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**IDENTITY CRISIS IN TESS ONUWEME'S DRAMA *THE MISSING FACE***

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**Abstract :** This paper provides a critical overview of the treatment of the questions of identity crisis of Igbo woman in Diaspora, in Afro-American dramatist Osonye Tess Onwueme's work *The Missing Face* (2002). The issues of identity is explored against the backdrop of African Diaspora, African Igbo rituals and traditional elements like *Lineage, Kinship, Naming ceremonies* and the significance of *Ikenga* image. The critical question raised in the drama is where does Afro-American woman, who happens to be of Igbo origin, position herself, back in the African's Igbo community, where she faces identity crisis, first because she is alienated in USA and secondly she is unaware of her African roots. The drama suggests that going back to roots is not a futile activity but helps people one to regain the identity. The paper discusses *The Missing Face* as a social drama. The face which is missing leads to identity crisis and the solution needs to be found by the protagonist. The paper discusses the authors emerging consciousness that appeal to Afro-Americans to go back to the roots in order to reinvent one's identity, which offer meaning and purpose to one's life and existence. The paper further analysis the presentation of the female character, Ida Bee in the drama by exploring the different cultural aspects of Igbo culture and thereby by depicting Ida Bee's journey towards self assertion. In the presentation of the character of Ida Bee we come across a young dashing and determinant mother, who, along with her son, Amaechi dares to travel all the way to Idu village in Africa, in order to find roots of her ancestor, only equipped with legacy of the image *Ikenga*. Her plea for the significance of the collective Identity of African Igbos, is supported by Nebe, who helps Amaechi to regain his identity as an African. The matching of the remaining half piece of the *Ikenga*, makes a complete Image of *Ikenga* which signifies the Igbo ancestral symbol of manhood and personal achievement, and it helps Momah realise his mistake and he too regains his manhood and identity. The paper concludes that the drama offers a hope to all the brothers and sisters in African who constantly face the identity crisis any point in their life. Going back to roots and reinventing oneself is vital from Africans to gain confidence and respect regarding their true identity. Africa is indeed the homeland for the blacks, all over the world

**Key words:** African Diaspora, Ida Bee Wells, , *Ikenga* image, , Kinship Lineage, Womanism, Self assertion and Spirit of ancestor

**Introduction:** Osonye Tess Onwueme, belongs to Igbo community in Africa, which is mostly found in profitable Delta region of Nigeria. Her plays, strictly, reflect critical perspective of Nigerian women on corrupt socio-political system in Nigeria. Osonye Tess Onwueme is distinguish professor of Cultural Diversity and professor of English at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire. Osonye Tess Onwueme, born on Sept. 8, 1955, at Ogwashi - Uka, Delta State, Migwa, she attended both her B.A. & M. A. degree from the University of Ife and Ph.D. in literature from the University of Benin, Nigeria.

Osonye Tess Onwueme has the reputation as the leading African female playwright with national and international distinction in Africa, Europe and North America. She is the winner of "The Associate of Nigerian authors (ANA) Award, The 1989 / 90 Martin Luther King / Cezer Chavez Distinguished Writers Award, the 1994 Nigerian Achievement Award in Literature. Her award winning plays are *The Desert Encroaches* (1985) and *Ban Empty Barn* (1986), *A Hen Too Soon* (1983) all these three are allegorical dramas. Another award winning plays are

*The Missing Face* (2002), *Shakara Dance Hall Queen* (2000), *Tell It to Women* (1997) and *Three plays* (1993). In her trio of plays *The Broker Calabash* (1986), *Parables for a Season* (1993) and *The Reign of Wazobia* (1988), the writer tries to problematize the idea of a united sisterhood for the promotion of worldwide feminism. In Political drama- *What Mama Said* (2003) she illuminates the effect of national and global oil politics, on the lives of impoverished rural Nigeria. African Diasporic legacy becomes a dominant theme, in her plays *-Riots in Heaven* (1996). *Why Elephant Has No Butt* (2000) is an allegorical novel.

