Chapter 3

Women coming into their own: The Post Colonial Ibo woman
In 2002, Nigerian women received a lot of international media attention when Safiya Husseni and Amina Lawai were convicted of adultery by a Sharia court (USA TODAY, 2002). The sentence was death by stoning. The verdict was overturned with national and international support for Husseni, but Lawai's is still being fought. My favorite story of 2002 was of hundreds of rural unarmed women who peacefully demonstrated to force multinational oil companies to make a difference in the communities from which they drilled crude oil. The women, ranging from 30 to 90 years of age, laid siege for ten days, held 700 Shell and Chevron-Texaco workers hostage for hours, and threatened to go naked if their demands were not met. These women took action to change their social and economic situation, and their demands were met (Minneapolis Star-Tribune, 2002; USA TODAY, 2002). However, the coverage of these events in the media (national and international) seemed to indicate surprise that Nigerian women were asserting their rights or doing something about their situation. I found myself disagreeing with that frame. (Aje-Ori Agbase 1)

Nigerian women have always risen to the challenge whenever their authority and identity as women has been threatened. Using a historical analysis, one can argue that Nigerian women have always played a powerful role in Nigerian culture, and have had to define and redefine their roles and authority according to the structural constraints that defined gender and gender equality in pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial eras. In redefining their power and roles, they have implicitly or explicitly maintained a level of power. As in many societies, gender inequalities exist in Nigeria (Arndt 78). Women in Nigeria do not receive the same treatment as men to make their lives economically, politically and socially better. A level playing field does not exist for women to make decisions about issues affecting them (Mufema 77). But this is not to say that Nigerian women have not made notable contributions in the political, social and economic arenas. Women have always had some economic power and have exerted influence in Nigerian society through women's councils, family connections, and to a much lesser extent, mainstream social, economic or political organizations. According to Leith-Ross, "Nigerian women, because
of their economic importance as mothers, farm cultivators and traders, have been rather more powerful than is generally thought" (21). Studies indicate that Nigerian women have implicitly or explicitly participated in Nigeria's development since pre-colonial times. This chapter will concentrate on the post colonial woman and the changing face of Nigerian womanhood.

**Historical Overview**

“Women in Nigeria have been identified as playing significant formal roles in Nigerian society from pre colonial through colonial and post colonial times (which begins from the time of Nigeria’s independence in 1960). (Amadiume 23) The women exemplified their dignity, strength and solidarity in various ways. Despite, their historic significance, the contribution of many Nigerian women have unfortunately lapsed into history. Remnant accounts, however, do reveal significant roles for these great women that can be laid as a foundation for future improvement of women’s lives. A brief inclusive history of such women is being given to emphasize their significant role in the society. The emphasis here is on the quality of life as it changes and evolves from the pre colonial to the post colonial times.

**Pre Colonial and Colonial Times**

Many studies of African women attempt to develop a historic account of women at given points of time. Writers of history tend to focus on changes that have occurred in the status of women during various selected periods. Some focus on historic factors that introduced changes in the lives on women; others are more concerned in restoring women to history and to demonstrate the extent to which women were actively involved in shaping their own lives and their communities. Historical accounts show that in pre – colonial times, Nigerian women had political roles and institutions in the society. Women in traditional Nigerian society had a powerful role and influence in the society. In the African oral literary traditions and festivals, women were placed at the centre of the social order as the custodians of earth, fire and water. (Khapoya 56) Women assumed the role of not only mother to children, but mother of the entire family and to the society. (Amadiume 87)
The society depended on her for food and her role was crucial in times of war. She had a feminine role but there was also social power reserved for her. Such roles included distribution of power, wealth and responsibility for sustaining life. (Amadiume 57)

Reiterating the role of women in traditional African society, Kalu asserts that “most African myths and legends place women at the centre of, or at least as essential to, the existence of things”. (269) Kalu presents the female discursive formation, which gives meaning to “woman as human, in a statement that includes the earth, creativity, harmony, transcendence, life, healing and so on”. (Kalu 269) Although critical of some cultures that create limits and boundaries for women in Nigeria, Kalu notes that the concept in ‘female’ manifests in some interesting domains. For example, there is the notion of some powerful oracles as female and the notion of ‘ala’ the earth as female in Ibo culture, and of ‘Iyaloja’ the mother who oversees the market, as in the Yoruba market ordinances, within the Nigerian socio-cultural tradition.

Kalu relates some historical accounts of great women from three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, namely, the Hausa in the North, the Yoruba in the South West, and the Igbo in the South East. Some of these historic accounts are discussed below. It is important to discuss these narratives; past historic acts of women informs the present and can help improve the future lives of women.

The traditional history of Hausaland relates that Queen Amina, the Queen of Zazzau from 1536-1573, had considerable success in wars. She led an army and conquered major towns in Hausaland from the district of Kwararafa to Nupe. Every town in the region paid tribute to her. All the products of the West were brought to Hausaland through her powerful influence. In order to acknowledge her reign, the king of Nupe sent her 40 eunuchs and 19,000 kola nuts. Her reign lasted for 34 years, after which she died in Atagare, a town in her conquered territory. Queen Amina is very prominent in the success history of great Nigerian women, particularly in Hausaland. Many public institutions are named after Queen Amina (O'Barr & Firmin-Sellers 56).
Societies in pre-colonial Nigeria believed women and men complemented each other, and had characteristics, some of which still exist today, that determined women's and men's roles (O'Barr & Firmin-Sellers 56). Ethnic groups were "structured around kinship which determined the productive and reproductive role of the individual in society" (Okome 8).

As in other societies, kinship is a very strong factor in Nigeria as the family is one of the oldest and most respected institutions. Kin includes parents, siblings, relatives, friends and in-laws, and they participate in every aspect of a person's life. Through family and kinship, women gained power and stature in society. For instance, because children are important, the ability to have children is central to a woman's identity in Nigeria (Potash 56). In pre-colonial times children were considered economic assets particularly as they provided labor on the family farm. More children meant power and wealth.

Husbands in traditional Igbo society always presented their wives with stools in appreciation of their roles as mothers (Ohadoma 19). Her stool is traditionally displayed at a woman's funeral. For barren women, society made provisions that allowed them to have power and control as they could marry wives for their husbands and have children through them. This allowed barren women to escape the stigma that was later created in Nigeria when customary law and Christianity, in pushing for monogamous families, supported the stereotype that women who could not have children were not real women (Amadiume 66).

Pre-colonial societies were also patrilineal, whereby inheritance and authority were traced mainly through men. This structure still exists. But, seniority, not gender, determined power (Oyewumi 44). Niara Sudarkasa's work on indigenous African societies shows that age, not gender, was a major deciding factor in who actively participated in government, performed certain duties, or earned titles. Even for men, seniority determined respect. Amongst the Igbos, the first male (Opara) and first female children (Ada) had higher status in the family than other children. Women also gained power from kinship and participated in the decision making process.

Socially and economically, pre-colonial Nigerian societies clearly delineated the roles which belonged to leaders, women and men. (Khapoya 88). Men were assigned the role
of provider and disciplinarian, while women mastered all things domestic and performed "womanly" tasks like harvesting crops and trading in certain products. But this did not prevent women from asserting their authority or themselves. According to Ellis, it is rarely known that 90% of Nigerian women are working mothers who trade and farm to provide for their families, ensuring that they have a source of income and economic clout where necessary. This system has existed since pre-colonial times. (33).

Gender separation also extended to social groups and collectives, where women and men met with their own gender to discuss issues affecting them and their communities. Collectives are associations made up primarily of women or men who come together because they share a common goal, trade, ethnicity, or family (Johnson-Odim & Strobel 66). These organizations also formed along religious, age, social and political lines (Oyewumi 66). As Johnson-Odim and Strobel explain, female networks allowed women to exercise considerable power and independence within society in Africa. (Johnson-Odim & strobel 66)

However, pre-colonial Nigeria was not ideal as women's clout in some circles was not as strong as men's. The social structure in some ethnic groups favored men more than women, like the Ibos of Nnobi (Amadiume 56). Each ethnic group differed in how women were involved in the political, social and economic spheres. Among the Yoruba, women were wealthy and independent, but did not occupy key political positions that allowed them to make decisions that would affect the political structure as a whole. Regardless, there is significant evidence that pre-colonial Nigerian societies allowed women to make ample contributions to the social, political and economic structure of their societies. Where they were prevented from being openly active, they used loopholes inherent in the structure to gain and maintain some level of power (Okome 88). This changed to a large extent with the coming of Islam and British colonial rule, and women suffered important setbacks.

Nigerian Women in Colonial Times -- 1861-1960
Denzer argues that British rule and colonialism gave Nigerian women greater freedom of choice in marriage, legal rights, the option of divorce, and economic opportunities. But recent research suggests the opposite, and argues that colonialism repressed women and set the tone for an overtly male-controlled post-colonial Nigeria (Johnson-Odim & Strobel 99).

What became Nigeria previously existed as two protectorates, Northern and Southern, until Lord Lugard amalgamated them in 1914. Northern Nigeria consisted primarily of Hausa-Fulanis, with a unified cultural and political structure and language. Southern Nigeria consisted of different ethnic groups, each with unique political and cultural structures and languages (Falola 77). British colonial rule was applied differently to each region to suit British purposes (Gambari 25). In northern Nigeria the British ruled indirectly through the existing structure, a centralized system similar to the British monarchy. In Southern Nigeria, the British changed the political structure to suit their political ideal of centralized authority. For example, in Igboland political power was not traditionally centralized in one person so the British created and installed warrant chiefs who reported directly to them (Davidson 12). In other areas, kings were dethroned and deported for opposing the British, and supporters installed. This had various impacts on traditional Nigerian societies.

Politically, leaders were no longer accountable to the people they governed (Boahen 11). Economically, colonialism instituted a cash crop economy that focused on the production of export goods instead of food crops, causing a dependence on imported European goods and hunger in many areas. Regarding women, "The Victorian mind-set situated men and women differently in social, political and economic relations. Men were expected to be in the public sphere and women in the private" (Okome 6). Colonial rule diminished women's authority and opportunities to participate in the social, economic and political spheres as it legalized gender discrimination. For instance, the emphasis on a cash crop economy run by European firms, displaced women from agricultural trade, a role previously reserved for them. However, depending on their region, Nigerian women reacted differently to their displacement under colonial rule.
The redefinition and integration of Islam to Hausaland (northern Nigeria,) when British rule began there between 1899 and 1903, at best eroded women's public roles and power in northern Nigeria (Callaway 8). Islam was introduced to the region in the 12th century through the trans-Saharan trade, but its impact was not felt until the 14th century as the ruling elite, who were supposed to enforce Islamic practices, was negligent in enforcing Islam and its doctrines. This lax attitude, coupled with "economic decline, excessive taxation, corruption, and the political marginalization of the poor among other things," antagonized the Fulani Muslim settlers in Hausaland (Abdullah & Hamza 5). For them, being a Muslim meant strict obedience to the teachings of Islam, and they wanted to purify the religion and society (Abdullah & Hamzah 6). The Fulani jihad of Usman dan Fodio in 1804 introduced Fulani interpretations of the Qur'an and perspectives of gender roles to northern Nigeria (Callaway 17). Fodio believed women should be educated and protected according to the Qur'an, and accused religious teachers of deceiving women by stressing their obedience to men instead of God. But most Fulanis believed Hausa culture gave women too much freedom by allowing them to rule, publicly mingle with men, or inherit property (Callaway 7). They removed women from political positions and introduced purdah (called "kulle" in Nigeria), a system that disallowed women from going out before sundown (Okome 2002). Women were told to depend on their husbands for their daily needs as good Muslims, and they did. (Callaway 17) Muslim writers and chroniclers also gradually wrote out women's contributions to Hausaland. Northern women ended up heavily secluded under Islam, and gradually lost their public, religious and political powers (Johnson-Odim & Strobel 56). The stage was set for a male controlled society, a great setback as northern Nigeria had produced great women like Queen Amina. So when the British arrived, Hausa women had lost their public rights to a great degree and the British, who "rejected prominent and political roles for women" and believed women should be silent, submissive breeders and domestics, did nothing to reclaim or enhance women's status (Johnson-Odim & Strobel IX). In fact, British colonial writings of northern Nigeria excluded women "except for the inevitable mention of marriage and divorce patterns" (Callaway 15). Since Fulani rulers were allowed to maintain this structure during indirect rule, nothing challenged their way of life and Hausa women were subdued and secluded from the public sphere. They were not
educated or allowed to participate in regional development during colonial rule. Imam
and Pearce argue that the plight of northern women probably worsened under colonialism
in an effort to safeguard Hausa culture and Islam.

