

GENDER AND IDENTITY IN TESS ONWUEME'S DRAMA, *THE REIGN OF WAZOBIA***MRINALINI B CHAVAN**

Abstract: This paper provides a critical overview of the treatment of the questions of gender & identity of African Igbo woman, in Afro-American dramatist Osonye Tess Onwueme's work *The Reign Of Wazobia*. The issue of identity is explored against the back drop of the African Igbo traditions, male domination and necessity of socio-political empowerment of African women. The critical question raised in the drama is where do African Igbo women position themselves in their society when they are forced to follow outdated traditions and attempts are made by male counterparts to deny them political power. The drama suggests that for upliftment of womanhood, socio-political empowerment is must. For this, women need to discard outdated traditions and concentrate on the optimum utilisation of their potentials, to become economically as well as socially independent. The paper discusses *The Reign Of Wazobia* as socio-political drama. Wazobia, the female regent of Anioma Kingdom become the symbol of women power. The paper discusses the author's emerging consciousness that appeals to bring the radical socio-political changes in the Igbo society for the liberation and freedom of African Igbo women's from outdated customs, to achieve political empowerment. Wazobia, the King, takes revolutionary decision to free woman from the shackles of male-dominated society and she herself goes through her journey of her self-assertion and helps other women for their self-realisation. The paper further analysis the presentation of the female character, Wazobia, in the drama by exploring the different socio-political aspects of Igbo society and Wazobia's reaction to them and her determination to hold her power as female regent. In the presentation of the character of Wazobia, we come across a dashing and determinant female regent who dares to confront the social and political cultural challenges in Anioma Kingdom in Post Colonial Igbo community. Wazobia advocates the need of united sisterhood to gain socio-political empowerment. Wazobia, who is equipped with education and awareness of the benefits of holding political power, she appeals the women in her Kingdom to educate themselves and to be economically independent. At political front, Wazobia, successfully dislodges the political plotting to dethrone her, by her rivals with help of Omu, 'the King among women'. The paper concludes that for the empowerment of womanhood, women need to be given space in social as well as in political sphere. When such space is not allowed to women, fighting for the right is the only solution they are in position to exercise. To fight against exploitative agencies, women need to come together. Their collectively power becomes an advantage to achieve social as well as economic empowerment.

Key words: Dual sex system, Dehumanization of Women Tradition, Domestic Violence, Gender and Identity, Male domination, Political empowerment, Womanism.

Introduction: Osonye Tess Onwueme, belongs to Igbo community in Africa, which is mostly found in profitable Delta region of Nigeria. Eugene B Redmond calls her 'an African - Nigerian - Igbo - woman - feminist - artist' (*Three Plays* 16). Her plays, strictly, reflect critical perspective of Nigerian women on corrupt socio-political system in Nigeria. Osonye Tess Onwueme is distinguished professor of Cultural Diversity and professor of English at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire. Born on Sept. 8, 1955, at Ogwashi - Uka, Delta State, Nigeria, Osonye Tess Onwueme 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. The play, *The Reign Of Wazobia* is the last play in the ordered, among the other two plays, introduced, by Tess Onwueme, in her book '.

Three plays" (1993) . Eugene B.Redmond in the forwarding to the *Three plays* calls Tess's all three plays(*The Broken Calabash* , *Parable for a Season* &*The Reign of Wazobia*) as 'she – King Trilogy'(15)

Tess Onwueme 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) .Daniella Giseffi , comments in the introduction to the *Three Plays* , about the universal appeal of Tess Onwueme plays : "Her drama are very much universal plays an international; audience as they speak to us of basic human rights , regardless of national age , sex or race" (10).**Eugene B.Redmond** , in the forwarding to the *Three plays* mentions Kendal's (Chair of the department of Theatre at Sasmith College) correspondence on June 18,1994 that expresses his views on Tess Onwueme 's plays in general and on *The Reign of Wazobia* in particular :