Osonye Tess Onwueme wrote *Legacies* in 1989, and re-republished (changing the names of the characters) as *The Missing Face* in 2002, is the story that demonstrates the search for roots and identity by an African American woman Ida Bee along with her son, Amaechi from Milwaukee to Africa, to find a place where they can "whole... a place that can fill the emptiness with kinship and the spirit of our ancestors" (*TMF* 3), arrives in the African kingdom of the mythological Idu, Igbo land in Nigeria, which is

completely unfamiliar to her., Her primary aim is to find out the whereabouts of her husband Momah , who ends up abounding them both in Milwaukee ,after his studies in USA, to return to his homeland Africa .This physical journey of Ida bee turns into her spiritual fulfilment. As Uko mentions in *Gender and Identity*

(She) portrays the force and potency of African traditional rituals in the process of bridging the yawning Atlantic that symbolizes separation, dislocation, rootless ness, marginalization and emasculation of the African American and the loss bthe African inthe African continent of knowledge and well-deserved self-pride.(122)

Uko further adds that Tess Onwumen claims to perceive theatre as a group medium for dialogue in the society as she is influenced by the Bertolt Brecht theatre ideology 'where the people are challenged to look critically at their situation and compelled to want to change it .( *Gender and Identity*43 )

In an interview to Uko, Tess Onwumen comments on the drama *The Missing Face* :

In a play *The Missing Face* , which I designed as an extended metaphor , an appropriate scenario is created for those African ( in Africa ) who have had no privilege of formal education and exposure the implicating facts of slavery .This means that the issues addressed which involves Ida Bee and Momah serve as a dramatic contexts for the resolution of the conflicts ,misrepresentations and misunderstanding that have , for centuries , plagued the black man on both sides of the Atlantic It reconfigures the mentality of the African elite , typified in Momah , towards appreciating the African values over and above others, regardless of his acquired Western education'( *Gender and Identity*262)

**Ngugi Wa Thiong** comments on the play *The Missing Face* , in the forwarding to Onwueme's *Tell It To Women*:

In all her work ,Onwueme has shown daring in her exploration of ideas , even when they lead to subjects and themes which may seem taboo . She has a way of using images to express very critical ideas . For example , in legacies [ or *The Missing Face* ] where *Ikenga* is split into halves – she explores important pan – African themes and sums up the historical tragedy of the first major division of Africa into continent and diasporan entities. Wholeness will come when the two halves come together (iii)

In this paper we propose to have critical overview of the dramatist's treatment of the question of identity crisis of Afro- American woman , who happens to be of Igbo origin , in Africa and the way she overcomes .it The paper further analysis the journey to self

assertion of the female character in the drams by exploring the different rituals and traditional aspects of the Igbo culture Although the discussion treats the topics separately , in the drama , they are integrated as a part of the organic whole

**The Real Life Ida Bee Wells:** Ida Bee , in the play *The Missing* in the said play is the archetypal of the real life character , Ida B. Wells Barnett (1862) of Holly Springs, Mississippi. As As Uko claims that the name of Ida B. Wells Barnett is synonymous racial pride and identity and unity among blacks in America and Africa .Uko gives a brief introduction to Ida B Wells contribution in the history of black community in America He writes :

Her personality and vision constituted a deconstruction of black stereotypes and reversal of destructive , racist activities against blacks. Barnett's era witnessed an alarming rate of black lynching by member of the Ku Klux Klan in the American south ... She displayed an overt opposition to all forms of segregation and oppression of blacks in America.This explains her refusal to relinquish her seat in a railroad coach designated for whites. In consequences she both faced a law suite and lost her job.As result ,she went into journalism ...she became established as an anti –lynching campaigner :chairperson of Anti – Lynching Bureau of National African council and the President of the Negro Fellowship League in 1908 .With Booker T Washington,Wells –Barnett got an anti- lynching bill passed amidst the enormous controversies and objection in early 1900. This background highlights the archetypal Ida B. whom Ida Bee in Onwueme's plays is modelled , thus authenticating the latter's boldness , resolve , spirit of adventure and desire to ensure a better future for prosperity ( *Gender and Identity* 122-123 )

**African Dispoara:** Being part of the African Dispoara, the female protagonist ,Ida Bee , in this prefers to regain her original identity as a Igbo community member in Africa.The Africans in Diaspora are the result of the human product of the Atlantic Slave Trade,.Blacks in America chose the term African American. The term African attempt to identify , define and characterize a transitional identity of people of African descent **Drake**, in refers to the initially constructed pan –African political ideologies of Delany , Blyden , Gravey , De Boies , & Padmore and attempts to identify the universe of African and African descended people which used to be indicated as Blackness or negroness, is now called African Diaspora .