Fatima Adamu points out that privately, northern women exercised some power, making
it difficult to interpret their position under Islam and purdah as powerlessness, dependent
or male dominated. For example, under gender seclusion, Adamu argues, women were
able to see themselves as independent of men and to build gender solidarity. She explains
that because the purdah system required men to shop, farm and fetch water and firewood,
women were not losing. They were allowed to engage in trade with other women and this
made them economically independent of their husbands while they maintained a network
with other women. According to Okomo, though purdah seemed to prevent women from
voting during colonial rule and in the early years of independence, when voting rights
were granted to northern women in 1976, "women in purdah turned out in such large
numbers to vote in local government elections that the voting day was extended by two
hours" (10). For women in southern Nigeria, the story is quite different. Strong measures
of conquest and Islam did not tame southern women who were active before British rule
(Oyewumi 78). Yoruba society, for instance, believed women could contribute to society
(Oyewumi 78). But colonial rule did not see women doing anything more than childbearing
and housework. In some cases the British ignored the female counterpart of
the political and economic structures (O'Barr & Firmin-Sellers 12). In Onitsha, the
traditional male office, Obi, had a female counterpart, Omu. The Omu was responsible
for the "maintenance of women's dignity, customary laws and their behavior" and she had
her own cabinet, the Otu Ogene. In essence, the Omu regulated women's interests and
was not accountable to the Obi (Nzegwu 5). She presided over matters of trade and price-
fixing and rallied women whenever they were threatened. The last powerful Omu of
Onitsha, Omu Nwagboka, mobilized women to boycott family and community duties to
"remind the community that no society can function without the duties and tasks
performed by women, namely their spiritual, agrarian, economic and familial obligations"
(Nzegwu 4). Colonial officers ignored the Omu and similar offices in the region when
they came to Nigeria. At first, southern women went along with the changes. But
whenever the British created policies "inimical" to women's interests, they organized and publicly fought them (Johnson-Odim & Strobel 56).

"Men's efforts to end their autonomy in the name of foreign principles propagated by missionaries -- that women should stay at home, submit to the will of the colonial officials and their husbands, and essentially renounce their economic and social privileges -- were intolerable" (Coquery-Vidrovitch 161). Unlike northern women, southern women responded publicly. Southern women participated in general strikes, protest marches, economic boycotts and armed rebellion during colonial rule from the late 1920s to the 1950s. These included the Aba women's riots of 1929-1930, the Lagos market women's strikes of 1945, and the Egba Women's Alliance from the 1930s through the 1950s. The most popular rebellion was the Aba women's riots, which Leith-Ross (1965) referred to as "original and formidable" (20). In just a few days, Nigerian women organized a riot "which necessitated the calling in of military forces before order could be restored, and the subsequent appointment of a Commission of Inquiry" (Leith-Ross 20).

Nigerian women, especially southern women, used blatant or available loopholes to maintain their power and play an important role in Nigeria's political and economic structure during colonialism. Unfortunately, postcolonial Nigeria largely excluded women from politics and issues of development by not changing colonial laws that excluded women from the political, economic and social arenas or giving women a place in the independent government. But this did not deter the Nigerian women.

**Post-Colonial Nigeria -- 1960 to the Present**

Post-colonial Nigeria was built on a "male privileging colonial ideology that empowered local men and their male-dominated, male oriented native authorities, agencies and customary courts" and dismissed women (Nzegwu 6). Though men had collaborated with women activists to fight for independence, men relegated women to subordinate and useless positions in politics after independence, ensuring women did not feature prominently in the political, economic and social structure (Okome 78). But women fought to be included. The difference between this period and the colonial era is that
women tried to assert themselves mostly through legal structures, and when that did not work, they reverted to traditional strategies.

Nigerian women could campaign for public office and some ran for office from the late 1950s to 1966. In southern Nigeria many were elected to local government councils, and in 1961, three women were elected to the Eastern House of Assembly (Okome, 2000). Under the military government of Yakubu Gowon from 1966-1975, there was at least one woman in state cabinets. Flora Nwapa was the first female commissioner appointed in the eastern region. Her appointment led to the appointment of women like Folake Solonke on Oyo state and Kofoworola Pratt in Lagos state.

However, women were almost absent at the national level from 1960 to 1975. Gender bias and discrimination was prominent in this era. Only two women were appointed to the federal senate. Even the draft of a new constitution in 1976 ignored women. Not one woman sat on the fifty member constitutional drafting committee, thereby "limiting the potential influence and participation of women in bringing issues that favored them to the forefront" (Okome 8). It took the efforts of Abigail Ukpabi and the other four women in the member assembly to outlaw gender discrimination on constitutional grounds. That amendment was never enforced when the constitution was adopted in 1979 because the mechanisms for enforcing constitutional provisions regarding women were never discussed, and nothing was done to formally include women in the national political structure or to enforce laws to make their lives better (Shettima 35). Nigerian women lacked the right to protect themselves and their children from abandonment by their husbands, exploitation and cruelty by relatives at the death of their husbands, or to be educated, as postcolonial Nigeria emphasized the education of boys. Women who complained were labeled westernized and un-African and gradually silenced (Ajai 1982).

One explanation for this dynamic shift could be that after 99 years of British rule Nigerians had learned to do things as the colonialists and internalized many of their values. Independence came with a great need to be accepted as capable of ruling themselves, of acting as civilized beings, and they reinvented themselves in the image of the British (Davidson 67). Nigerian men had a colonial mentality that traditional Nigeria
was savage and uncivilized. They kept the British form of government, including English laws, and as women did not feature during colonial rule they were not prominent in postcolonial Nigeria (Okome 78). If western nations excluded women then the civilized thing to do was to exclude women. However, to turn the country into a male-controlled one, men needed to believe that traditional Nigerian societies did not value women, and so they reinvented tradition. In some communities women were discouraged from participating in politics on the basis that traditional society did not include them in such fields. A woman's traditional role as mother and homemaker was emphasized ensuring that tradition could be used to determine what a woman could do or become (Oguonu 11).

Over the past forty years of Nigerian independence, the political structure has developed social class positions and a stricter hierarchy (Andrade 87). Although these are manifested in the society, nonetheless some positive changes have occurred as women in contemporary Nigeria attempt to go beyond their traditional roles as mother, wife, and homemaker. A significant change has taken place in the Nigerian work environment, where there is an increase in the number of women entering the work force. Barber & Allen consider this as a manifestation of women's efforts to deconstruct traditional norms that are rigidly tied to gender roles. A key component of this trend is women's efforts to transcend and grow to develop the self through connection with others (Gilligan 67). From this perspective, therefore, women build on developing the self towards an improved quality of life. The quality of life experienced by many women is guided by norms of their societies. In the Nigerian context, quality of life for the individual is achieved through collective roles and communal ties. Individual identity is linked to group membership. Women identify their informal and collective roles through groups and organizations, struggling together, taking actions together, and using one another's commitment. These organizations are both formal and informal, serving different functions. Such women's groups include the National Council Women's Societies (NCWS), founded in 1958. The NCWS was founded to create a federation of non-political women's organizations and to assist women in towns and villages. Other organizations include the Nigerian Catholic Women's Organization, the Muslim
Women’s Organization, the Christian Women’s Council, the Young Christian Women, Women in Nigeria (a professional women’s organization), and others. The NCWS serves as a link for all Nigerian women irrespective of religion, ethnicity, or class. The NCWS is the umbrella organization that provides a forum for women to articulate issues about women (Andrade 87). Through the guidance of the NCWS, women’s groups serve the following functions. They:

- Assist in obtaining employment for unemployed women
- Provide recreational facilities to the public particularly to children
- Provide moral guidance
- Provide programs to strengthen family life
- Support advancement for Nigerian women in professional careers (Andrade 87)

Women’s groups have increased their concerted efforts to foster their support for the improvement of education of Nigerian women. The ‘Better Life Program’ for Nigerian women, established in 1987 by then First Lady Marian Babaginda, provided centers nationwide for food production, literacy program, skilled training for women (Andrade 56). This was an important effort, especially since a significant indicator of positive change is the increase in the number of women entering the workforce. Nigerian women can be mobilized through various routes as suggested by Andrade. She proposes a better route through academic performance, acquisition of degrees, and the retaining of lucrative jobs. Education, according to Andrade is the key to forging a link to social change, improved well-being, and quality of life for Nigerian women.

In Nigerian political history, women have aspired to political positions, and some have assumed political responsibilities in ministerial positions. In the Churches and in various religious groups, women have been given assigned roles in religious ministries. However, the political system leaves much to be desired; women are not well represented. Failure in this respect has generated action by some interest groups. An example of such was the conference initiated by the former head of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa held in Nigeria in 1991. Among its goals was to educate policy makers about the importance of women and trying to include more women in important political roles.
Today, women sit on the board of banks, even own them, industries and more. Nigerian women have formed, and are forming, organizations such as Women on Nigeria (WIN) and the National Council of Women's Societies to educate women and girls and push for their participation on every front in Nigeria. Some are using communication technologies like the Internet to garner global support and educate people on the plight of Nigerian women. It took the collective efforts of women across the nation and the globe to stop the death of Safiya Husseni and they continue to protest Amina Lawal's death sentence.

**Post Colonial Writing**

The 1990s witnessed a proliferation of writings and the gradual institutionalization of post colonial studies. With the proliferation of publications, there has been an increased visibility of intellectuals from the former colonies of Britain and France in North American academies. The flourishing of this system of scholarship stimulated a critical debate about the phenomenon of institutionalization, and with it the changes in the role of the post colonial intellectual. The term post colonial has been the object of a lot of criticism. Due to the term's non-specificity, societies with very different histories and structures are put under the post colonial umbrella. The term post colonial suggests the end of colonial domination and a definitive break from it, when economic realities indicate the onset and continuance of neo-colonialism and the substitution of a more insidious economic control by corporate power for an earlier administrative and political subjugation. The term post colonial has also been criticized for its impulse to cluster disparate histories under the master trope of the colonial/post colonial. Nineteenth century independence movements in South America, have been thrust together with twentieth century de-colonization struggles in Africa and Asia, leaving as ambiguous questions such as “when does post colonial begin, and when if ever does it end?” Can the rise of the new ethnic nationalisms in the Balkans be studied or explained even partially by the theories of the post colonial? Can the marginalization of tribal and indigenous populations in the first world (Native Americans, Maoris) and in the Third World (Santhals in India) be analyzed from the framework of the colonial/post colonial? Also can the contemporary predicaments of white settler colonies like Canada and Australia be grouped under the trope of the post colonial? The problem with the term post colonial
seems to be that it has mushroomed into an amorphous and loosely connected mass of political agendas often disparate and contradictory.

