriends to their bosses. These groups of women are projected as marketing their sexual attractiveness to men who tend to hold the economic power and use their position to enforce their preference (Agunloye, 2011: 9). The men are the doctors, bosses, headmasters and directors. When successful women are portrayed, they are usually husbandless - single, divorced or widowed. In their works, they dwell on patriarchal philosophy, which has no room for a woman except as a shadow of her husband. The characters of women in these male-

authored texts are defined by their relationship to men: they are someone's wife, mother, daughter, mistress, and daughter-in-law or sister-in-law. The women are projected from a social, traditional and cultural point-of-view.

Indeed, all through most male-authored creative texts, the female characters are relegated to the background as docile and unimportant personalities. They are regarded as inferior, weak and peripheral beings in a world where men are central and superior. For example, in the works of Wole Soyinka, women are objectified as sex symbols in a world where female experience is confined to their relationship with men as foolish virgins, mistresses and matrons. They are not given enough room to explore other possibilities for self-fulfillment outside these sex roles. This portrait is used in Kongi's *Harvest* where Segi is portrayed as a prostitute and Sidi is used as a sex symbol in *The Lion and the Jewel*. In *The Trials of Brother Jero*, Soyinka portrays Amope as a ceaselessly nagging woman who makes life intolerable for her husband. J.P.Clark's Ebriere in *Song of a Goat* entices her husband's younger brother into a sexual relationship.

In the light of the foregoing, the corpus of female drama in Nigeria has arisen to challenge this dominant ethos of women's images in male authored plays in Nigerian literary drama. In their quest for a new narrative of a balanced portraiture of the role of women in society, Nigerian female playwrights have taken up the challenge of recreating the image of women in their works by portraying women in a very positive way. That is, the artists ensure that women play crucial roles in their texts. The female protagonist often displays her mettle in terms of her initiative and dynamism. If she operates within the ambit of motherhood and wifehood, she displays enduring qualities of dignity and industry. If she lives within the urban sector, she is dynamic and exerts a strong political influence. The women reacts aggressively against any tradition that tends to enslave them. In Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, for instance, Ogwoma flouts the tradition which makes a widow to be inherited by her husband's brother. She would rather die with her lover, instead of waiting to be inherited by Adigwu's brother.

Stella Oyedepo, Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, Tess Onwueme, Irene Salami Agunloye, Julie Okoh, to mention just a few, have also resorted to using the Nigerian theatre as a stage to express their discontentment and to protest against their oppression, seeking a transformation of their identity and their subordinate position in the society. In *Brain Has No Gender*, Oyedepo avers that women are as intelligent as men, contrary to Wole Soyinka's position in *The Lion and the Jewel* where women are projected as simpletons. Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, showcases strong women characters who venture into the world of politics, an area that is known to be exclusively preserved for men, and defeated their male rival. Prof. Nona Odaro in Agunloye's *More Than Dancing* "displays the highest form of political astuteness and cunning that the men who had underestimated her were left dazed after her unexpected victory" (Methuselah,2010: 158). Onwueme's heroines in *The Broken Calabash* and *The Reign of Wazobia* refused to be content with the roles carved out for them by the society. They fought their way through a maze of obstacles and proved their mettle. In Julie Okoh's *The Mannequins*, *The Mask* and *The Trials*,

the male characters are projected as brutes who trample on their wives.. These men neglect their family responsibilities. However, their wives continue to be unflinchingly faithful to them. These female playwrights have unveiled the gamut of unsavoury experiences of women in society. They have also attempted to register their conscious efforts towards changing the status quo. Indeed, "the role of the African female writers is to dramatize injustices against women and thereby attract society's attention to them" (Chukukere (1995: 14). In other words, the injustices done to women can only be redressed through protest writing. However, the main focus of this paper precisely, is essentially on the literary drama of the two distinguished Nigerian female playwrights, namely Irene Salami-Agunloye and Tracy ChimaUtoh-Ezeajugh. These two playwrights have proved themselves to be flag-bearers of a woman-centred ideology. Among the plays to be examined are: *Sweet Revenge* and by Irene Salami-Agunloye, and *Nneora: An African Doll's House* by Tracy Utoh-Ezeajugh.

This work is premised on the Womanist theory which is a woman -centred theory meant to highlight peculiar gender issues in Africa and in the Diaspora. Womanism advocates equality of all, irrespective of sex or gender in all things. It seeks to improve the image of women and engender the principles of justice, equity and fair play. The paper adopts a textual analytical method. It is a textual analytical study in the sense that data for analysis are sourced from the two selected texts for this study and interpreted in accordance with how the data are used in the texts. The texts are *Sweet Revenge* by Irene Isoken Agunloye and *Nneora: An African Doll House* by Tracie ChimaUtoh-Ezeajugh.