(Theses terms) constructed and ascribed social identity indicative of sub- Sahara African territorial origin and simultaneously biological difference from lighter – skinned population. Outside of 'racial'

Blackness for these intellectuals membership in the lack world was determined by common experience of racial terms and marginalization based on internationally held racist ideologies of Black inferiority. These Pan-Africanists struggled for but did not assume a shared notion of history, consciousness of identification on the part of those presumed on racial grounds, to be part of the international community of blacks (*Global Dimension Of African Diaspora*, 462)

In the play *Ida Bee* experiences alienation in Milwaukee, when she rebuffs her son: "how many times have I got to tell you that the homeland of black people is Africa, not Milwaukee?" (TMF 3)

**Renate Zahar** comments on the sense of alienation experienced by blacks

The black must be made to realize that his alienation is not an individual problem. Its causes can be found in the interiorization of an historically and economically determined 'inferiority': 'If there is an inferiority complex, it is outcome of the double process- primarily, economically - subsequently, the internalization, or better, the epidermalization of this inferiority' (*Colonialism and Alienation*, 28)

To study the character of the main protagonist *Ida Bee*, it is vital to analyse her relationships and experience with the other four important characters: like her son, *Ameachi*, her son, *Momha* the man who father a child with her and later leave her, *Odozi Momah's* father and *Nebe*, *Momah's* mother.

*Ida Bee* a single mother struggling to bring up her son in a poverty ridden area in Milwaukee. She barely makes money. For *Ida Bee's* life at Milwaukee, USA is all about struggle, humiliates & constant fear for her son's future, as *Ida Bee*, The fractured lives of her relatives in USA is of no use to her. *Ida Bee* she fears like other children her son might get influenced by anti-social element. Over and above, *Ida Bee* forces her son to go to school because she doesn't want her son to land in jail. Her fear come true when she comes to know that her son carried a gun in school just to impress few of his friends and he thinks it's a manly act and remains unapologetic about it. This incidence shocks *Ida Bee*.

She travels to *Idu* village in Africa with her son and she genuinely feels *Ameachi* needs to be with his father in Africa, as his role model and make him understand the real meaning of 'manhood'

*Ida Bee* decides to visit Africa to meet *Momah* and explains to her son Africa is their homeland. Her statement confuses her son *Ameachi* who only knows the limited life at Milwaukee.

**Ida Bee:** Your father is here in Africa.. He can teach you that an African man carries the power of the gun in his heart, then walk boldly the forest of demon

with a steady stride, his feet firmly on the ground like an elephant, trampling vipers and scorpion that threatens his progress towards the light of the sun

**Ameachi:** I won't know such, man if I saw him.. how come he left us? It's been ten years he laid eyes on us

**Ida Bee:** Blood has a way of coming together like the tributaries of a river. You could never be a stranger to a man who named you 'Ameachi' - 'who knows tomorrow?' (TMF 6)

*Uko* mentions that by describing the qualities of an African man, *Ida Bee* wishes her son to develop those qualities and further claims that *Tess* condemns the single motherhood that might lead to the identity crisis among the children (*Gender and identity* 124)

**Ikenaga:** When *Ida Bee* travel to *Idu* village, she carries half image *Ikenaga* 'Ikenaga (place of strength) signifies the OIgbo ancestral symbol of manhood and personal achieve' (TMF ii)

*Toyin. Falola* comments on *Ikenaga* :