The post colonial seems to have replaced the earlier term third world in current critical vocabulary. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have argued that the term post colonial unlike Third World lacks a programme of emancipatory action. They seem to privilege the term third world over post colonial, because the origin of the term third world as an act of resistance against imperialism in the Bandung conference. On the other hand, the term post colonial seems for Shohat to be a product of the theoretical era of post- connected intellectually to movements like post modernism and post structuralism in the American academy. Shohat interprets these theoretical movements to be confining theory to the arena of the textual practice. While they are accurate in their critique of the lack of specificity in the term post colonial and its homogenization of diverse histories of different regions and the colonizing powers and are colonized under a single term of ‘post colonial’, which contradicts sharply with neo colonial realities, one feels that their rejection of the term post colonial because of its origins in post modernism and post structuralism is predicated upon an interpretation of these movements as only intellectual and politically neutral.

Shohat and Stam prefer the terms post independence and third world to the ambiguities of the term post colonial. Leela Gandhi’s Post Colonial Theory: a Critical Introduction exemplifies this mode of analysis. After a critical evaluation of Said, Bhabha and others, Gandhi creates a new binary, that of the post colonial and the nationalist. In this formulation the post colonial represents the metropolitan, the hybrid, the migrant, which Gandhi interprets as a canon forming discourse of European language literature of non European subject matter and limiting of the possibility of resistance to mere textual practice. Against this, Gandhi juxtaposes, the nationalist, which is seen as more connected with grassroots reality, more politically engaged, less influenced by the hegemony of European languages and a truer repository of resistance. Speaking of language, Gayatri Spivak argues that Asia and Africa have been at the receiving end of the first World. She says: "Asia and Africa are always supposed to have had trouble with
"Oedipus." (143) She points to the consequences of the fact that she, and women like her, like the Algerian Muslim writer Assis Djebar, like the Indian writer Mahasweta Devi and, the likes of Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta, have been "culturally banished from Oedipus" (144). This acquired language, secondly, is figurative, is the symbolic with a small "s." Language is steeped in the dominant culture's imperialist and masculine tropes and metaphors, and it is from this language that women are, supposedly, banished. Stephen Frosh puts it quite unambiguously when he describes that in the Lacanian formulation the very "definition of 'woman' here seems to be 'she who is outside language'. (Shohat and Stan 54)

Due to the predominance of post colonial studies, there is an active interest in studies of women in less industrialized societies. Prior to recent developments, most studies of women in non industrialized societies came from anthropological work. This new attention was stimulated by a growing awareness of some of the issues facing women as they engage in social and economic activities: issues associated by a growing awareness of some of the issues facing women in general and Nigerian women in particular. Nigerian women's lives have always been governed by dual activities: they are both reproductive and productive. Balancing these dual roles is a reality for the Nigerian women. Historical accounts point to the number of factors that influence Nigerian women's quality of life, such as socio cultural and traditional norms and religious institutions. Research, however, has not yet established in more significant terms the role of these factors on quality of life. The post independence, western educated working woman of Africa has been a site of study for many African writers. The African feminist theoretical model serves as a lens through which the Nigerian woman's life is viewed from the pre colonial times through the colonial period to the post colonial phase.
Religion had a strong influence on education in Africa in the 19th century. Together with the colonial state, religious organizations -- particularly missions influenced the form, content and the processes of canon formation in African artistic and intellectual endeavors. Through formal, westernized education, pioneered by the church and subsidized by the state, women in many parts of Africa experienced a separation between religion, politics and the economy, disempowering them substantially and domesticating them in the process of restructuring labour and its distribution in colonial economies. Unlike men, women's western education was focused on domesticity, divorcing women from the political, public and lucrative spheres of colonial economies. In the process, many groups and classes of African women became formally dependent on men in many colonial economies. They lost their political and religious powers, placing them in weak leadership positions socially and politically. This disempowerment persists to date and has very negative consequences for the inclusion of women in the canon in different areas of life in Africa.

On the other hand, African men's experiences with western education and the formation of the canon in the arts and intellectual arena took a decidedly different path. Men of different classes were the first to access western education and to participate in shaping the canon in specific areas of intellectual and artistic endeavor such as literature. The processes of colonization, state formation and modernization separated religious from artistic, political and economic spheres, advantaging those African men who were at the centre of colonial and post-colonial education, state, political and economic enterprise. These men occupy the centre of the canon in many areas of enterprise and shape the development of the canons in the artistic and intellectual arenas.

Hastings and Labode assert that women missionaries comprised the majority of mission workers in Africa. Since the women missionaries were themselves subordinated to their religious hierarchies, the women missionaries were unable to present much of a revolutionary force for African women whom they tried to evangelise and 'civilise'.
Labode points out that missionaries, many of them single women, performed most of the Anglican mission work in South Africa. Most of their work comprised what is termed ‘welfare’ work in contemporary parlance. This work included teaching, nursing, visiting people at homes, training women in homemaking and mothering skills, running orphanages and rehabilitating women who had gone into prostitution or had borne children outside wedlock. This was women’s work then as it is now. African women were, at that time, involved in agriculture, trade and other types of work outside the home in their peasant and pastoralist societies. Domestic labour, shared with children, was not women’s sole or primary focus in most parts of Africa that are dominated by female farming systems. (Boserup 1970)

According to Comaroff, “the accomplishment of a missionary in Central Africa is that the husband is a jack-of-all-trades without doors and the wife to be a maid-of-all-work within.” (64) In effect, the confinement of women within the newly constructed private domestic and the men in the public domains was an important aspect of Christian evangelism. This thrust shaped subsequent events in the evolution of rules, rights, obligations and accomplishments by gender in colonial and post-colonial societies. It must be noted that the majority of missionaries in Africa in the early nineteenth century, originated from European countries, which were patriarchal. In the case of the United Kingdom, many missionaries had Victorian backgrounds and the subordination of women to men was taken for granted in these European societies of the nineteenth century. Thus, missionaries were nurtured in the context of ideologies of female subordination, which made them less open to other possibilities for gender organization, education and women’s participation in public life in any society. The blatant racism and white superiority of colonial societies confounded the issue, placing missionary women in a superior position to African women and destroying many possibilities for mutual education on many issues that could have benefited both missionary and colonized African women.
The Christian curriculum for African women

In general, the Christian curriculum for African women focused not on the interests of African women as expressed by them, but on the interests of their fathers, husbands, brothers, the colonial state and the male-dominated church. While the early Christian churches, Anglican, Catholic and Methodist in Africa, allied themselves with women over issues such as the killing of twins, forced marriages, bridewealth payment and witchcraft accusations, they also allied with colonial and native men in subordinating African women through male-centered education which replaced variants of African education and socialization with a variety of European-derived patriarchal values embodied in formalized western education. Here the curriculum of different Christian denominations are discussed which indicate their impact on the statuses and power of African women in their societies.

Labode argues that Anglican mission education for African women differed from that of African men. Primarily, the education of African women in South Africa focused on moulding wives and helpmeets for colonized Christian men so that Christianity could spread in Africa. The dominant assumptions about African women were that, unlike African men, African women had little contact with colonialism through the labour market and were thus steeped in their heathen and un-Christian customs. It was also felt that African women were victims of African traditional customs such as polygyny, bridewealth and forced marriages. Thus, African women were objects of missionary women’s pity and needed to be raised in different environments from those prevailing in their homes. These assumptions led to the institutionalization of African girls in boarding schools, homes and similar environments. According to a variety of scholars, domesticity was the cornerstone of missionary education for women in South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. While native boys were trained to assume leadership and public roles in their societies, native girls were trained to become wives who had to run the homes and bear the children of these leaders.
Thus, missionaries who felt that lives of servitude, badly paid, with little social status and recognition, were appropriate for women, forced girls into domesticity. This observation is still true in contemporary Africa. Nevertheless, the minority of African women who had personal and parental ambitions for higher paid occupations were able to glean some academic and domestic education and were able to work as teachers, nurses, orderlies and could occupy positions of authority in Mothers’ Guilds and Unions. Missions imbued women with a view of alternative lifestyles and locales, enabling them to break away from their natal families and to build up limited power bases in colonial societies. In one instance, girls at Bloemfontein Training School, an Anglican institution, revolted against their domestic curriculum in 1877. This curriculum stressed housewifely training, sewing, and religious education with a bit of the reading, writing and arithmetic thrown in. Thus, the mainstream Catholic, Anglican and Methodist conceptions of African Christian women were those of women who were content to take a back seat to their husbands, to keep homes for them, bear their children and enable them to serve the church and state. The educational needs of African girls and women were not prioritized. Flora Nwapa’s *Women Are Different* is part autobiographical as it discusses the colonial education she had been part of.

**The Christian curriculum for African men**

While African women were provided limited education for domesticity, African men were also offered education for subordination, albeit broader and less vocational. In Southern Africa, social work, carpentry, agriculture, teaching, pastoral work and the armed forces were the provinces of men. These men were the colonial functionaries who taught in the African schools became the lay preachers, worked as orderlies under the western nurses and doctors, acted as interpreters in the courts, performed the policing of the colonized, and became the direct assistants of the colonial civil servants. There was some reluctance to introduce higher education amongst the natives particularly in the areas of law, engineering and the sciences in general. In East Africa, Makerere College drew on native populations from Southern and Central Africa. Fort Hare, an African institution in South Africa, drew its student population from Southern and Central Africa.
These institutions were few and tended to recruit male Africans who had had a head start in education beyond primary school (Davidson 39). It was only in the post-war period that colonial governments started planning broader education provision to support the colonial administrative efforts as natives demanded access to more and broader education for both men and women.

**The African woman in search of identity**

This chapter concentrates on the “new” Nigerian woman in search of her identity in the contemporary society, which is very different from the society of the past. While it is clear that she resents her suppression by the combined forces of tradition, patriarchy and motherhood, yet it not yet clear that she has resolved her situation in modernity. To make matters worse, there is constant ambiguity and confusion which is apparent in the construction of the new woman. The authors deal with and talk about this new persona with hitherto untraversed “mountains” on her back. The new woman has to strike a perfect balance between her tradition, her Western education, her city life which is devoid of the cushioning of the village life and her own changing persona. Commenting on the change in the writings of Nwapa from *Efuru* and *Idu*, Ada Azodo writes:

…Nwapa seems to recognize, since the writing of her first two novels, *Efuru* and *Idu*, that the Nigerian woman must, of necessity, now go beyond her narrow ethnic group to find herself in the context of a new Nigeria. Yoruba, Hausa and Fulani names now rub shoulders with Ibo names in Nwapa’s writings, a phenomenon that has not been seen before. Secondly, Nwapa recognizes that women in a new historical time period, in post war era, have new problems and desires. Nothing prepared Nigerians for the experience they were going to have in the civil war. Many had heard of wars from war veterans of the Second World War, especially the war at Burma; still the ravages and traumas of Nigeria – Biafran war were a unique experience…. For the first time the Nigerian women realized they were capable as men do and dare. To regain control of their lives,
therefore, women saw they needed to have economic independence from men.  
(Umeh 1998 243)

Carol Boyce Davies (1986) points out that the artistic works of important Igbo writers, Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta, directly contradict the gendered meanings assigned to motherhood by Igbo male writers and others from outside Igboland. Nwapa and Emecheta contest the assumption that having children does not necessarily guarantee the women’s happiness and success by constructing fictional works in which mothers and wives who are dominated, unfulfilled and not in control of their lives, live significantly unhappy lives. These two Igbo women depict different types of women, mothers and wives, indicating that there are many ways of being women, wives, mothers and that choices exist for women to fashion the kinds of existences and lives they would desire. Thus, while in many male writers’ creations and in the appreciation they derive from scholarly critics, the struggles of black men are prioritized to the detriment of those of African women who comprise the other half of colonized societies. Nwapa, Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, Bessie Head, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Neshani Andreas, Lilia Momple and Yvonne Vera, foreground women’s experiences of colonial and post-colonial realities through their fiction. In this endeavour, they shape and re-shape the canons of African literature in ways that advance the struggle for more humane existences for all Africans. These writers, writing from the perspectives of African women, help to lay bare the differences between African women and men’s realities in colonial and post-colonial Africa.