"Her plays not only bring the rage and beauty Of Nigerian culture to an international audience , they create the artistic bridges crucial to the development of a multicultural educational environment ...In *The Reign of Wazobia* she examines the intersections of tradition and ritual, the construction of gender and the construction of 'woman", in a framework which is particular to Nigeria but to which is pertinent to women in the U. S . A . and many other countries" (*Three plays* , 15) The play deals with the theme of necessity of political empowerment of women for their upliftment and African women's subjugation in the name of outdated tradition .**Tess Onwueme** defines the theme of the play *The Reign of Wazobia*:

"...*The Reign of Wazobia* the matriarch Omu's proposed strategy of female insurrection against a male campaign to dethrone Anioma Kingdom's feminist sovereign Wazobia ..An army of female bodies , objectified for ages as things of sex , transforms themselves into political statements against the kingdom's conventional structure of male privilege "(*Theatre and the Post colonial Desires* 62)

In an interview to **Uko** , in *Gender and Identity* , Tess onwueme comments on the socio-political hardship women have to face: '...We live in a society where women have it hard. Their lives are manipulated by others"(271) She claims ,further , in the same interview , that the *The Reign Of Wazobia* "is historical fact"(253). She explains that in real life she witnessed the ceremony of the selection of a female regent at Ilaaa in Anioma – Igbo land " when the prospective male – king had to confine to the hut to for a variety of rituals for three years" (252). She also got inspired by real life story of a newly elected ,

educated modern ,and westernised female regent , in Yoruba land , caused uproar in the society because she ignored the traditions and her role regarding conventional inhibitions regarding her role and social expectations.'

In this paper we propose to have critical overview of the dramatist's treatment of the question of identity of African women at the socio- political level . The paper further analysis the elements that are considered as the major obstacles for the upliftment of women of Anioma Kingdom , in the mid – western region of ILaaa and how the way Wazobia, as their King , provides solutions. Although the discussion treats the topics separately , in the drama , they are integrated as a part of the organic whole

Gender And Identity: Wazobia ,she is the king surrogate ,who has already ruled for three seasons. She is the symbol of women power and a role model for women of Anioma kingdom Wazobia,is supposed to rule for limited period and her male rivals are desperate to dethrone her . She knows without power she is nothing .

Inibong I uko in mentions Ezeigbo's observation on Gender roles of African women:

" The misfortune of the modern Nigerian , any y African women is that that she neither enjoys political power no economic power .Her tragedy is that she has virtually lost out all counts and [she] finds herself more marginalized and devalued than her traditional mother"(quoted in *Gender and Identity* xvi)

Uko further adds that Ezeigbo attributes this female loss to the impact of colonialism and propagation of Islam and Christianity. These factors are largely account for the 'pauperisation" of Nigeria (and African) woman and their dislodgement from their wonted heights of economic and political power (*Gender and Identity* 03)

Wazobia, is a socio-political conscious female regent who has been educated on foreign land and she realises the need of political empowerment for the upliftment of women . Wazobia , appeals to women never to underestimate their power and strength

"Arise, women!, They say your feet are feeble, Show them those feet carry the burden of the womb...hands are frail, Show them those hands have claws, Wake up, women!...With your claws hook them,But spill no blood..."(*TRW*₁₂)

Wazobia , feels it is unfair that a male king is allowed to rule with no time limits, whereas a female regent like her is expected to step down after ruling for stipulated time period. However she already senses , that her arch rivals , male chiefs : Iyase and Idhen want to dethrone her ,since at the beginning of the play , they present her a steaming pot with burning herbs which is an indication of asking her

to step off the throne. But Wazobia is hard nut to crack and determines not to give up so easily :

"Three seasons Wazobia has reignedand men are sweating in their anuses... I , Wazobia , Will show them That women bear elephant tusk" (TRW 129)

Zulu Sofola claims that the sense of authority runs in the blood of African women even on Motherland Africa or amongst the black women in Diaspora; and rejects the Eurocentric theory that claims it is simply circumstantial behaviour of black woman.