**Ikenaga** (place of strength") is a horned *Alusi* (deity) found among the *Igbo* people in southeastern Nigeria. It is one of the most popular symbols of the *Igbo* people, and the most common cultural artifact. *Ikenaga* is mostly maintained, kept or owned by men and occasionally by women of high reputation and integrity in the society. It comprises someone's *Chi* (personal god), his *Ndichie* (ancestors), aka *Ikenaga* (right hand), *ike* (power) as well as spiritual activation through prayer and sacrifice. (*Culture and Customs of Nigeria* 67)

*Ida Bee* convinces her complaining son, *Ameachi* the significance of *Ikenaga* and admits that both share the burden of exploring the past which is though very taxing but both are on the same page."...So now *Ameachi*, the legacy is as much your burden as it is mine..." (TMF 6)

*Ida Bee*, next to the assembly of *Idu* village, explains the story behind the half image of *Ikenaga*. She explains that the legacy *Ida Bee's* father left with her is the mysterious item of split image (a half face) of *Ikenaga*, carved in wood, which her father gave her on her twenty-first birthday. This image had been passed down from her great grandfather to her grandfather, onto her father. *Ida Bee* is from North Avenue, Milwaukee, in the United States and her mother who was trapped and burnt along with their home, in a racial attack by *Whiteman*. In the debris of fire, the same half split image of *Ikenaga*, was spared. Her father left when he lost his job went out in search of work and never returned, leaving her and her mother alone with his memories. Her Father's last words were "Hold on to this *Ikenaga*. Some day, you will mend the splinted face of our people and we'll be whole again" (TMF 7)

As *Uko* claims about the racism and marginalization of blacks in USA.

The reference to white racism and allusion to the evil of the Ku Klux Klan are significant in showing the marginalization and dehumanization of the African in American society. The reference also illuminates an entrenched system of racism that diminishes the black man (*Gender and Identity*, 127)

**Lineage:** Ida Bee is unaware of her Lineage. Victor Uchendu comments on the importance of Lineage in Igbo society to develop affinity to their own African identity:

Normally the Igbo is brought up in his father's lineage. Later in his childhood, he is constantly brought into contact with his mother's lineage. As he grows up he is made increasingly aware of the wider social world, the most important of which are his father's mother's lineage and his mother's lineage. When he marries he acquires affiant links, his wife's lineage playing an important role in the social life of his children. These five lineages, each of which is a distinct agnatic group, constitute for the Igbo their most important kinship network (*The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* 64)

When Ida Bee arrives in Idu Village, Momah is going through the ceremony of 'passage to manhood'. Ida Bee fails to answer the name of her clan when Odozi, Momah's father, is Diokpa, the oldest man in Idu, questions it since it is the basic way identity formation in Africa. Odozi repeatedly insists that, out of nine clans she must belong to one if she claims she or her ancestors are Africans.

**Odozi:** ... I don't understand you ... You must belong to particular lineage ... We have Ubulu, Ishekpe, Umu-ozu, Ugba, Akwu, Achala, Azagba, Okiti. And we are Aaboh. To which clan do you belong? Everyone in Idu kingdom, even the poorest person belongs to a clan, a lineage. Everybody has a place on our land ... You look like us. You claim to be one of us, we don't understand you. Why? ... I would tell them you are oyibo ... your mission brings us confusion (*TMF* 10-12)

In a bid to assure Odozi, that she belongs to Idu, Ida Bee fumbles claiming she is one of the child of Africa born in a new world, which makes her laughing stock among the crowd

**Id Bee:** From... Idu... from all of Africa. We are children of Africa ... born in the new world. Africa is our land ... So why must we limit ourselves to one country ... one state. The whole of Africa is our Nationality. This is our land. We are children of Africa

Ida Bee's answer reflects her ignorance of African past and culture and Odozi in return immediately ridicules this idea of one nation informing her that the 'oyibo' created havoc on their land, turning their world upside down and that world is no more in their control nation

As Uko mentions that the answer given by Ida Bee

typifies the ignorance of many non-Africans who perceive Africa as just one nation. Ida Bee fails to understand that it is not herself who is searching her past but the whole of Africans in the Diaspora, all over the world (*Gender and Identity* 125)

Odozi challenges Ida Bee's view of Africa being one land.