### **Analysis of the Selected Plays**

#### **Sweet Revenge**

*Sweet Revenge*, Salami-Agunloye's fourth play, is a continuation of her advocacy for political space for Nigerian women. The play revolves around Sota and Aisosa who are both educated couple. Sota, Aisosa's husband, leaves Nigeria for a four-year Ph.D programme in London, leaving her in Nigeria with a juicy promise of sending her a monthly allowance of forty thousand naira (40,000). However, events take a twist as Sota leaves Nigeria for London, abandoning his wife and three children. Rather than the supposed N40, 000 monthly allowance, Sota sends a paltry sum of N10, 000, barely enough to feed the children, talk less of other domestic, educational and medical challenges in the family. Sota worsens the situation by engaging in an extra marital affair with Cheryl, a Briton, whom he eventually raises children with. Sota stretches the four years' sojourn to eight and would not have returned had he not been called home by his people who want him to represent them in the senate.

Life becomes unbearable for Aisosa who after being persuaded by her husband to quit her job as a consultant gynaecologist in a hospital, finds it difficult to cope with the stipends he sends for the eight dreary years. Cheryl, Sota's pregnant concubine in London, refuses to allow Sota travel but later consents as Sota gets Regie, his friend and confidant to convince her of the necessity

of sustaining their nascent democracy and lead the people to the path of total freedom, greatness and nationhood after many years of military rule.

Sota arrives home to meet his wife, Aisosa, remarkably aged, ugly and flabby because of the stress she and her children have been subjected to as a result of Sota's marital irresponsibility. Despite Sota's incessant damning criticisms against Aisosa, she still mobilizes the women who vote for him during the election. However, after his success at the polls as a senator, Sota decides to do away with Aisosa and bring in Cheryl, his white wife. Sota further throws all caution to the wind and perpetrates the worst degree of wickedness against Aisosa despite the warnings of Nosa, Sosa's friend. He complains that Aisosa's degeneration over the years in all aspects of her life makes her unfit for his new status as he says:

Sota: ...Look at you; from you're to your toes, you are ugly. You nauseate me. Your hair is always hidden in scarves. You tie wrappers all the time like a village woman ...Sosa, I must be frank with you, and you no longer excite me. You are too dull and drab. The spark that used to be in your life is no longer there((25-26).

As a result of this, he sends her packing from the house she built with the money she inherited from her parents. This is captured in the following discussion:

Aisosa: Well, since your mind is made up there is very little I can do. So be it then. When are you moving out?

Sota: Moving out? No, you are the one moving out with the children. I need my space, I am going to remodel this house to benefit my status.

Aisosa: Oh! Which house? My house? Where do you expect us to move to?  
To the street?

Sota: What do I care? It's between you and your God (28).

Thus, Aisosa and her children become despondent, roaming the streets of Benin helplessly. She would have continued in this condition if not for the timely intervention of Ede, her friend and her husband Nosa who take her and her children to Abuja. While there, she starts to pick up the scattered pieces of her life. SotaOjo, on the other hand, becomes so power drunk that he entirely forgets the mandate of his people. He is recalled home when it is proven beyond every reasonable doubt that he is incompetent to hold on to the people's mandate. At this point, events take a sudden twist as life closes in on Sota. He loses everything he has acquired. Even Cheryl, his British wife, discovers he is legally married to Aisosa, jilts him and returns to London. On the other hand, fortune smiles back on Aisosa as she gets a new job and also receives various national and international honours and awards to her credit. She thus becomes a celebrity and she is requested to replace the vacant senatorial seat of their constituency, which her husband has been recalled from. Thus, Aisosa does not only become a senator but also the senate president for two

consecutive tenures. The unrepentant Sota still enveloped in his pride and ego accuses his wife and Nosa of being the agents of his misery. He, however, later seeks forgiveness and restoration from Aisosa “when it dawns on him that his world, has crashed and crumbled”( Ebo, 2009). Aisosa is also quick to remind him that she had long forgiven him, but that accepting him back as a husband is impossible.

In *Sweet Revenge*, Salami-Agunloye explores how the collaborative efforts of both men and women can help foster national development. The play advocates for the involvement of women in the mainstream of affairs, thereby moving them from the margin to the centre. Salami-Agunloye has been able to knit two settings, London and Nigeria to create an effect. London, on one hand, represents the developed countries where democracy has thrived for decades and women fully absorbed into the scheme of things, while Nigeria on the other hand, exemplifies a developing country set back by military coups as well as female gender marginalization. The playwright "meticulously juxtaposes such burning issues like "nationalism against unpatriotism, fidelity against debauchery, democracy against meritocracy, gender equality against gender marginalization in her socio-political crusade" (Ebo, 2009 :406).