Molara Ogundipe- Leslie, commenting on the woman writer and her commitment stresses on the socialization of women. According to her, the European model of femininity is not applicable to the African woman who has been resourceful from the pre colonial times. *Palm Wine Drinkard* is one of the most correct images of Yoruba women of all classes. Ogundipe- Leslie feels that one of the tasks the woman writer from Africa needs to do on a war footing is to correct the stereotypical images of African women. Nwapa, Emecheta, Aidoo, Ba and others discuss the changing face of the society and show the woman changing due to the pressures on her. Cyprian Ekwensi’s *Jagua Nana* celebrates the new
spirit of the woman as Jagua, a beautiful single woman makes her living in a hostile city. Ekwensi has come under serious criticism from feminist scholars for presenting Jagua as a stereotypical prostitute. However, a closer look at the text shows that Ekwensi’s sympathies lie with Jagua. It is the complexities of the city life which he is unable to decipher and it reflects in the characterization of the central protagonist. It is as if he is trying to understand this new breed of women who are so different from women he has known so far. Nwapa, Emecheta and other women authors qualify perhaps, as “sage philosophers”, given their new insights into deviancy as a product/symptom of society’s ills, not as the failing on the part of the individual. Thanks to their insight, a prostitute is no longer seen as a wanton, lascivious woman, but rather as a hard working, resourceful woman employed in the informal sector and trying to make the best she can of society. Nwapa, Emecheta and others challenge uncritical condemnation of women’s behaviours, especially women living in precarious living conditions, in between survival and death. (Umeh 1998 244)

One of the biggest reasons for the change in women’s traditional roles is the unexpected civil war the Nigerians were forced to witness. Non-medical populace was hearing for the first time of kwashiorkor—an illness brought about by starvation. Mothers would do anything to prevent their children from turning into skeletons before their eyes due to malnutrition. Many women went into “attack trade” to ensure the survival of their family members. This form of trading involved befriending the enemy and trading directly with them. It involved great risks which most women took in order to keep their family members alive. A by product of this is that the women tasted economic freedom of a certain kind. They realized that they could look after their families single handedly. Nwapa and Emecheta saw the need to give meaning and value to human life in post-civil war era, deprived of the benefits of religion. The war had brought about certain alienation. At the same time, it brought about a craving for tradition and luxury products of a capitalist economy—houses, cars, jewellery—in a rather uncomfortable manner. Both Nwapa and Emecheta critique the Nigerian post civil war era. While Nwapa’s writing engages in a search for self with the modern Nigerian woman in complex times, Emecheta’s canvas is larger. She talks of the naira power, rape, madness and the
diasporic entity of the Nigerian woman. The woman consciously using her body to further her economic gains is seen in the writings of Cyprian Ekwensi, Nwapa and Emecheta.

The women authored novels of the ‘60s and ‘70s have been termed “radically feminist” by Katherine Frank. In an essay titled “Women Without Men: The Feminist Novel Of Africa”, she identifies some novels which she feels are more feminist in nature than their Western counterparts. The novels which she discusses at length are Mariamma Ba’s *So Long a Letter* (1980), Buchi Emecheta’s *Double Yoke* (1982) and *Destination Biafra* (1982) and Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). (18) Frank argues that the feminist novel in Africa is not only alive and well; it is in general, more radical, even more militant than its Western counterpart. She writes:

The militancy of the new feminist novel in Africa, then, arises from the institutionalized sexism of contemporary African life, though there is endless debate among writers, critics, journalists, sociologists, anthropologists over whether this entrenched patriarchal culture came with White colonialists or is it entrenched in the African society. Flora Nwapa and Ama Ata Aidoo hold that it derives from the white man or, more accurately from the white man’s wife and her helpless, dependent, unproductive life in the colonies. According to this view, the European imperialists – along with their other political and social impositions also brought the norm of feminine subordination in the face of masculine power and oppression. (16)

Frank identifies certain obvious similarities between these novels. They have educated and highly Westernized heroines. The women are economically independent and therefore they choose to live alone displaying their fierce personhood. The female protagonists operate in their highly individualized spaces. Most of these women protagonists forsake marriage though not always out of choice. The traditional past, time and again, interferes with the women’s “modern” lifestyles. In Nwapa’s *One is Enough* and Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra*. Debbie’s and Amaka’s mothers represent the
traditional past. They reinforce the old values urging their daughters to get married and beget children. They disapprove of their daughters wearing pants and smoking cigarettes. The daughter’s generation is caught between her allegiance to her culture—her African identity and her aspiration for freedom and self fulfillment. Beatrice Stegeman writes:

The New Woman represents a theory of personhood where the individual exists as an independent entity rather than her kinship relations, where she has a responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than to accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than quantitative financial worth and where she must reason about her own values rather than fit into a stereotyped tradition. (15)

Katherine Frank’s essay has met with severe criticism as her vision seems rather myopic. Both Nwapa and Emecheta are uncomfortable being addressed as feminists. The reason for this is their discomfiture at being slotted in a Western feminist paradigm. Their vision extends from being merely feminist to pragmatist feminists who comment on the social changes basing their views and ideas on concrete facts as they observe them with keen eyes of a literary artist and empiricist. Azodo draws a parallel between Nwapa’s philosophy and Nnamdi Azikwe’s “eclectic pragmatism”. According to this Nigerian indigenous philosophy, the best of capitalism, welfarism and socialism are blended together—pragmatically in response to the unique situation of Nigeria beleaguered with social, economic, religious, political and cultural problems. (Umeh 1998 244) Pragmatism is an Ibo adage according to which “one does not watch a masquerade from one vantage point alone.” (Umeh 1998 244) Both Nwapa and Emecheta concentrate on two imperatives—mothercraft and education.

Chimalum Nwankwo points out that the word "dissidence" offers itself as a ready example. It has echoes of the rebellious, the violent, and the vandalistic; the iconoclastic and the blasphemous; and, indeed, the needless or outright destruction in general. The status quo will be overturned if the dissident succeeds. Because of this possibility, the reaction to dissidence is invariably defensive and protective, most times, irrationally so.
An analogous example is the word "feminism." In African literature, feminism is to ordinary African men like a mad and irrational battle cry from women, and because of its foreign origin, a sizeable population of women, conservatives and activists, view the notion of feminism with something like nervous suspicion. Because of this negative reaction, we find even both the so-called radical African women writers and the not so radical, such as Buchi Emecheta, Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, distancing themselves from the word and its connotations. At the two ends of the spectrum of African women's literature are Flora Nwapa for the temperate and Buchi Emecheta for the intemperate. Both writers have denied their feminisms in well-known interviews. "If I am now a feminist," once declared Emecheta, "then I am an African feminist with a small 'f'" (Peter-sen 1988, 175). This declaration by Buchi Emecheta may indeed be representative of the sentiment of most African women writers and critics. (98)

Nwapa’s temperate vision eulogizes mothercraft as it continues to be an enduring strain in her writing. The issue of mothercraft asserts itself thematically in the relationships between mothers and daughters. Mothercraft involves nurturing, preservative love and socialization of the child. Nwapa’s feminist pragmatist approach enables her to explore what the role of the mother should be in nurturing, training and socializing her daughter in the peculiar Nigerian environment. Specifically in this complex society, this further calls for girls to be taught the skills for survival, and the necessity to identify themselves as people, that is humans, without reference to any man. It also requires for the mother to teach her daughter adequately empowered to stand up for her beliefs and convictions. In One Is Enough, the mother of the heroine Amaka, advises her to seek economic independence from her man, even while needing him emotionally. “Never depend on your husband, never slave for him. Have your own business, no matter how small because you can never tell... never leave your husband, I did not leave mine but I was independent of him.” (Nwapa 1989 9) A little later she adds: “… the richer you are, the better your husband will be and he will really appreciate you as well.” (Nwapa 1981 10) The idea is that every able bodied adult woman should strive to be employed in the formal or informal sector according to her abilities. Nwapa is extremely critical of men who are unable to appreciate their wives’ success. She traces the origin of this hostility to
the ideological indoctrination of populace by agents of British, Victorian, capitalist economy in colonial times who turned erstwhile independent and hard working women into men’s helpers and servants in the domestic realm.

Times changed and men began to assert their masculinity over the industrious wives. Men made fun of husbands, at drinking places and functions, whose wives were well to do, saying: “Look at him, just take a good look at him. He is less than a man, depending on women to buy his shirts for him, to spread out the mat for him. One day instead of him forking (sic) her, she will fork (sic) him. And they spat to show their disgust.” (Nwapa 1981 17)

The Nigerian – Biafran war banished erstwhile Christian morality brought in by British colonists and missionaries, which were based on hope and faith on a future better life. At the same time, it seemed to exaggerate and reconfigure traditional morality according to which paradise resides in the past, not in the present nor in the future. Nigerians seemingly interpreted their predicament as being one in which no moral stipulations or admonitions existed at the collective level. Individuals suddenly found themselves with the responsibility of choice among competing points of view, practices and beliefs. What is the truth? Who has the right to tell what is right and what is wrong, to stipulate the criteria for choice, to pontificate on what’s right and what’s wrong? What is left is a huge array of options and alternatives to deliberate on and choose from. Nigerian women now found themselves able to make practical and meaningful decisions according to what obtains today, according to “present standards”. (Umeh 1998 248)

Education appears to be the getaway to survival for modern women. In Women Are Different Nwapa stresses the woman’s need for education which therefore becomes also a means for her to be independent. Emecheta has always seen education as a means for women’s liberation. Right from her autobiographical novel Head Above Water to her diasporic novel Kehinde, Emecheta stresses on education as a means by which her protagonists achieve financial independence. However, education for women comes with a price. Very often it is debated whether education for women is an investment? Does a
woman become an investment merely because someone, usually a man, has paid for her school fees? Is the woman bound by the dictates of the fee payer? These are some of the pertinent questions Nwapa and Emecheta raise through their novels. According to Ada Azodo,

The fact of a father “expecting” service from his daughter after her graduation as a sign of gratitude for financial support she received in time of need appears to be a simple understandable matter. It is even more comprehensible when viewed in the traditional African context in which the married woman is expected to leave her family of birth and completely integrate herself into the new adoptive family of her husband. In this light, therefore, a father appears justified to extract whatever service he can before he “loses” his daughter (financial investment as it were) to a “stranger” who had nothing to do with the formation of the “money making machine”. (Umeh 1998 249)

Post Colonial women’s writing from Africa addresses multiple issues. The influence of tradition, the impact of modern education on women, and the dictates of the modern day living all need to be taken into account in human relationships. Present day living appears to be a “complex package of interconnecting items which often must be read together in order to comprehend a total message”. (Umeh 1998 249) The message that is implicit is that women are refusing to be treated any longer as material objects. They are demanding their rights to be treated as humans. The covert criticism here is against the Nigerian society and governments which shirk their responsibility to render services to the needy citizens, thus forcing them to fall victims to rapacious blood relatives who hold them ransom. (Umeh 1998 249) Not only are women refusing to be seen and treated like material objects, they are also demanding to be treated as equals in relationships to men. They are resenting any kind of ill treatment like beating, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Emecheta’s women characters go a step further as unable to balance their load; they try to make a precarious balance. If they go over the brink, they enter the world of madness.
Madness

In "Madness in The African Novel" Femi Ojo-Ade observes that: The African novel in dealing with the question of alienation has depicted two types of alienated heroes: the one who has managed, in spite of overwhelming pressures of his situation, to stay on what could be termed 'the right side of the fence'; that is, he does not belong to the mainstream of the social order, he is a 'stranger', albeit a 'sane' stranger. On the other hand, there is the hero who goes over board, so to speak. Finding it totally impossible to adjust to the inhuman situation existing in his society, not satisfied with mere utterances of protest or with a fairly 'sane' life on the fringe of society, he pushes himself mentally to the limit, and even beyond it, and finally reaches a point where society ostracises him and deems it fit to put him away in a madhouse (134).