We reject the Eurocentric theory that the depletion of Afro- American men during slavery gave their women the opportunity to develop strong female presence and authority (the so called black matriarchy). We assert that the presence of strong, black women in the African diaphanous was due to the African woman's healthy psyche and heritage and they carried over to the new world. It was not brought about by a mere circumstances of being left in charge of the home during slavery. It runs in the blood. (*Sisterhood , Feminism and Power* 61)

Dual -Sex System: This reflection of the power sharing phenomenon ie Wazobia's election as a Female regent , is product of the dual -sex system , existed in the African community .However this system too has its limitation as it doesn't grantee the enough political space and empowerment to African women , and as a result Wazobia , in the play gets conscious to step off the throne. Zulu Sofola claims that The African social dual sex system of socio-political power sharing is basically based on the four perception of womanhood. (Woman) as the divine equal of man in essence, (2) as a daughter, (3) as a Mother (4) as a wife These four & realities of womanhood, are conceptualized within the structured system of co-rulership(*Sisterhood , feminism and Power* 554). Further Zulu Sofola quotes Ehusani:

"The idea of co-rulership is possible and encouraged, among African Communities because they had a specific rooted philosophy of holistic harmony and communalism" (quoted in *Sisterhood , feminism and Power* 54)

Wazobia is proud of the fact that she manages to maintain women friendly approach while making policies in her Kingdom .However she realistically accepts the fact that the male chiefs never going to approve, her way of administration or cooperate her ,since they hold prejudice against her and are biased because she is a 'female regent' .Wazobia declares:

" Wazobia , have come with these feminine Fingers to embroider it (world To knit your world together. When , will men learn to Accept they cannot gain peace from war ?.I am Earth itself .Where will you move it ?(TRW 131)

When Wazobia expects men to join her in her

journey , her approach is conditioned by typical dual -sex system practice , which doesn't consider competition between men and women unhealthy .As Zulu Sofola explains:

The Yoruba proverb says, "the sky is always big enough for all birds to fly without colliding." The dual sex system in theory and practice, do exist in African society, and therefore, the man-woman relationship, like European way is not a battleground to fight to clinch some of men's power. (*Sisterhood , feminism and power* 62)

Dehumanization Of Women: Wazobia wants to get rid of outdated customs/tradition that will make women look backward and inferior. In fact Zulu Sofola, blames male centric and male- dominated European and Arab culture, for the "Dehumanization of African Women" ,since these cultures, dislodged black man and he dislodged black women ,eventually , in order to sustain and grab a position in Socio - political sense:

This demotion of African womanhood has produced the contemporary African women who are to a large extent disoriented, weakened, and rendered ineffective and irrelevant.(*Sisterhood , Feminism and Power* 52)

Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie claims Backwardness of African woman is the third mountain on African woman's back :

Her backwardness is a product of colonization and neo-colonialism , comprising poverty , ignorance and lack of a scientific attitude to experience and nature (*Re-Creating Ourselves* 35)

In the play ,at initial stages , Wazobia, takes revolutionary decision : Woman should not dance as the sex object to please men , her Queens will not kneel down like helpless creatures and no hierarchies among the.Queens. Wazobia doesn't want women to be perceived as mere object of sex and pleasure by men She announces : Dance no more !..you have been dancing to Feast the eyes of licentious men...They have used and sucked you When will you learn?(TRW 132) .She further adds her successful inking as a female regent of the kingdom proves that women are brainy and versatile and can take up any challenge successfully .

Wazobia inherits wives named: Wa , Bia, Zo and Aanehe .When Wazobia , arrives in the palace dressed in a royal regalia of the late king ,all four queens , kneels down and creep forward to attract attention and favour of the king , thrusting their dishes to serve her . However , Wazobia , ask those women to make efforts to maintain self respect, "It is no time to kneel but a time to stand ..No time to succumb but stand . It is no timer to gloat on praise , women . The task ahead calls for abstinence and sacrifice ."(TRW 143)Further Wazobia ,erases the

hierarchies among the queens, and makes all queens cook together. which, mostly displeases Anehe who is the eldest of all and fails to tolerate horizontal power sharing with younger queens. **Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie comment on the sixth mountain** on woman's back is nothing but 'herself' She adds :