The playwright clearly focuses on the virtues of self-sacrifice, self-denial and patriotism. These virtues are juxtaposed with such vices as self-aggrandizement, deceit, cheating and looting of the national treasury. In the beginning of the play, Sota's people in Nigeria call him back from London for the service of his fatherland. With the restoration of democracy in Nigeria, his people acknowledge him as the best candidate to represent them in governance. Here, the playwright informs us that to participate in politics is a well deserving honour, not towards self-enrichment, but a call to duty and selfless service towards societal transformation. Sota reiterates this view when he says:

Sota: My people call and no doubt, I must respond to it... I cannot turn down their offer, I must respond... I cannot fail my people. No, I will not turn down their invitation. They have reposed their confidence in me and I will not fail them. I cannot let them down. Together we shall transform our land (1-2).

What Agunloye tries to reconcile in this play, according to Ebo, is the practice of intermingling forces between family/parental responsibility and national leadership. This indeed is evident in the characters of Sota Ojo and Aisosa, his Nigerian wife. While Aisosa is struggling tirelessly, contributing her best towards raising a healthy family, Sota is in London enjoying himself with, among other things, an extra-marital affair with a British woman and an extension of his four-year stay to eight.

Being a failure at the family level, it is obvious that Sota cannot lead his people out of the clutches of the oppressors. Sota could not have won the election in the first place were it not for the women who exercised their power by coming out in their great numbers to vote for him just

because of Aisosa, the great mother and wife, who despite her husband's eight long and silent years of absence, comported herself properly.

The following dialogue affirms this:

Sota: Nosa, I really appreciate your contributions to the success of my election as a senator.

Nosa: Well, you should show your appreciation to our wives. Aisosa AndEde mobilized the entire women of our senatorial zone and they responded in this solidarity.

Sota: That is true. I was overwhelmed when I saw these women come out in their thousands to vote for me even though it rained cats and dogs.

Nosa: Vote for you? No, they didn't vote for you, they voted for Aisosa. Our people have deep

Respect for Aisosa. They admire the way she comported herself in your absence. Some other women would have abandoned their responsibility and ran off with another man. She has been a good wife and mother, to you and your children, made a lot of sacrifices and the women wanted to reward her, encourage and honour her by coming out to vote for you, hoping that her lot will improve from now on (18).

This quickly reminds us of the power and influence of women in contemporary issues like politics today. Politics is metaphorically used in the play for evaluating women empowerment in a developing country like Nigeria. In developed countries like Britain, Germany, South Korea, China and Russia, women have been fully absorbed into the mainstream of politics and governance. Therefore, Cheryl as a Briton frowns at the lukewarm attitude of the likes of Sota who feel reluctant in accepting women as team members of this great game. Disgusted at this type of attitude, Cheryl speaks:

Cheryl: It seems your country is made up of only men; women are nowhere in your national agenda. They are at the margin, nowhere near the centre. Good luck to you all. (11)

In the present world of the play, Nigerian women no more play a second fiddle but are absorbed in the mainstream. Their integration in governance is necessitated by labour rather than favour. Their actions, though non-violent, yield great positive results due to their persistence and resolution even in the valley of death as Regie comments:

Regie: Oh! Our dear mothers, they put in all they could. They held rallies, pleaded with the wives of military leaders, led protest marches; in fact, one woman who strongly opposed them was shot dead one early morning. She paid dearly with her life (9).

Women are the true heroines of the present democracy existing in this play, hence the men have no other option than recognizing and giving them their pride of place. But Sota fails to recognize and accept this recent development until he becomes a victim of the dynamic forces of change.

**Nneora: An African Doll's House-Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh**



*Nneora: An African Doll's House*, is an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's late 19th century play, *A Doll House*. As the play opens, Nneora comes to the aid of an unemployed young graduate, Ikenna by paying his debts and promising to help him secure a job, when she finds out that he is actually a qualified lawyer but could not find a job because he has nobody to help him. Nneora keeps her promise by going to see her benefactor and lover, Osita, who is a bank manager. She requests him to help Ikenna get a job, pretending that Ikenna is her cousin. Osita promises to fix him up, and he actually did. This marks the beginning of a relationship between Ikenna and Nneora who has come to his rescue. The playwright thus invests power and authority on the female folk here, while her male counterpart is projected as being powerless. We later find that Osita and Nneora are in a relationship and that Osita wish to marry her but she is reluctant because he has a wife who , although has left him, Nneora suspects she might one day come back to him. Osita feels grieved by her position but because he is so much in love with her, he could not refuse her request.