Here we look at the second type of heroine, the one branded mad or insane by society. As Femi Ojo-Ade contends, questions posed regarding the issue of madness are innumerable, yet the same questions he poses to the African novel can be asked in African women's novels: why does a woman go mad? Why are there so many mad women in African women's novels? Is the mad woman any less sane than the society that condemns her? The most difficult question is what is madness anyway? We have to admit that the proliferation of women's texts dealing with this peculiar theme indicates its presence and great impact within the societal structure.

In an attempt to define madness, Joan Bushfield argues that madness, like its twentieth century counterpart mental illness, is an evaluative concept. It is a concept which categorizes some aspect of mental functioning-some thought, action or behavior-as abnormal, defective or disordered-that is as undesirable ( Bazin 260). Michel Foucault argues that the invention of madness as a disease is in fact nothing less than a peculiar manifestation of western civilization (viii). One must then ask if madness is a disease of western civilization, what is it in non-western societies? Is it a disease caused by witchcraft, as it is sometimes believed in African societies? Shoshana Felman states that "madness usually occupies a position of exclusion; it is the outside of a culture. But madness that is a common place occupies a position of inclusion and becomes the inside of a culture" ( Bazin 13). In "South Africa and the Theme of Madness," Nancy Bazin
agrees with Felman, however, she argues that "ironically the madness of inclusion (in which madness is the norm) can coexist with the madness of exclusion (in which the social madness creates the mad outsider) (139)." Bazin cites feminist theorists Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement among those who have pointed to ways in which living in a patriarchal environment has repressed women and frequently led them to outbursts of hysteria and madness (139). Clarifying their position, Cixous and Clement observe that "societies do not succeed in offering everyone the same way of fitting into the symbolic order; those who are, if one may say so, between symbolic systems, in the interstices, offside, are the ones who are afflicted... with what we call madness"(7).

In the case of African women authored writings, the definition of madness provided by Lillian Feder (1980) is most apt. Feder contends that there is no one description that evokes all the varieties of aberrant or bizarre thought and conduct that have been regarded insane throughout human existence (5). She defines madness as "a state in which unconscious processes predominate over conscious ones to the extent that they control them and determine perceptions of and responses to experience that, judged by prevailing standards of logical thought and relevant emotion, are confused and inappropriate" (5). Feder further argues that "The varieties of madness created in Literature are in most respects no different from those to be discovered throughout human society" (7). As Feder contends, the madman of literature is, to some extent, modeled on the actual one, but his differences from such a model are at least as important as are his resemblance to it. He is rooted in a mythical or literary tradition in which distortion is a generally accepted mode of expression; furthermore the inherent aesthetic order by which his existence is limited also gives his madness intrinsic value and meaning (9) Even when a writer draws on her own experience of insanity as the subject or emotional source of her work, such as the novelist, and short story writer Bessie Head, what is of interest in this discussion is her adaptation of delusion, disassociation, or other aberration to the creation of a unique view of her society, her art, and her own mind.

Bessie Head's novel, *A Question of Power* (1974) is an autobiographical work that deals with Head's mental breakdown and subsequent recovery and renewal. The narrative is based on the life experience of the author. The main character takes the author's name,
Elizabeth. Like the author, she is born in a mental hospital because her mother was considered insane for having an affair with a black man. Like the author, Elizabeth is raised by a foster mother and thereafter by a harsh missionary. Like Head, Elizabeth joins a political party, meets and marries a womanizer, bears him a son, and after the breakup of the marriage, leaves South Africa permanently for Motabeng village in Botswana. From Bessie Head's biographical record, it is clear that she is telling her own life story in this novel. As Craig Mackenzie observes: "two worlds co-exist on different ontological planes in the novel: there is a recognizable, social world of co-operative gardening, human interaction, everyday events in the village; there is also an inner, psychological constituted world, in which logic of the nightmare, and intuitive dream-association, predominates and the free play of ideas is allowed to proceed" (120-121).

It is through Elizabeth's dreams that the text adopts a certain narratological authority: the dreams are in fact the content of the text, the locus of "the real life" of the novel. It seems that by locating the action of the novel inside the mind of a character Head is adopting a distinctively modernist strategy; the "outer" world bombards the sentiment subject with a barrage of sensory impressions which must be configured by the subject's organizing intellect. The subject's ordering gaze, in other words, imposes an interpretation on a seemingly random universe (Mackenzie 121).

Head moves the narrative into the arena of psychic struggle by making Elizabeth's mind become the site of a monumental struggle between conflicting forces. It is Elizabeth's mind that produces the central paradoxes of the novel. If Elizabeth represents the author's mind, then Felman points out that "the madness silenced by society is given voice by literature" (15) becomes relevant to our discussion because Head uses Elizabeth's voice to air her grievances and thus her own personal madness. Elizabeth is alienated from all of society's power structures: as a "colored" she is denied full "self hood" in racist South Africa; as a "half caste" she is despised in traditional African society; as a woman she is oppressed because of the patriarchal hierarchies in both societies. Elizabeth therefore "creates" her personality from the sketchy details supplied by the Principal of the mission school in which she is placed as a young girl. "We have a full docket on you. You must be very careful. Your mother was insane. If you're not careful you'll get insane just like
your mother. Your mother was a white woman. They had to lock her up, as she was having a child by the stable boy, who was a native.” (Head 16).

Elizabeth is driven to madness by the psychological pressures of her society. It is only through her act of will that any sense of unity or coherence as a person can be built. As Mackenzie contends, Elizabeth's mind is invaded by vertiginous nightmare sequences drawn from the deepest wells of her unconscious (122).

In A Question of Power we have more questions than answers from the text. One is not sure whether the dreams in the text are a faithful record of the author's descent into insanity, or whether the author is experimenting with a narrative technique that encourages the reader to be a producer rather than a passive consumer of meaning. By encouraging the reader to participate in the production of meaning in the text, Head is exercising post modernist tendencies. In her 1983 interview about the text, Head says: “It was like a book saying now, I'll tell you as much as I can, then you sort things out... it” a sort of book that's written in such a way that it invites people to fill in gaps and notes where the author has left blank spaces.” (14)

Emecheta’s heroines have always traversed the grey area between sanity and insanity. Unlike Nwapa’s holistic and placid vision, Emecheta seems to be constantly waging a war against the society. In Joys of Motherhood, Nnu Ego hovers between sanity and insanity. Unable to make sense of the society she lives in, she moves towards the brink and finally succumbs to clinical madness.

As Stratton observes, her final destruction is caused by her two sons. Having been sustained in all her travails by the thought "that one day her boys would be men" (161), their repudiation of the traditional communal values for which she had sacrificed herself in favor of western style individualism destroys her completely (158). After being rejected by Nnaife for the behaviour of their children, who he now refers to as her children, Nnu Ego returns in disgrace to Ibuza. Despite having several children, Nnu Ego dies in complete isolation by a roadside: the text says "She died quietly with no child to
hold her hand and no friend to talk to her. She had never really made many friends, so busy had she been building up her joys as a mother: (224).

How does one account for Nnu-Ego's madness? Stratton argues that Nnu Ego's madness is a response to and a metaphor for the absurd contradictions of her life. She further states that it can also be seen as representing her last subversive act. Ironically it is only in death that Nnu Ego acquires psychic integration and that her explosive anger finds a revolutionary course. It is also after her death that realization seems to dawn on her and she refuses the bless women with children.

Anowa (1965), a play written and published by Ama Ata Aidoo, is yet another work by an African woman that deals with the theme of madness. This important work has received little critical attention and as Carole Boyce Davies states it occupies a marginal position in African literary studies and feminist criticism (59). Anowa in many ways echoes and modifies the popular African folk tale of a disobedient daughter, a tale which has received varied treatment from different writers. (3). Anowa, the main character in the play, is a powerful heroine who refuses to marry potential spouses from her hometown of Yebi. Against her parents will she chooses Kofi Ako with whom she elopes. Because of her parents' opposition to the man of her choice, Anowa and Kofi decide to make a success of their marriage away from their families. Through a cooperative venture they start a trading business between the hinterland and the coast. It is Anowa's indefatigable energy that makes their cooperative business a success; however, their relationship deteriorates as rapidly as their wealth increases. The clash of personalities and values leads to mutual recriminations and ends in madness and death.

From the very beginning of the play we are warned "Anowa is not a girl to meet everyday" (67). The play proves that Anowa is an exceptional African woman; her refusal to marry someone proposed by her parents, her insistence on remaining true to her vision that slavery is wrong and that men and women must live by the fruits of their own labor, makes her a woman who lived ahead of her time. Her madness surfaces at the end of the play. As Cixious and Clement argue, societies do not succeed in offering everyone the same way of fitting into the symbolic order, those who are, if one may say so,
between symbolic systems, in the interstices, offside, are the ones who are afflicted... with what we call madness" (7). It is Anowa in the play who is considered to be offside and therefore referred to as mad. The reference to her being mad appears several times at the end of the play.

Carol Boyce Davies argues that Anowa offers a way of "creative theorizing" which is a central aspect of some Black women's writing. Anowa can be analyzed in many different ways, but what is pertinent here, is how Aidoo handles the theme of madness in the play. Davies rightly points out that her concept of madness is used in Anowa to stress the relationship between the character of Anowa and those women who for a long time have resisted patriarchal dominance. To illustrate her point, Davies quotes Cixous' "The Laugh of Medusa" and Clement's "The Newly Born Woman" asserting that: "the witch and Medusa are two constructions of women who respond overtly to patriarchal dominance." She says: "I think the difference between Western women's resistance to patriarchal dominance and their African women sisters lies in the fact that African women do not dismiss marriage as an institution completely. What African women demand are changes within the institution, changes that will end male domination. This can be the reason for Anowa's reluctance to divorce Kofi Ako in the play." (77) Davies points out that feminist discussion of women and madness identify the trope of the mad woman as a resisting figure. Despite the mad woman being a resisting figure like Anowa, madness does not change structures in society. As Davies notes: "the hysteric interrupts phallic mastery but does not change it" (77).

From the above examples it is clear that madness is a common problem among resistant black women protagonists. The texts by African women writers identify patriarchy and migrations to new societies as the cause of madness for women who otherwise would have been powerful figures in the society. Elizabeth, Nnu Ego, and Anowa would have had better opportunities in their new societies had it not been for the displacement caused by their migrations in search of better opportunities. Their problems are made worse because of the patriarchal social institution which functions on the principal that "male shall dominate female" (Millet 25). They are all products of what Davies calls "separation and dislocations and dis-memberings" (17).
Aidoo likens the isolation of the female protagonists to the isolation faced by the women authors themselves. She writes:

As an academic today, I wonder how I can maintain a vibrant intellect condemned as I am to ostracism only because I refuse to consider marriage as the only way to live. (Even in the University environment) no one expects a woman to perform well in any other areas apart from cooking, sewing, and other so called traditional feminine activities. (Adeola James33)

In the discussion of the post colonial women of Africa, the novels analyzed closely are Flora Nwapa’s Women are Different and One is Enough and Buchi Emecheta’s Double Yoke and Kehinde.

**Women Are Different**

*Women are Different,* as the title suggests talks of women who dare to make different and difficult choices. It is not only the different choices; it is also their courage and resilience which sees them through. It is a simply told story which covers over forty years and recounts the lives of three generations of women. The novel begins with the near utopic world of Christian learning for the girls. The Ibo world view and the Christian teachings are very often at odds but the world of the school remains undisturbed and pristine. It is also the place where the chief protagonists Dora, Rose and Agnes meet, become friends and also find their respective partners with whom they eventually get married. From the Christian Ibo milieu of Elelenwa, the girls move to the deviant and murky Lagos. It is the civil war which eventually shapes their destiny. Their daughter’s generation is seeped in the confusion that is characteristic of growing nation whose greed for wealth has stripped it of all its moral values. The murky world of falling moral standards and drug peddling have adversely affected the new generation.