Woman are shackled by their own negative self image by centuries of interiorization of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy. Their own reaction to objective problems therefore are often self defeating and self - crippling. Woman react with fear, dependency complexes and attitudes to please and cajole where more self-assertive actions are needed ...Both men and women need 'conscientisation' (*Re-Creating Ourselves* 36)

Uko claims that Wazobia, as the king certainly denies herself some traditional privileges as to change the outdated trends to bring reform in the lives of the women of Anioma Kingdom. Wazobai wish improve, "...the status of women and getting them empowered to meet the demands of their contemporary socio-political, economic and cultural realities". (*Gender and identity* 94)

Tradition: The Identity of African Igbo women can be viewed against the backdrop of the importance of traditions in their society. Uko mentions the importance of traditions in of African culture and its association with the gender.

Tradition is in active relationships with certain trends in the society, resulting in a process of symbiotic influencing between them. These trends include religion, speech patterns, gender roles and relations as well as socio-economic and political realities. By implication, tradition on the one hand determines the nature and process of operation of these trends in the society, and on the other, contemporary society activates the trends to call to question their subjectivity to tradition. ... (*Gender and Identity* 52)

In the play, Wazobia, has been accused by Omu for breaking the major tradition: Wazobia prevents all Queens (Wa,Zo, Bia and Anehe) from dancing naked in public as a part of last funeral rites. Omu, who is the "King" of all women in Ilaaa, has the responsibility of ensuring that the funeral rites are exhaustively performed by the widows. Omu, raises questions about a tradition that has been violated where the women who survive funeral rituals dance in the market place as final mark of their innocence regarding their husbands death. Further she adds a woman who dies mourning is unclean and must be left rot in the evil of forest. When chiefs the and entire kingdom awaits the women, to make their appearance at the market place, Wazobia entirely ignores them. Wazobia, doesn't want to continue a tradition that will add to the plight of a widow and

she finds it humiliation for a widow to dance naked, in public. Wazobia declares: "My women will not dance naked in public to appease the eyes of a wrathful populace. This is no era for dancing to entertain lustful eyes." (*TRW* 20) Wazobia insists that the traditions that don't pass the test of time need to be discarded and stress on rationality behind exercising any tradition: "Longevity is no measures of wisdom..." (*TRW* 142). Wazobia's contention is borne from her realization that those widows have other important roles to play and further adds: "These women have more urgent roles than such ceremonies meant to extort the very last breath, wealth and dignity from them! My women wont dance today!" (*TRW* 144) Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie claims Heritage of Tradition is the second mountain, that slows down the African woman's progress.

African women are weighted down by superstructural forms deriving from the pre-colonial past. In most African societies, whether patrilineal or matrilineal, male hierarchy, male supremacy or sex asymmetry was known ... Men are still dominant in public life. The ideology that men are naturally superior to women in essence and in all areas, affect the modern day organization of societal structures. This ideology prolongs the attitude of negative discrimination against women (*Re-Creating Ourselves* 34)

Domestic Violence In The Marriage System: Wazobia, introduces, one of the clauses in her Manifesto, that will save women who are the victim of domestic violence at the hands of their husbands. **Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie** claims the African women has been put to unjust domestic violence and deprived of her rights with in marriage system

The oppression of women within marriage takes various forms. First, the woman loses status by being married because of the indigenous system ..with marriage becomes possession; she is voiceless and often rightness in her husband's family ...she loses person freedom ..She has to submit to dominance by her husband, or face execration and blame from total society..She can win...accepting subjugation in order to 'conure' abstractly (*Re-Creating Ourselves* 75)

In one incident, Wazobia, challenges the abusive husband of a victim who under the disguise of the marriage system, beats his wife. The husband, expresses displeasure of female a regent interfering in his domestic matter and through the act of *Ikpoba*, divorces his wife, whereas, as per newly introduced, manifesto, Wazobia, declares him guilty of wife beating and asks to tender public apology. Over and above the guilty man is supported by Omu and other mal chiefs in the assembly. Tess onwueme, deliberately uses this scene to highlight the fact in

African society, women are commonly victims of horrific domestic violence and their rights are violated due to lack of protection of

Political Empowerment: Wazobia introduces, a revolutionary Manifesto which might play a major role in socio-political upliftment of women in the kingdom. **Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie**, through her speech, appeals to women to fight for their political rights.