**Odozi:** (Laughing derisively) What is she talking about? HA! HA! HA! (The crowd joins his laughter) You children now day amuse me. You know? How can Africa be one land? (To the crowd) Did she say on nation? Africa? Stranger, are you drunk? HA! HA! HA! (Taking off his chieftaincy cap as he laughs with the crowd.) There is nothing one would hear nowadays ... in this new world (Emphatically) Enu Ofuu! HA!, children! Oyibo has spoiled our land. Indeed, our world is turned upside down. Now who am I to mend it? I am Odozi-Obodo alright. But who am I? (*TMF* 11)

Uko explains in *Gender and Identity*:

Odozi's expose to Ida Bee of the fundamentals and implications of identity in the African context reveals the essence of one's roots: it is the definitive factor of one's origins of belonging and the existence after life. -It makes one an effectual member of a particular space and time. One shares in the legacy from the ancestors and one also contributes to the propounding and evolution of the legacy for posterity. Unfortunately, Ida Bee's claim of Idu as her homeland is invalidated as much by her ignorance of African values as by her strange language and the mutual lack of understanding between her and the people of Idu (126).

**Kinship:** Ida Bee claims that she wants her son to be offered kinship since Momah is the father of her son. Kinship is an important elemental identity formation in African society. **Toyin Falola** explains the importance of kinship: "...Emphasis is on descent or ancestry, a family tree shows how present generation is connected to previous one, back to the founder of the lineage." (*Culture and Customs of Nigeria* 118)

**Alexander Kure** mentions the tradition of the importance of kinship in Nigerian society since pre-colonial time:

Pre-colonial Nigerian societies were structured around the centrality of kinship as the determinant of the productive and reproductive role of the individual in society. Childbearing was considered central to the worth of woman ... children were regarded as economic assets. As a general rule, the more children an individual had, the more power he/she had in their respective societies. With the introduction of colonialism, most elements of the kinship support system disappeared or were considered outdated (in Falola, Soremekun: 31)

Commenting on the age and Kinship status in Igbo

society, Victor Uchendu writes:

One of the ways of approaching Igbo status placement is through the kinship system that is, treating kinship as a network of interrelated statuses. The important features of Igbo kinship include precedence accorded to the male, seniority by birth order irrespective of sex, emphasis on agnation, the polygynous household, and residence. Seniority by birth order is the normal basis for 'pare status (extended family headship), the investment of – the symbol of authority of, and other heads of lineages as well as other male-linked offices and positions. ( *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* ,84-85)

Momah gets angry with sudden appearance of Ida Bee in Idu, along with her son since she discloses to all that he is the father's of her child, Ultimately, throughs naming ceremony, Nebe nad Odozi and even Momah, accept the child as part of their lineage.

**Ida Bee** : (Excitedly, passionately breaking into spiritual song until overwhelmed, she breaks into monologue) My son, is at last part of the fold. And here, at grotto, my journey ends. Or could it be the beginning? The end of the grotto. Knitted with cords of black navels? Pregnant with the secret that weaves the souls of my people? Secret enshrined in the grotto where the beginning of the circle ends to reveal the essence of backness? Here, where my journey ends, I take a leap ... and I limp ... into where pain heralds the birth of a new born child. Pain, breaking the hymen for birth ... breaking soil to deliver seed. And I look at my belly and trace the thread, blood from my navel to the grotto, which perhaps someday will bind me. ( *TMF* 35)

**Womanism**: Both female characters, Ida Bee and Nebe stands for the power of Alice Walker's 'womanism' where one women assist other to regain the identity.

Alice Walker in her work *In Search of our Mothers Graden*, first utilized the term 'womanism'. AS she mentions the womanish girl exhibits wilful courage and outrageous behaviour that is considered to be beyond socially accepted norms. She mentions:

A woman who loves another woman, sexually and non sexually. She appreciates and prefers woman's culture, woman's emotional flexibility ... [she] is committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically for health ... loves the spirit ... loves struggle. Love herself. Regardless. (23)

Here the focus of theology is not based on gender inequality when she claims 'womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender', but suggest feminism is one of the component of large umbrella of Womanism. Ida Bee is thankful to Nebe for accepting her son and

welcoming to homeland as her daughter. Nebe's welcome to Ida Bee is an emotionally charged appeal to other black daughter to merge with the fellow women. The praise Nebe showers on Ida Bee, helps Ida Bee to boost her moral and strengthen her identity to connect with her homeland. For instance