In the next scene, we discover that Nneora and Ikenna have been married for eight years. From this point, the true character of Ikenna is revealed. Having been empowered economically, he takes over power from his wife and begins to exhibit patriarchal tendencies as seen in the following conversation:

Nneora: (going behind him and massaging his neck). You really look tired. Did you have a very busy day?

Ikenna: I was saddled with a very difficult client the whole day. I barely managed to shake him off some ten minutes ago.

Nneora: Oh,poor you. I know how you must be feeling, I used to have some difficult customers too when I still owned my shop.

Ikenna: Your shop! There you go again Nneora. How can you compare a shack in the market with my executive position in a Merchant bank?

Nneora: (feeling hurt) It may have been a shack but I owned it...

Ikenna: And now I own you. You are solely mine; shop, body and soul. So honey, why are we arguing about something that belongs to me?

The above conversation shows that power has shifted from Nneora to her husband. It is true that Nneora actually helped her husband to secure a job and start a good career, but now things have changed. Ikenna is now the man of the house, the bread winner, the one who decides how the family's money should be spent. He is the one whose wishes must be paramount (Asiedu, 2011:175). Asiedu further maintains that Ikenna's disdain for Nneora's shop, is a strategy to remind her of her new position of subordination. She is now inferior to him by virtue of his education and his executive position in a merchant bank. Ikenna's domineering and possessive attitude is generated from fear of insecurity precipitated by the memory of his earlier position of powerlessness. To ensure complete disempowerment of his wife, Ikenna has to stop her from going

to her shop. This is the plight of women in African society. In the words of Asigbo (2010), African society of the twentieth century saw the woman's place as predominantly revolving around housekeeping as well as rearing children. In fact, we learn that Nneora sold her shop two years after their marriage to help pay for Ikenna's medical treatment abroad. It is also through her connection that they were able to get someone in the bank to sign the documents which allowed the release of the money he needed for the treatment. This transaction which is tied to a promise of sexual favour later raises potential problem in their marriage.

Meanwhile, the marriage has produced four female children. However, Ikenna, who rather prefers to have male children considers the girls as nuisance. A seed of discord is sown when Ikenna receives a strange phone call from someone who refuses to call his name. The caller tells him that he has deposited a letter containing some information about someone close to him in his office. We learn through Nneora's discussion with her friend, Linda that she never kept her promise of sexual favour to Osita, her benefactor, who helped her to raise the money for her husband's treatment abroad. She further disclosed to her friend that Osita is threatening to disclose her secret to her husband as well as lie that they had continued their relationship even after she had married him. But at the end, Ikenna brushes aside all insinuations and allegations leveled against his wife accepting the fact that she had done what she did out of love for him.

### **The Playwrights' Presentation of the images of Womanhood in the Selected Plays**

The exploration of the two plays selected for this study reveals different approaches to the presentation of women in Nigerian drama. In *Sweet Revenge*, Irene Agunloye idealize her female characters. For instance, Aisosa, the heroine of the play is projected as a perfect woman without a flaw. She is humble, obedient, submissive, diligent and indeed, a marvel of patience. When Sota, her husband, persuades her to quit her job as a consultant gynaecologist in the hospital under the pretext that he wants her to have enough time to give their children the best attention while he goes to London to pursue a Ph.D programme, she willingly obeys her husband and quits her job. Unfortunately however, Sota sends a paltry sum of N10, 000 monthly allowance which is barely enough to feed the children, talk less of other domestic, educational and medical challenges in the family. Aisosa tolerated the situation using the little resources she could afford to take care of the children. Sota arrives home after eight years to meet his wife, Aisosa, remarkably aged, ugly and flabby because of the stress she and her children have been subjected to as a result of his marital irresponsibility and levels insults and accusations against Aisosa. But despite Sota's incessant damning criticisms against Aisosa, she still mobilizes the women who vote for him during the senatorial election he contested. However, after his success at the polls as a senator, Sota decides to do away with Aisosa and bring in Cheryl, his British wife. Sota further throws all caution to the wind and perpetrates the worst degree of wickedness against Aisosa despite the warnings of Nosa, Sota's friend. He complains that Aisosa's degeneration over the years in all aspects of her life makes her unfit for his new status.