Through *Women are Different,* Nwapa recreates her life at the Missionary school at Elelenwa. Though not as sophisticated as the Queen’s college at Lagos, Elelenwa has its
own charm. The students share a good rapport with their teachers. Very soon they realize that though the life was hard, they had fallen into a routine and were enjoying every moment of their school life. It is in this school that the three friends or three musketeers, as they are called, come together. In spite of going different ways in life, they stand by each other in times of need. It is their bonding which forms the crux of *Women are Different*. Education, economic independence and female bonding are seen by Nwapa as the key to female emancipation. The school forms a metaphor not only for learning but also for the creation of a breed of women who are different from their ‘uneducated’ mothers. The daughters’ and the mothers’ generations are seen at odds on several occasions but the mothers are seen to be proud of this generation of ‘book learned’ women. In fact for the older generation, education also seems to be a passport to a certain kind of freedom. In the words of Ma Nkem,

‘A lot is changing. Our children will have to get that important piece of paper before they get married. I have told my daughter, she must have it, I don’t have it and that is why Papa Emeka behaves in such an atrocious manner to me. He seems to tell me during some of our quarrels: “If you can’t take it, go.” Then I think- where will I go with seven children? So I stay. But if I had that piece of paper which Agnes now has, I could have left him and gone to study.’ (53)

Commenting on the changing face of the new breed of educated women, Miss Hill, their White missionary teacher wonders what future holds for her students.

As the next three years passed, Ms. Hill saw the girls God entrusted in her care preparing to face the adult world. Their secondary education was coming to an end. What kind of children were they going to be? What kind of world were they going to work in? A hostile world? Were they going to be greedy and undignified in manner? What kind of women would they be?...Was it not time for her to go back to her home and continue the good work there and leave the scene for the new breed of educated Nigerian women? (40)
Women Are Different discusses the impending Nigerian independence. While it is something the whole country is waiting for, somewhere there seems to be a doubt whether Nigeria is prepared for the freedom or not. New fangled ideas enter the school through the words of the ‘Boycott King’ Mazi Mbonu Ojike who speaks Ibo without peppering it with English. Ojike’s visit sensitizes the girls to the richness of their mother tongue and also instills in them the desire to see their country free from foreign domination. While the Nigerian independence is something all Nigerians look forward to, there is skepticism as to whether Nigeria is mature enough to handle this freedom. Nwapa initiates this debate through the well meaning white missionary Ms. Hill.

She warned them that it was too soon for Nigerians to advocate for independence. Independence, she said would come, but that the people must be prepared for it. To be prepared was not just building big Government houses and mansions but to be prepared in spirit. Independence she told the girls did not mean that all the white civil servants should leave Nigeria and go home, so that the new breed of educated Nigerians should take their places. The meaning of independence was awareness of Nigerians to their responsibilities in government. (48)

Ms. Hill’s fears are not unfounded as Agnes realizes when she joins the civil services. The civil services are rampant with corruption which seems to have seeped into the pore of Nigeria.

Young girls in school were no longer safe in Enugu. The young parliamentarians and the secretaries thought that taking over from the British meant having license to corrupt young school girls and their mothers. (63)

Nwapa engages in a debate on the education of the girl child. The colonial administration preferred the education of males to females and even though some girls did receive education, it was considered of value for the marriage rather than for the pursuit of a career. In Elelenwa, a debate is organized titled, “Education of girls is a waste of money”. The girls warm up to this debate. While most girls felt that education was important,
Comfort with her trademark fortitude saw very little sense in the education of girls who would eventually get married, have children and forget everything they learned at school.

Then Comfort took it from that point, ‘yes, you should take it further by saying, why educate girls then give them in marriage before they are fifteen years of age. Teach them how to sweep the floor, cook, wash and iron clothes, take care of the home generally, to be able to knit and sew…’

‘In short teach them domestic science’, one of the girls put in.

‘That is education’, Rose said ‘That is not education the way we know and understand it. What you are talking about is the type of training my mother received when she married my father’, said Comfort. And the girls roared with laughter. (13)

This debate brings to light the plight of most Nigerian women. While very few could make it to the precincts of school, fewer still could complete their education as an early marriage was a commonplace occurrence. Only a rare handful could pursue a career as the home and the hearth was seen to be a woman’s domain. As Ms. Hill wonders sadly:

‘What was the use of spending so much time and energy teaching a child Algebra and Geometry and all other subjects if she was not going to make use of them? Wasn’t that other missionary right in recommending that the school that Ms. Hill carefully set up to educate the elite of Nigerian women, should be downgraded, and use for the training of Catechists, and church agents wives?’(22)

The idyll of the school is soon replaced by the harsh adult world. While the three friends go their ways, their shared past is never forgotten. Agnes is married off to her step mother’s friend even before she can take her examinations. However through sheer grit and persistence, she is able to get a University degree and finds a placement in the civil services as the women’s education officer. Her personal life is fraught with difficulties. Married to a man she does not love; she conditions herself to serve him. She runs her
household with strict precision. While she gives her husband no cause for complaint, her mind remains focused as she prepares for one examination after the other.

Agnes had her plans. She was a bit cold blooded about it. She went to her new home, and in a short time got it under control. There was not a doubt right from the word go, that she was the mistress of it. (57)

While traditionally African women’s sexuality has been restricted to the mere act of procreation, Nwapa makes a strong case for the woman’s sexual fulfillment. For Agnes, sleeping with her husband is something which she loathes. “Sleeping with her husband was nothing special...she submitted herself like a lamb ready for slaughter and prayed that it should be over quickly...” (57) For her lover Ayo Dele, she feels very differently. She relates to him as a person. Trying to analyze her feelings for both the men who incidentally are much older than her, Agnes muses

Her husband, though she was not in love with him, was kind to her. He respected her, loved her if that was love...but then why was she so cold, so dead when both of them were together and why did she have to have a lover who was not young? If she could not relate to her husband because he was old, what about Ayo Dele? He was old but she related to him. When he made love to her she responded. (62)

Agnes follows her heart. She leaves her husband and lives with Ayo Dele who is a married man. Ayo Dele’s unfortunate death makes her a destitute once again as his family treats her like a usurper. Fortunately her educated status helps her in finding a job and she is able to fend for herself and her children. Later, after serving in the Ministry of Education, she lands herself a plum job with a firm called John Levis Production. Apart from a good pay packet, she gets a flat at Ikoyi and a car. In a sense Agnes had arrived. She was the sole guardian of her children and she had shifted her base to Lagos.

Dora marries Chris, her childhood sweetheart. Out of all her friends, Dora alone is blessed with business acumen. She starts a bakery which flourishes. Her business grows
fast and Chris, unable to keep his job joins her as an accountant. In order to feed his ego, Dora offers partnership and makes him the Managing Director. As a punitive measure from the office, Chris is forced to take leave without pay for three years. Leaving Dora alone with five children, Chris sails to London in search of a better future. Dora realizes soon enough that he had sold off her house without informing her. With a sinking heart she finally acknowledges that the man she had loved had duped her. But her love for her children and her flourishing business keep her going. During the civil war she keeps her bakery running. After the war she is able to buy back her house. While there was suffering all around, Dora’s business had thrived.

So when the war ended in January 1970, Dora came out of it, with her five children, and lost not even a pin and regained her house and two property deeds into the bargain. She went back to Aba to resume her business. People envied her what kind of woman was Dora who was able to resume business soon after the war ended? (75)

Inspite of Dora’s phenomenal economic success, she continues to feel the necessity of a husband. Through her Nwapa presents yet another aspect of womanhood where the woman feels the necessity of a man for a purely decorative purpose. Dora prefers a husband over a lover as the presence of a husband aids her socially and her children are no longer called bastards. Justifying the wisdom in taking back her wayward husband, Dora confides in Rose.

‘Has he (Chris) changed much?’ Asked Rose.
‘A good deal. But I have the whip hand. I am not a fool. Now my children have a father. That’s all that matters.’
‘And you, a husband?’
‘Yes, and I a husband. But it is not the same. It can never be the same again Rose. What is left now is stark reality and common sense.’(133)
A semi autobiographical shade of Nwapa is seen in the characterization of Rose. Like Nwapa, Rose has an aunt in Achimota College and an uncle overseas. She goes to Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls School in Elelenwa in 1945 and to Queens College for her post secondary education completing her higher education at the University College, Ibadan. But this is where the similarity ends. While in school, Rose believes herself to be in love with Ernest, however Ernest, who is a couple of years her senior chooses to ignore her letters when he leaves school. Rose gets a diploma in education from the University of London. On her return to Nigeria she is appointed as Woman Education Officer in Queen’s college. During her stay in Ibadan she meets Mark and he moves in with her. She believes herself to be totally in love with him and even agrees to marry him. Their marriage, however, is to be a secret till Mark settles down in Harvard and asks her to join him. Mark decamps with all her money and she never hears from him again. She moves to Lagos and joins a firm of Public Relations. She prospers in her job. Here she falls in love with Olu, a married man. She even conceives but loses the child when Olu’s wife comes to her office and tries to attack her. Later still, Dora introduces her to her erstwhile lover Tunde but Rose realizes that Tunde lives with the guilt of having killed his wife. Such a man could never be her partner. Ernest comes back to her but Rose refuses his hand in marriage as she feels she needs more time. However, during the violence of the civil war, Rose rescues Ernest’s mother and keeps her with her to keep her safe. Rose’s life sees several ups and downs but she remains quintessentially alone. She envies her married friends, their husbands, lovers and children but she is unwilling to marry simply for the sake of it. After the follies of youth, she now craves for a loving and understanding partner which life has denied her.

Rose was on her own as always. Since leaving school, she has always been on her own. Ernest was beyond her reach, in jail or in protective custody, she did not know. Mark duped her and deserted her. Dora has come to terms with Chris and has her children; Agnes lost her lover but she has her husband and children; Olu always went back to his wife after each affair; Chinwe and Zizi had their youth to show. Even Tunde cherished a dear dead wife. But Rose, what had she? (138)
The second generation of post-colonial women - the daughters of Agnes and Dora redefine the concept of marriage as they operate in a decadent world where moral values have ceased to exist. They are not ruled by the missionary teachings their mother’s grew up with nor are they governed by the values of the past. Their generation lives in a global world and redefines life on their own selfish terms. Chinwe, Dora’s daughter leaves her husband at the young age of 22 because he brought a 17 year old girl to live with him. She then falls in love and marries a rich contractor. When he runs out of money and contract, she leaves him. She sets herself in a job in which she does well and is paid handsomely. Both Rose and Dora wonder at the prosperity of some young people and wonder what the future holds for them.

She as well as Rose did not approve of a society where it is possible for young women of twenty four or twenty five to boast of possessing a Mercedes Benz, big business associates overseas, expense account paid credit cards and so on, without a husband. At forty, what would this brand of women be? What was left to be achieved? (118)

At this stage her erstwhile husband comes back to her and wants her back. Chinwe not only refuses but she goes to court and gets herself a divorce.