- Nebe's act of **Ibe ugo onu** i.e Neck cutting find warming to Ida Bee. Traditionally, 'ibe ugo onu' among the Aniocha-Igbo community is an amorous sign. It is an indication of love and romance from male and female or as in this case from any member of the family as an indication of bond between them. It soon becomes clear to Ida Bee that Nebe is being playful as she smiles and repeats the 'neck cutting' over and over again.
- Nebe sings Eun Ebuke" i.e. "The world is too Large" Nebe sings and sways to the rhythms of the song.
- Nebe first time welcomes, Ida Bee open heartedly. She calls Ida Bee, 'wife, daughter, fellow women. Oshimili, Asia, Uli, Alo, Ebiny. and finally Egbe..
- Nebe calls Ida Bee Alua Oahimili" the Ocean, a wife whose eyes sing, glow, flashes dark water, mingling water with fire.
- Further she calls Ida Bee "Asia nwa Asia ngwo" i.e. 'Fish and beauty queen of river" whose 'soothing skin holds elements in water captive, while she glides her way to their souls".
- Nebe welcomes Ida Bee calling her "Uli" i.e. "whose blackness tattoos conscience with dignity".
- Further she calls her Alo", the black die on the weaving-bowl whose blackness, whites cannot endure.
- Nebe calls Ida Bee "Ebony" whose is the beauty and soul of the forest, and "whose dark essence mock termites and whose body laugh out aloud at the untutored hand craving the history of a land".
- She finally calls her "Egbe" lea woman - bird who doesn't know a land but journey there all the same ( *TMF* 36)

**Identity Crises Of Momah**: Momah is the one who always adds to the identity crises of Ida Bee. For instance, Moamah, is ashamed of his African name, doesn't bother to know its meaning and prefers to call himself Jack which sounds more 'American'. He looks down upon his roots as an African and have no respect for past African history, culture or the tradition that demand respect for family values, spirits of ancestors etc.: He claims the old glorious past of Africa or the ancestors are not useful to build plain or expensive cars '...Ancestors! Oh give me a break! Our ancestors should just sleep fine in their graves. And we shall rise wake up ..' ( *TMF* 30) He criticizes the African extended family system as "backward, burdensome" where 'everyone noising

into everyone else's business.."( *TMF* 20) Being a student of Urban development and with the strong exposure to globalization , Momaha dreams of of turning Africa into a materially prosperous country with modern infrastructure. With "modernization' Jack wish to bring transformation,: By acquiring a new form of civilization, Modernizing their culture and finally Americanizing their ways .This is possible only through "Anglicizing language" by banning the native language and adopting "civilized language"like English , French , and German because these languages "flow with hard currencies and dictate the tides if international trade"( *TMF* 29)

Ida Bee feel sorry for Momah's onion about the past and ancestors. She claims the blacks in America are away from their motherland, "adrift on foreign boat without a rudder".(25)And have lost confident as there is no memory of the past glory left for them. And the minds are filled with distrust and fear. .She further fears if her own brother and sister are causing damage to the memory of homeland..

Riding on Ida Bee's back Momah graduates from college and manages to secure green card. He indulges himself in material world of car, and house. He wants Ida Bee'to abort the child, as he sees no hope " in the black race , in the black race , born anew'( *TMF* 32) and he fears that impregnated child might become the interfere with his mission "to become JACK in mind" ( *TMF* 32) .IDA, BEE is broken when MOMAH calles her"a slave daughter with foolish dreams of a primitive Africa who was born to serve the world for eternity." ( *TMF* 32).Ida Bee had suffered hunger, racism, sexism, deprivation injustice etc but she couldn't bear a blot on her race, or her collective identity as a black women, whose homeland is in Africa.