Sota is portrayed here not only as an ingrate but also as a wicked monster who delights in making Aisosa in particular, and women folk in general suffer agonizing and traumatizing pains. For instance, when women politicians send delegates to Nigie and Sota reminding them of their mandates, Hon. Nigie apologizes for his protracted ineffectiveness, but Senator Sota chooses to arrest the women "charging them with disturbance of peace and trespass of private property" (Sweet Revenge: 47- 48). Cheryl, Sota's white wife recognizes Aisosa's goodness and selfless services to humanity, renders her apologies to her and surrenders the 10 million pounds Sota looted back to the Nigerian government and runs back to her country.

While Sota is portrayed as an arrogant, incompetent and power-drunk politician who forgets the mandate of his people and he is recalled home, Aisosa is presented as an ideal and highly competent politician who replaces her husband in the senate and performs excellently well that she becomes a senate president for two terms in an unopposed contest. These dazzling qualities bestowed on Aisosa makes her a virtuous woman who is not only deified but unchallengeable both in political and family life. This however appears to be an over romanticized portrayal of Aisosa, the heroine of the play as no real human being is said to be perfect.

Like Agunloye, Utoh-Ezeajugh also adopted the romanticized presentation approach in *Nneora: An African Doll's House*. However, Utoh-Ezeajugh appears to be more realistic in her presentation of the images of women and less subversive in her reaction against women misrepresentation in this play. She simply presents the virtues of womanhood without necessarily portraying an exaggerated image of women. Nneora for instance, is imaged as a generous and kind-hearted woman, but not an angel or a superhuman. She rebukes Mama Uduak for chasing away the masquerades who are dancing in the market for money. She also pays off a stranger's debt out of sympathy and gives him some money to buy food items. We also learn that Nneora has been saddled with great family responsibilities following the death of her father. She however finds succour in Osita who gave her money to start her business and also assists her to take care of her family. Nneora enters into a relationship with Osita as a way of appreciating him for his kindness. But she refuses to marry him because he was already married. When Nneora discovers that Ikenna, the man she helped to pay his debt is a university graduate but does not have a job, she offers to help him get a job, thus initiating a relationship with him. She takes him to Osita to ask for his help, and as human, she lies to him that Osita is his relative. She promises to sleep with Osita even though she knows she would not keep the promise. Nneora finally secures a job for Ikenna and both gets married. She did not disclose her relationship with Osita to her husband neither did she tell him how she managed to secure a job for him. Again she did not tell Ikenna anything about the officer who helped to approve the release of money for his treatment abroad. These are true human character disposition. The good, the bad and ugly traits in Nneora are presented objectively. Her negative parts are not glossed over; they are juxtaposed with the positive sides.

Thus, the playwright clearly shows the virtues of womanhood as manifested by her female characters. "Nneora," literally translated as "mother of all," is a symbolic name ... which marks

her out as “ an embodiment of all that is virtuous in the quintessential woman . Nneora is presented as an ideal wife --submissive without being slavish, assertive without being pugnacious” (Asigbo, 2002: 269). The virtues in Nneora’s character are thus, ascribed to her self-sacrificing love for her husband which made her submissive without being slavish.”Above all, she was the embodiment of true womanhood by virtue of being a mother, demonstrated not only in her symbolic name, but also by the fact of her procreative prowess (Asiedu,2011: 180). It is Nneora,s virtues that endears her to Osita and she gets her way with him not by aggression but by persuasion and entreaties to his goodness of heart and his feelings for her.

Linda is another exemplary character that projects the virtues of womanhood. Though she experienced great ordeals in the hands of her estranged husband Osita, she refuses to remain in that miserable condition. She works hard, acquires education and finds her worth in life beyond motherhood and wifehood. She does this however, without giving up her responsibilities to her children. Seeing Linda’s example, Nneora resolves to go back to school and make a good living without Ikenna.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, we have established that most women believe that the pioneer playwrights and indeed most male playwrights in Nigeria misrepresent women in their plays. As a result of this, the corpus of female drama in Nigeria has arisen to challenge this dominant ethos of female misrepresentation in male authored plays in Nigerian literary drama. Thus, the women playwrights in their quest for a new narrative attempt to project positive image of women in their plays. The women are idealized as perfect humans who in spite of their goodness are subjected to miserable conditions by men. The women however, refuse to remain in their disadvantaged condition in the world of the plays studied. Through the virtues of self-sacrifice, self-denial and patriotism Aisosa becomes a celebrity and replaces her husband in their constituency Senate. Similarly, Nneora empowers herself through hard work and education and finally becomes independent and successful in life. These are a clear voices of a new narrative in Nigerian feminist drama.

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