"my mother and sisters, the great women of Nigeria ...It is time to organize, act and take part. Don't be without hope ...Don't push it all on the men and then complain later ...Learn to politicize and organize. Give each other support. ...Get into the executive and important committees of your families, neighbourhood, communities and political parties...Express and defend your own interests. Don't think men should promote you because you women are adults. We must work at what we want" .(*Re-Creating Ourselves* 167)

The Wazobia's Manifesto, eventually intends to empower women and can be considered as a stepping stone towards the political empowerment of women in Anioma Kingdom. The details of the manifesto are: The symbol of the kingdom shall be the palm tree from top to bottom has all and produce all. From leaves, to thatch to shade to brown. From fruit to wine to oil to kernel. Each part. Its own values and yet interdependent on all other parts. Secondly All women and men children must be schooled nobody should oppose other to (the process) of actualising his or her full potential. Thirdly Women will have equal representation in ruler ship. To tutor women and bring out the best of their potentials to sharpen their awareness. Fourthly Women shall have equal right of inheritance in matter of land and property. And finally Wives are not slave to man.

Uko comments that by introducing Women friendly manifesto, Wazobia, attempts to her position as female regent and her reform program also indicates she wishes to free women from the shackles of repressive and retrogressive tradition. Consequently, she rejects activities that enhance female oppression and backwardness, and through her pronouncements and actions a female image emerges that is positive, resolute, courageous and modern(*Gender and Identity* 83)

In another incidence, Wazobia, expects women to contribute to state building and believes, "...Matter of state affects them much (Women & youth) as they affect chiefs and princes..." (TRW149) and therefore she allows women and youths to attend the intellectual meeting to share thoughts on the rules of governance, even though, Iyase, Omu and other male chiefs object this decision, because Iyase

believes "serious matters of state concern are too heavy for the brittle heads of women and children"(TRW 148). **Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie** observes that even women themselves don't support women, especially in politics, out of the fear of offending their masters.

Some women would argue that women withdraw from politics because they are shy of public criticism and would wish to avoid rough and tumble of politics ...Women become their own worst enemies and the worst enemies of other women in their effort to please males (*Re-Creating Ourselves* 79-80)

Male Domination: Wazobia, appeals to women, including Omu, to spot potentiality and be productive to become emotionally and economically independent. **Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie** discusses that the Fifth mountain on the back of African woman is 'man' that obstructs women's progress with his centuries old patriarchal society and urges 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)

When Wazobia, decides to save Omu from the "intellectual menopause" (TRW 154) she proceeds to promote, Tess Onwueme's message of need of "United sisterhood" for African women. Wazobia explains to Omu, that she is Queen and mother of tribe / first among women. She is a role model and caretakers and others are her 'children'. Further she adds that Omu is a powerful woman and she has potential to motivate other women to facilitate their mind and energy in the productive activities rather than living as shadow of men. She asks Omu to act as it is the right time when women need to be treated as an individual and not mere as slave or sex object. She says women are human beings, too and they should be given opportunity to spot own potential and develop themselves into independent personalities. Wazobia suggests for women to live with dignity and respect.