"... One is dead without identity . The blood that knitted us together swelled into my hands .. lost him , Momah forever .But I also knew I had gained a seed , the seed I must plan on firm soil .The African soil , fertilized in love , pride and self assurance , that fruit may abound and come to life again '( *TMF* 33)As Uko explains the reason , behind not aborting her child : Ida Bee sees in spiritual and philosophical terms the implications of aborting her pregnancy. She feels that it is akin to aborting the authentic past, the black race and the hope of black people. Her eulogy and admiration for African communal living and sense of brotherhood are sharply contrasted with Momah's opinion that the African extended family system is burdensome.( *Gentler and identity* 128)

**Self Assertion:** Equipped with her newly found true African identity , Ida bee , retaliates to the bullies of Momah and she start self asserting herself .Ona's fight can be justifies with **Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie** discusses the six mountains on the back of African

women and the Fifth mountain on her back is 'man ' with his centuries old patriarchal society and urge women to fight against it .:

"..male domination is advantageous to him ( man ) ... Thus it is up to women to combat their social disabilities ; to fight for their own fundamental and democratic rights , without waiting for the happy day when men will willingly share power and privilege with them --a day that will never come .

The liberation of women in society is not simply about sexual freedom as most men tend to think and fear, but about the larger problem of the redistribution of privileges , power and property between the rich and poor , encompassing the smaller problem of the redistribution of power , property and privilege between men and women( *Re-Creating Ourselves* 36)

,Momah accuses Ida bee for chasing him all the way to Idu , to force him to marry her , . Ida Bee laughs at his fears and doubts.

**Ida bee:** well now Momah , how ironic that I should witness to your entry into manhood when you have not demonstrated to me single ounce of manliness in all the years I've known you ...

..while you chased the dream of synthetic cities that would stretch across Africa without traces of bush that has just anointed you a man Amaechi , who is becoming the real man , has come of age without a single piece of guidance from you .....

... I never said anything about marriage . I raised my son , and supported you too , without ever asking you for anything except to take responsibility of teaching our son the values of African manhood .But I see now Momah, you could never have helped me. I have taken too long for you to become a man ( *TMF* 38)

Selfish Momah has no answer to Ida Bee's accusations. In th capacity o f the sun of Idu land ,he struggles to push her to the forest of demon ,However , Ida bee warn shim he has no right over her as she has found her real identity and no more stranger to her homeland She shouts at him

**Ida Bee :** (Shouting ) Momah . You have no power over me .Here , in this land , my bond is to the earth .No knife , no matter how sharp , can serve it . My feet , they stand firm fir I am a child of this land .And no matter what you do to smash the shadow of me in the past , my images shines to reflect the face of tomorrow through my son , whose umbilical cord is planted deep in the earth of this homestead , where now I am condemned to be a stranger .But Momah, Momah , in the end I charge you with the blood which binds us , the blood which the eternal bond of motherhood shall show your eyes to the painful truth .( *TMF* 39)

Momah pounces on Id bee and finally pushes her

into forest , ridiculing her being an Osu .A crashing sound is heard Victor c Uchendu in his book quotes Leith –Ross that ‘the Osu are hated and feared , treated as if mean and discussed with the tone of horror and contempt ‘(*The Igbo Of Southeast Nigeria* ,89) .However Momah mistaken the slaves with Osus in Africa.

**Spirit of Ancestors In Igbo Culture:** Spirit of MEME ,play major role in bringing back Ida bee from the forest of demon and reunite her happily with Momah , who later regrets ill treating her. Momah too regain his identity and manhood.

Commenting on the value and significance of the spirits of ancestors in Igbo Culture , Victor Uchendu comments :

Ancestors occupy a special place in Igbo religious practice. The Igbo conceive of their ancestors as the invisible segment of the lineage. The ancestors are "honored" and not "worshiped" in the strict sense. The ancestral honor is a religion based on reciprocity. There is a loving reverence for the deceased ancestors, who are expected to cure back to incarnate and "do to the living members what they did for them.