Chinwe had done the right thing. Her generation was doing better than her mother’s own. Her generation was telling the men that there were different ways of living one’s life fully and fruitfully. They are saying that women have options. Their lives cannot be ruined because of a bad marriage. They have a choice, a choice to set up a business of their own, a choice to marry and have children, a choice to marry or divorce their husbands. Marriage is not THE only way. (119)

Agnes’s daughter Zizi gets involved in a drug deal and is taken into custody in London. Agnes does all in her power to free her. Upon her release she marries Theo. It is a marriage of convenience because their families shower them with gifts. Soon they are
divorced and Zizi takes another lover. Zizi represents the sordid decadence of the modern day world. Commenting on this generation Nwapa writes:

God help Elizabeth and Theo. They are a part of the world that has gone mad. It is not their fault. It is the fault of their age and the society. They cannot act differently. One feels the anguish of Agnes, Dora, Ernest’s mother, Rose and Theo’s parents. (130)

The Nigerian civil war transformed social values and almost revolutionized gender relations and attitudes towards sexuality. This change produced a new generation of Nigerian women. The war introduced a new mentality and moral order based on immense desire for material wealth. Among the second generation of modern women, power derived from wealth comes to supercede that of education. Beer parlours and eateries becomes a certain way of life in the 1970s. Chinwe meets her second husband at a beer parlour. Beer parlours appear to be replacing the traditional compounds of extended families. In this novel, Nwapa records the changing face of the society where money becomes more important than personal relationships. Money marriages become a strategy of adapting to the economic and socio political change as well as co-opting with challenges of insecurity. This trait is seen in One Is Enough as well.

**One Is Enough (1981)**

Nwapa dedicates One Is Enough to her mother in law. In her dedication she writes, “For Ine, my husband’s mother who believes that all women married or single (childless or with children) must be economically independent. The text revisits her earlier theme of childlessness and motherhood and seeks to place it in the modern day context. Child bearing and rearing still continue to be a woman’s chief desire but in the present scenario, the cushioning of marriage is not a prerequisite. A woman’s financial independence grants her ticket to a high society life where she can enjoy the joys of motherhood without encumbering the indignities of wifehood. One Is Enough begins with a Hausa proverb. Nwapa writes, “For all women of the world, I repeat a Hausa proverb: A women
Amaka, the lead protagonist of *One Is Enough* starts off by being a good wife and a good daughter in law. She prospers in her business as a contractor and is even able to buy a car for her husband. Like all good wives, she allows him to take all credit for the new car. However, unfortunately for Amaka, she is childless. It is this childlessness that gnaws at her persona and makes her the hapless victim of patriarchy. People look down upon her and her mother in law goes as far as marrying her son to another woman who is said to have given birth to his sons.

Amaka believes in marriage. Educated by the missionaries she has a rosy picture of marriage. Her marriage to Obiora crumbles due to her inability to conceive. In her desperation to have children, she visits doctors, gynecologists and dibias but nothing seems to succeed. A native doctor goes as far as telling her that only a special man could make her conceive. Amaka knows that very often the doctor masquerades as the special man looking for victims in women desperate to have children. Amaka spurns his offer. She concentrates on her trade and her husband little realizing that he is seeing another woman and has fathered her sons. Her mother in law is overjoyed as the sons are a proof of Obiora’s virility. Obiora’s mother has decided that since all her children have heirs, Obiora, too must have an heir. The barren wife may continue to stay in the same house but the new wife- the mother of her son’s sons must move in and claim her rightful place. Amaka’s mother too wants her to conceive but she does not see marriage as a prerequisite to having children. She tells her “Marriage or no marriage have children. Your children will take care of you in your old age. You will be very lonely if you don’t have children. As a mother you are fulfilled.” (11)

Amaka’s missionary education is at odds with these words of wisdom. She is confused as she thinks “the good missionaries had emphasized chastity, marriage and the home. Her mother was teaching something different. Was it something traditional that she did not know because she went to school and was taught the tradition of white missionaries? (11) In her mind Amaka tries to make sense of her strange predicament. “Was a woman nothing because she was unmarried and barren? Was there no other fulfillment for her?
Could she not be happy, in the real sense of the word, just by having men friends who were not husbands? There did seem to be some magic about the word husband”. (22)

Amaka chooses to make a clean break with her past and come to Lagos to look for better opportunities. A city is preferred over a small town as a certain degree of anonymity is possible only in a city. Here, with the help of her friend she is able to get herself a contract. Very soon Amaka lands herself some plum contracts. It does not take her very long to be a wealthy woman who owns a house and a car. She also joins a prestigious club of the cash madams or rich business women. Amaka is seen to have finally arrived when she travels to her village in her new car. She returns the dowry of her former husband and divorces him through her native custom and through the court. Like Idu and Efuru, her wealth makes her generous as she gives money to all and never fails to help the needy. Interestingly, because of her wealth, her husband and her mother in law now want her back. The mother in law sings her praises as it is evident that in the contemporary Ibo society, money talks. Amaka, dressed in silks and driving a car becomes the cynosure of the village.

One Is Enough deals with two seminal themes- a woman’s financial independence and motherhood. Contrary to the popular Ibo belief that children elude women who concentrate on making money, Amaka gets to enjoy both. However, it is her financial independence which earns her social respect. Her ability to conceive and being the mother of sons is an icing on the cake. In dealing with these two themes, Nwapa represents two conflicting points of view. While Amaka can only think of having children within the holy wedlock, her mother feels differently. She feels Amaka should sleep with any man who can give her a child. Wealth and children signify prosperity for a woman and she can achieve it without a man in her life. Interestingly, it is not her missionary teachers but her mother’s advice which Amaka chooses to take when she is in Lagos. She senses the priest Izu’s liking for her. She wants to fan his desire in order to procure lucrative contracts for herself. “Amaka had succeeded in tempting him as she said she would. She was going to play her cards very well. It was the first time in her life that she planned the total annihilation of a man, using all that her mother taught her, which she
had sadly neglected because the spinster missionaries had taught her otherwise.” (74) Amaka’s sister Ayo feels similarly. Acting upon their mother’s words, the women know better than to treat men as their masters. For Amaka’s mother and her daughters, men are mere tools for producing children. Once their job is done, the woman can be content with her trade and her children. About marriage too, Amaka’s mother feels very differently from the missionary teachers. She can not bear to think that her daughter has been accused of barrenness. Early in Amaka’s marriage when she does not conceive, her mother asks her to go to another man. She tells her daughter, “I told you four years ago to leave him, or if you did not want to leave him, to go to other men and get pregnant. You are my daughter. We are never barren in our family. Never.” (32)

Ayo, Amaka’s sister, lives with the Permanent Secretary when his wife goes abroad for furthering her education. Her “husband” buys her a house in Surulere where she lives with her children after the wife comes back. Nwapa writes: “Men were all the same, Ayo had concluded ages ago. As a younger woman she had used men as part of her outfit. She had said that a woman needed a nice man to be by her side when she was properly dressed for an outing, and when one was ready to have children, one needed them for that purpose only – procreation. If they had money to go with it, all well and good.”(136)

Amaka’s relationship with the priest bears fruit as she is able to conceive. She has twin boys just like her lover who was a twin himself. She does not tell the priest that he had fathered her children. However, Izu in all earnestness wishes to marry Amaka. He even goes as far as confessing his sin to the Bishop. Upon his resignation from priesthood, he is offered an important position in the new government. Amaka’s mother now sees a great opportunity in marrying a man like Izu. Izu is much sought after, having been given his current position in the government. However, Amaka refuses marriage. Here, her native stubbornness and her inner strength comes to fore as she resists her mother’s and her sister’s attempts. Quietly she confides in her sister:

“Ayo, I don’t want to be a wife any more, a mistress, yes, with a lover, yes of course, but not a wife. There is something in the word wife that does not suit me.
As a wife I’m never free. I am a shadow of myself. As a wife I am almost impotent. I am in prison, unable to advance in body or soul. Something gets hold of me as a wife and destroys me. When I rid myself of Obiora, things started working for me. I don’t want to go back to my “wifely” days. No, I am through with husbands. I said farewell to husbands the first day I came to Lagos.” (127)

*One Is Enough* is not merely about women living on their own, it is about their conviction that they can live on her own terms. Marriage is not denigrated but is examined from different perspectives. Amaka’s mother had had a loveless marriage. She however, prospers in trade. She is quite relieved when her husband is no more and she has a flourishing trade and her children to take care of. Perhaps in debating various issues relating to marriage, Amaka comes closest to understanding why women may not prioritize marriage over all else. In the earlier days a woman shared in the glory of her husband. He would praise her for his station in life. Now men were ridiculed if they were soft on their wives. Worse still a woman was never supposed to win an argument with her husband or else she was regarded as a “he” woman. As a newly married girl who is abused by her husband tells Amaka. “But the trouble with our men is their ego. They refuse to appreciate their wives. Mind you, they do appreciate their mothers and sisters, but never their wives. Your husband will always show you that he is a man, and put you in your rightful place which is under his thumb. Your rightful place is not in the kitchen as you rightfully think, but right under his thumb. He would like to control your every movement, and it is worse if you depend on him financially.” (27)

In *One Is Enough*, Amaka walks the tightrope between tradition and modernity with a quiet dignity which sees her through. In the complex post war scenario, modern women find it difficult to solve their emotional problems in the face of increasing competition and depleting resources. The gender war becomes more potent as the men fear the women who invade their work places and displace them. Modern women seem to draw on the strength of traditional women in their ability to cope with stifling patriarchal constraints while trying to establish control of some of the most vital sectors of the society including the civil services, education, nursing and business.
Double Yoke

The title *Double Yoke* paints an image of chattel labouring under the yoke of civilization. Emecheta, unlike her other texts, attempts to delve into the psyche of men and Ete Kamba becomes the narrator, narrating the story his childhood sweetheart Nko. However, the narrative is interspersed with authorial comments giving Nko’s point of view. The author travesties the educational system in West Africa where a woman’s quest for knowledge is viewed with a degree of suspicion. In Nko’s case, her corrupt Professor tries to seduce her. Nko allows herself to be seduced but bargains with him for a first class degree. Emecheta sees education as the tool to women’s emancipation. Nko, who understands the value of education, agrees to barter her body to acquire a degree which she knows is her passport to an elite lifestyle. However, though the author’s sympathies lie with the woman, Emecheta tries to be fair to the modern men as well. For the men raised in the cocoon of patriarchy, it becomes impossible to accept the new woman. Towards, the close of the novel, Ete Kamba seems to rise to the occasion by standing by Nko in her time of need. Nko, however, chooses to redefine the bounds of patriarchy as she wishes to have her child and complete her University degree without the help of a man. Though slandered by one and all for having a child out of wedlock she stands her ground and acquires an almost heroic status.

A simple and pretty girl, Nko starts off her school and college life with the simplicity of a nun. It is this simplicity which draws Ete Kamba to her. Their problem begins when they have their first sexual intercourse and Ete Kamba is aghast seeing that there is no blood. He is convinced that Nko is not the virgin he had imagined her to be. Ete Kamba takes her by brute force. She resists initially but later gives in. Assuming her warmth to be something she shares with other men, Ete Kamba is desperate to see the proof of her virginity. “He saw the area where they had trampled in their frenzy, his lighted torch fell into every hole and every corner, he even searched the blades of every leaf, looking this way and that, his heart pounding. He wanted to marry Nko someday, but tonight she was desperate for the blood that she ought to have shed.” (58)
Ete Kamba is quite clear in his mind about the kind of women he wishes to marry. He wants a virgin – an educated virgin at that - who would later mother his children. His wife should be like his mother, albeit educated. She should be “a very quiet and submissive woman, a good cook, a good listener, a good worker, a good mother with a good education to match.” (31) It is only when their idyllic love shatters that Nko learns to face the reality. Earlier she had been willing to do Ete Kamba’s bidding but now slowly she comes into her own. In no uncertain terms, she tells her lover that if she was a whore, it was he who had made her one. She says, “You called me a prostitute because of that, but you forgot that it takes two people at least to make any woman a prostitute, by your definition.” (62) Nko’s stumbling block is her desire to possess both worlds- she wants marriage and children and she also wants a University degree and a career. She tells her mother “Oh mother I want to have both worlds, I want to be an academician and I want to be a quiet, nice and obedient wife, the type you all want me to be. I want the two, mother. Oh please, mother, help me. I know I can be more use to you and my brothers if I had these two worlds” (94). Her mother knows that her daughter has asked for the impossible. She replies with a sigh, “daughter, you know what you are under- you are under a double yoke.” (94)