"For long, men have had the baths with the tears of your daughters ... Look around you, Omu! Women have ears. ...Who among you can weave?(some rise hands)Go take your loom and weave. Who among

you can trade (Other raise their hands) Go weave to cover us from our nakedness. And so on and so on With o without man, make meaning to your life" (TRW 154)

Uko observes that through Wazobia, Onwueme as a writer, appeals women the need to be economically independent.:

Wazobia's self-awareness and self assertiveness make her recognize the apparent poor conditions of women in Illaaa. The women's poor condition manifest in female ignorance ..(she advocates) hoe to use hands meaningfully with or without men for economic venture. This ensure the dignity of womanhood. By advocating economic independence for women, Onwueme, through Wazobia, responds to African woman's plight of economical exploitation and marginalization which are used by men to perpetuate female inferiority and debasement (Gender and Identity 100)

Omu realises the value of united sisterhood and she agrees with Wazobia. In fact, later she admits that Wazobia helped to open up her eyes: "Unit our great king opened my eyes, Is not aware what heat women steamed in.. you women Together join hands..." (TRW 166) Uko comments on the transition takes place in Omu's approach:

In several ways, Onwueme indicates that one has to be painstaking to effect this transition and subsequent change as Wazobia does in Omu. Alternatively, knowledge acquisition and positive change may be independently achieved within a woman after her exposure to crucial issues or problems which question or seek to justify the validity of existing ethos'. (Gender and Identity 102)

Womanism: Both female characters, Wazobia and Omu stand for the power of, what Alice Walker proposes: "womanism"; where women assist each other for their upliftment. Alice Walker in her work *In Search of our Mothers Garden*, 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

At the end of the play, Omu senses Iyase, Idhen and Anehe, conspire to dethrone Wazobia. Iyasá

prejudices against women are exposed when he declares:

"...The Wa-zo-bia, the new disease that plagues us as ...The new wine that intoxicates, sending our women to run amok on the streets, throwing their dignity behind. ...this new tail or wing by women must be clipped, least they take a flight and soar above us, their head We are the head, Women can never rule us.." (TRW 158)

Iyase has plans to manipulate the collective will of the people and in return people

will force Wazobia to step down. While demanding Wazobia to step down, people will present her 'with steaming herb in a pot'. This act mean 'a vote of no confidence on the king'. It is also considered as a subtle piece of such a ling to disappear into the evil forest. In such case the king has only two options, "either proceed to self-exile or commit suicide: "Either way Wazobia will receive a high gift from the people" (TRW 164)

Omu owns, her awareness of woman empowerment to Wazobia. Omu ask women to be courageous and determined like Wazobia and use all 'force' to sabotage the evil conspiracy against her: "...Wazobia is us. We are wazobia Together we stand... Match force with force. Together, join hands" (TRW 166). She explains women to cover Wazobia in a moon shape and they lie in ambush, surrounding the throne of Wazobia. When men arrive to dethrone Wazobia, the women will salute the men in 'naked legion' i.e in 'natural state' as it is been ages together if women had, had a naked dance. This naked dance is last weapon to be used against men if they force women in the corner. Omu justifies her decisions to use 'nakedness' as the last weapon because "Unusual problem demands, unusual solutions" (TRW 167). And if they force Wazobia to sacrifice, women will attack them. This strategy works as Wazobia is saved by Omu. Uko comments that Wazobia's effort to educate women to work hard toward the united sisterhood pay off and it also led to simultaneously "evolving and legitimizing viable paradigms to end sexual reductionism among the people" (Gender and Identity 102)

Conclusion: The paper concludes that for the empowerment of womanhood, women need to be given space in their social as well as political sphere. When such space is not allowed to women, fighting for the right is the only solution. Women are in a position to exercise. To fight against exploitative agencies, women need to come together. Their collectively power becomes an advantage to achieve social as well as economic empowerment. Tess Onwueme, through the character of Wazobia, a frenzied 'She King', offers a role model to fellow African Igbo women who are hardly having access to sources to

liberate themselves from restricted social and political norms in Anioma kingdom. If not all fellow women, at least Wazobia, manages to convince her mission and approach to Omu, the 'King among women', since she is also one of the politically influential figure in the kingdom. However, since women are already bogged down by certain expectations and social as well as traditional

norms, very few women are privileged to enjoy such space that give them plenty of opportunities to exploit their potentials to achieve economic and political power. Male-dominated society hardly provides the support system to women to boost their potential, under such scenario, it is vital for women to support each other's causes and fight unitedly against exploitative agencies.

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