The Igbo idea that the ancestors and other deceased members come back to "temporal life" is rooted in their theory of reincarnation Belief in reincarnation gives the Igbo hope of realizing their frustrated status goals in the next cycle of life. Transmigration , on the other hand is regarded as the greatest possible punishment for incestuous , the murderers , the witch and the sorcerer ( *The Igbos of Southeast Nigeria* ,102)

During the important ritual of land , Momah ,along with Amaechi witness the spirit of ancestor, ‘MEME , the great father’ (TMF 50 ) which ridicules Momah for being ignorant and clueless about the death and murders of his great father : ‘ If you were your father’s son , you would dig out his spirit ... walk bold . Search through mangroves and ebony and obeche and iroko.”(TMF 49) The voice ridicules Momah for being a failure to be the true black son of the earth The voice questions Momah’s bonding and connection with the land Africa : ‘.. You son of Africa! Do you know yourself?( TMF 49)

The voice of the spirit orders him to bring home back the ‘the beautiful black sister’

Voice orders :

‘..Trace the lost path ... return home. Fortify grotto .Above all , retrieve the spirit of a mother , chased her like a hen into night to cackle , until if finds eternal rest in a murky pond .As long as a child is connected to the navel of a woman , it will always have strong roots . (TMF 51)

The Voice further orders him to share the secret of the land with Amaechi who ‘bears the eyes of

tomorrow , filled with the light of tomorrow , filled with the light of great father , shining to reveal the beautiful essence of black ‘(TMF 52)

**Complete Ikenga Image:** When Ida Bee emerges from the forest , carrying bundle of wood on her head ,she mutters and sings herself in manner of a mad woman . She dances, smiles and stirpes and washes herself with the sand , and also holding the half image of the *Ikenga* her father had given her . She continue singing blues:

.. I am baby left to rot in woods ... I want to be born .. Are you ready for new birth ?... Do I smell Like wood or woman ..

I am wood carved with a half face .. lost in the bush .Did anyone find my face carved in wood ? Did anyone find it ? The Missing Face ? The Missing Face ? Deep in the bush ..black with night ? My daddy’s face ? Missing ? Where is it ? (TMF 56-57)

Amaechi , squeezes ‘*mgbidingbi*’ leaves and rubs the potion to Ida bee’s eyes and she comes to her sense. Nebe holds Momah responsible for Ida bee’s condition .: ‘You snatched from my breast this daughter I never had ..where are you to drink from the vial of your bitterness(TMF 56)

When Nebe come across the same half spilt image of *Ikenga* , at the end of the play , Ida Bee explains her that MEME , her father gave it to her .

Id bee :."Meme, my own great father. Kidnapped. Snatched. Robbed of manhood. Snatched by strange hands of the night of initiation to manhood. In the struggle that ensued, the great father's symbol was split — one half lost. But the other, he carried with him. And he handed to me as a L-E-GA-CY."(TMF58)

Momah fetches the other half of the image which he had kept in grotto , which belongs to his great grandfather MEME .This half *Ikenga* was left on the footpath on the night of MEME’s captivity . Ida Bee’s - *Ikenga* fits perfectly and makes a complete *Ikenga* face with Momah’s *half-Ikenga* , . Momah grips Ida bee in his hysteria. They both are interlock into each other’s arm As Uko explains. the matching of the both images ,reflects the connection between Ida Bee and Momah :

Ultimately,demonstrating both the spiritual and physical connections between Ida Bee and Momah. These signify that while Ida Bee reclaims her authentic African identity, Momah reclaims his manhood and appreciates the spiritual essence of the African life, in *The Missing Face*, Odozi finds Momah's hand, Momah takes up Amaechi's and Amaechi and Momah lift the matching faces of the *Ikenga*. Amaechi lifts it alone "slowly, slowly until it attains a final draft." (Gender and Identity 59)

**Conclusion:** The paper concludes that the drama offers a hope to all African brothers and sisters in Diapora as well as in African who constantly face

the identity crisis at any given point in their life. Going back to root is not a futile activity but helps one to reinvent, strengthen identity and traditions and gain confidence to find the purpose in life. Knowing one's past, culture, traditions and ritual is an enriching experience which gives meaning to one's soulless existence. Africa is indeed the homeland for

the blacks, all over the world. Instead of looking down upon one's original roots in Africa, the young generation can always reconnect to their roots and they need to find a golden mean where both old as well as an d new generation can be on the same page . .

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