Nko is surrounded by a group of supportive women who stand by her on all occasions. Like Nwapa, Emecheta stresses on the cohesive power of female bonding. Nko relies on her female colleagues to balance her load of the traditional past and the modern times. She recognizes the gulf between her two goals as she says

“She must either have her degree and be a bad, loose feminist
Shameless career woman who would fight men all her life;
Or do without her degree and be a good loving wife and Christian
woman…oh blast it all! She was going to have both,
she was going to maneuver these men to give her both.” (123)

In the chapter aptly titled “Lost Innocence”, Nko is raped by her Professor. She bears it calmly but tells him in no uncertain terms that he has to give her a first class degree. Nko
tells herself that she will not kill herself over either Ete Kamba or Professor Ikot. Since she has been reduced to using her bottom power, she will use it to further her education. She faces the Professor squarely and tells him what she feels. "You mean I take sex like food...lightly" (138). Nko’s room mates support her. They agree with her that "it is easier to get a degree using one's bottom power than brain power." (155) Shunned by the whole world during her pregnancy, Nko confides in an older room mate. She wonders what had happened to her - a girl who only dreamt of marriage to Ete Kamba. Mrs. Nwaizu’s assurance and support is shown in her words as she stands by Nko. She says, "she has simply just grown because she is going to be a sure academician and a mother" (159). While Ete Kamba wishes Nko would go away and hide her shame, Nko refuses. She carries her pregnancy with a pride which Ete is unable to understand. In doing so she refuses to conform to the patriarchal norms which the society expects her to adhere to. Towards the close of the novel, Ete listens to the advice of Ms. Bulewao, a world famous author who had come to teach in the University of Calabar. Ms. Bulewao is cast in the mode of the author who taught for a year in the same university. Ete Kamba goes back to Nko and follows her to the village after the death of her father.

In *Double Yoke*, the sexes are seen to be constantly battling for supremacy. In a world dominated by men, the women are forced to use their cunning to move forward in life. However Ete Kamba proves to be a positive model who learns from his mistake. There is a perceptible growth in his character from the pompous young man to a man who is now willing to shoulder his responsibilities. According to Florence Stratton,

In contrast to such male characters as Adizua and Gilbert in Nwapa’s *Efuru* or Nnife in Emecheta’s own *Joys of Motherhood*, Ete is not confined in a stereotypically reduced characterization of manhood. His is a realistic portrayal, for like Nko, he changes in response to his social circumstances. Miss Bulewao, 'the most talked about female writer in Nigeria' is the catalyst in bringing about the transformation. The portrayal thus serves as a reminder to women writers that men, too, face problems of adjustment in a rapidly changing society that they too, as Ms. Bulewao indicates, labour under a double yoke. (131)
Double Yoke is Emecheta’s strongest indictment of the education system where the student is exploited sexually by the man who professes to teach her. A man, who is almost a father figure to her, hailing from the same village as Nko’s. It also reflects the impossible standards that the women are expected to approximate to. She is expected to be as docile as her mother and yet be able to flaunt a university degree. The change in the education scenario which Nwapa points out is also seen here. From being the place of Catholic teachings and having a certain Christian milieu, the world of education looks murky as the professor takes advantage of his student. Emecheta supports Nko’s quest throughout - from being an innocent schoolgirl to a manipulative woman who knows her mind. Emecheta feels that it is the society which has brought about this change in this innocent girl and that she is perfectly within her rights if she manipulates the society to meet her goals.

Kehinde

Kehinde is one of Emecheta’s diasporic novels. Based mostly in London and partly in Lagos, Kehinde is the story of a Nigerian family settled in London for 18 years. While Kehinde has a well paying bank job, her husband works in a warehouse. kehinde earns more than her husband and they share a certain degree of amicability. They own a house in London and have two children. They look at their period of stay in London as short term, hoping one day to return to Ibuza, their home town.

Through Kehinde, Emecheta raises several issues. Primarily there is the issue of the home and the other. Whereas Albert chooses Nigeria as his home, Kehinde comes back to London and revels in her new found diasporic entity. Kehinde grows through the pages of the novel as she transforms from being “a good Nigerian wife” to a woman who has finally discovered herself. The novel traces her growth from being the woman her husband coerces into having an abortion, to one who claims the London property as her own and has a Jamaican lover.
Through this novel Emecheta exposes the hypocrisy ridden society of Nigeria which is favourable to men but treats a woman very differently. Kehinde, too starts off like Nko, being a “good” wife to her husband and a “good” mother to her children. “She related to Albert as a friend, a compatriot and a confidant” (6) But with Albert refusing to cooperate with her pregnancy, Kehinde feels trapped. He wants her to get the promotion that is due to her in order to have additional financial support and have enough money for Albert’s passage fare to Nigeria. She confides in her Nigerian Muslim friend Mariammo, “Only say, sometimes I do not understand that man I marry. He dey worries more for my job here for bank than for pikin.” (9) For Kehinde, the abortion seems like wrenching away a part of her being from her body. It is at times like this, she thinks of her twin Taiwo, who also becomes her chi. In the creation of the myth of twins, Emecheta relies on the Yoruba ibeji- Orisa myth of twins. While among the Ibos, twins were supposed to bring ill luck, among the Yorubas, twins are the harbingers of luck. Taiwo, therefore becomes the inner voice of Kehinde- a presence that continues to guide her through her life. Kehinde dreams that her father is being born to her in the form of her unborn child yet the foetus is killed off mercilessly. Kehinde feels lonely and orphaned once again. Bereft of the cushioning of her family, she grows distant from her husband as well who forces her to abort her child for his own monetary gains.

Soon Albert leaves for Nigeria. He settles in very well and so do the children who go to hostels. Kehinde is left behind to sell the house. She realizes that she cannot stay alone in London either. Without her husband by her side she is treated with scorn by her Nigerian neighbours. Tunde, Mariammo’s husband even stops her from meeting Kehinde saying “what was Mariammo, a good Muslim wife, doing at all with a woman who had sent all her family away so that she could have a good time? Any man could go to her now, had Mariammo thought of that?”(94)

Kehinde’s homecoming is nothing like what she planned it to be. Instead of being feted as a “been to” Madam, she is shocked to see that her place has been taken by another woman, her husband’s second wife. Unlike Kehinde who barely has any degrees, Rike is university educated with a Doctorate in Literature. Emecheta’s views on polygamy are
rather ambivalent. On the face of it she speaks favourably about it. She says, “People think polygamy is oppressive, and it is in certain cases. But I realize, now that I have visited Nigeria often that some women now make polygamy work for them”. (Umeh 1996 211) However, in her novels, The Joys of Motherhood and Kehinde, she emphasizes the rivalry and jealousy among co-wives. While Rike and her family look at Kehinde as a threat, she in turn is very jealous of Rike’s youth and superior education. Through the portrayal of Rike, Emecheta makes a very grave point. While education is liberating, the likes of Rike, allow themselves to be trampled upon by internalizing and perpetrating decadent patriarchal values. However, Rike, too is a victim in the “man’s world” of Lagos. Albert loses his job and contemplates taking a third wife. Kehinde is quick to realize that she is no match for Mama Kaduna, Albert’s sister and Rike. On the long drive to see her children, Kehinde sees the predicament she is in.

Here women were supposed to stick together and a wife to give her husband room enough to be a man. This was not new to her so why was she finding it so difficult to accept? She felt she was being cheated, undervalued. She looked at Albert’s younger wife bowing down to tradition. But through it she had acquired a home and a big extended family for her children to belong to. In spite of her Doctorate, she had got herself hooked to a man eighteen years her senior, with a wife and two children in England. Kehinde knew she did not stand a chance against Rike, with her Lagos sophistication. They were not playing by the same rules. (88)

It is this sorry state of hers that sensitizes her to a woman like Mary Elikwu. Mary had left her husband because he abused her. She took her children along with her when she left him. Among the Ibos in London, she is an anomaly. Kehinde treats her with disgust as a woman who could not keep her marriage and was therefore a “fallen” woman. But now in Nigeria, Kehinde learns to respect a woman like her. Emecheta sensitizes women to respect and stand by each other rather than ridiculing women who dare to be different.

Kehinde eventually decides to return to London. Lagos no longer seems like home for her. Her self worth takes a beating as she writes to Mariammo telling her about her plight.
Mariammo understands her hidden message and sends her a ticket to London. For Kehinde it is the return of the diasporic. Suddenly London feels like home. She is even nostalgic for the weather of London. It is a new and content Kehinde who settles back in her old house. It is not a bed of roses though, as initially she has to work as a cleaner in the hotel. However, she works towards a degree in Sociology and eventually gets a job which she likes. Her Caribbean tenant is now her lover. Her son moves in with her and is shocked to see a self reliant mother. She tells her son in no uncertain terms that the house belongs to her and that he has no claim over it. When he tries to shame her by saying that he has seen her in bed with her tenant, Kehinde replies to him calmly, “Oh! Is this what the drama is about? I’m sorry, we weren’t sure it was you. You weren’t meant to, believe me...Mothers are people too you know” (140)

Kehinde’s life has come full circle. She has a full life- a job, friends and a life which allows her space for herself. It is in London that she is able to find this space. In the words of Christine Sizemore, “Like Emecheta herself, Kehinde learns that marriage and homeland are not the only ‘places’ for women. She discovers that there is room in the city of London for the diasporic and the post colonial to achieve both place and space. In London Kehinde finds a home, an education, a career and a lover.” (Umeh 1996 211)

With Kehinde, Emecheta’s diasporic entity comes to fore. The author and her protagonist have both moved on, where, the idea of Nigeria is home whereas the real home becomes London. With an eye of the ‘insider – outsider’ Emecheta is able to comment on the hypocrisies that exist in Nigeria. Rike, the university educated professor is forced to bow down to her husband’s wishes for the sake of her inclusion in a large family. She is forced to lose her individuality. Emecheta is sympathetic to her cause and once again puts the blame on the society which expects impossible standards from its women. Perhaps the hypocritical face of the society is best reflected in Kehinde’s sister who has a different face for every occasion. While she cries and beats her chest when Kehinde leaves, in full view of her relatives, when they are alone, she congratulates her sister on being ale to get away. Kehinde’s quest is rewarded in an alien country. In her case, the country is not alien any more. Kehinde calls London her “home”.

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Conclusion

This chapter traces the development of the economically independent Nigerian women. Just as the country has progressed from the pre colonial times, through the colonial times to the post colonial world, the role of the woman has undergone a vast change. The commonalities remain, in the woman’s engagement as a mother, but motherhood has ceased to be the controlling factor of women’s lives. This discourse emphasizes the impact of education on the rise of the new women to top positions of power and privilege. For the post colonial woman, education is the tool to her upward mobility.

The women authors and their protagonists continue to fight to be heard. Ignored for a very long time, the women authors have been acknowledged, albeit grudgingly, almost 20 years after they started publishing. Tess Onwueme quotes Femi Ojo Ade as the lone male voice which recognizes the worth of women’s writing from Africa. Ojo Ade in his essay “Female Writers Male critics’ writes:

The female counterparts of the Soyinkas are a rare breed. They do exist, however. Nwapa, Aidoo, Njau, Emecheta and Head are names that come to mind. For that rare breed, practicing the art of writing poses problems at once similar to, and greater than, those faced by their male “masters”… the male writer, like the male social animal, is more fortunate than the female. His presence is taken for granted. The publisher seeks him out, unlike the woman whose silence is also taken for granted. Cultural misconceptions and taboos abound. It is believed that women must keep quiet when men are talking… fortunately taboos die – though slowly but with the times. With the new warped so - called luminaries emerging from the colonial roots, even the female deaf and dumb have acquired a voice. It is a voice of confusion, or confrontation, of commitment. The men have had their say. They continue to have it. It is the women’s turn. (Umeh 1998 297)
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