
**PORTRYAL OF WOMEN IN TESS ONWUEME'S THREE
DRAMAS: *THE BROKEN CALABASH* , *THE REIGN OF
WAZOBIA* AND *TELL IT TO WOMEN***

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Abstract: This paper provides a critical overview of the treatment of the questions of identity and survival of African Igbo woman in socio political sphere which are reflected in the Afro -American dramatist Osonye Tess Onwueme 's three dramas: *The Broken Calabash*, *The Reign Of Wazobia* and *Tell It to Women* ,respectively. The issues of identity and survival are explored against the back drop of the African Igbo tradition like *Idegbe* system (woman marriage), Igbo cosmology , political rivalries and finally, intra-gender clashes between the rural women and their city counterpart. The critical question raised in theses dramas, is where do African Igbo women position themselves in their society when they are forced to follow outdated traditions , deprived of socio-political rights and eventually , expected to copy the westernised notion of feminism .These dramas suggests that the traditions that almost fail to stand the test of time , shouldn't be forced on any human being. Further, it urge the necessity of awareness among the African women about their socio-political rights .The paper discusses the authors emerging consciousness that appeals to bring the radical socio-political changes in the society that would offer space to African women in order to exercise their freewill in social , political and cultural domain, respectively. The paper further analyses the presentation of the female characters in all these three dramas and study the strategies the women characters follow,at individual as well as collective level , in order to solve the problems they face in their immediate environment . Most of the female character fight ,frenziedly against the exploitative agencies : Ona, from *The Broken Calabash* challenges patriarchal system , Wazobia from *The Reign Of Wazobia* demands more political rights for women whereas in the *Tell It TO Women* we come across intra- gender clashes among two sets of female characters : *Daisy* , *Ruth* from the city and *Yamoja* , *Adaku* , *Tolu* etc from the rural world, respectively. All these women characters offer the Igbo women's perspective on post colonial Africa's corrupt socio-political system. The paper conclude that the dramas offers solution by suggesting that the educated Igbo women can not have freedom of will or gain socio-politically unless the dominant exploitative agencies are tackled , diplomatically . African society needs to bend rigid norms to offer liberty and space to their women so that they carve their own course of lives . Through out the paper , *The Broken*

Calabash, The Reign Of Wazobia and Tell It to Women are abbreviated as *TBC*, *TRW* and *TTW* ,respectively.

Keywords: *De-womanization, Dual sex system, Idegbe ,Motherhood ,Tradition*

Introduction: Tess Onwueme belongs to Igbo community in Nigeria and she is one of the leading Nigerian female dramatists who writes women centric plays . Eugene B Redmond calls her ‘an African – Nigerian –Igbo – woman – feminist – artist ‘(Onwueme 16). Her plays ,strictly, reflect critical perspective of post colonial Nigerian women on corrupt socio-political system. Tess Onwueme’s drama book, ‘*Three plays*’ (1993) to which Eugene B.Redmond calls ‘she – King Trilogy’(Onwueme 15) is compilation of her three dramas: *The Broken Calabash Broken Calabash, Parable for a Season* and *The Reign Of Wazobia*, respectively . *The Broken Calabash* deals with the theme of African women’s subjugation in the name of outdated tradition whereas the play ,*The Reign of Wazobia* deals with Anioma Kingdom’s feminist sovereign Wazobia and her army of female bodies who fight for the socio-political empowerment of women ;thereby justifying the need of united sisterhood Her another play *Tell It to Women* depicts the intra- gender clashes between the rural women and city counterpart .It focuses on the Igbo cosmology and the futility behind applying the westernised notion of feminism for the upliftment of African women .In all these three dramas, the dramatist deliberately portrays her women characters as socio- politically conscious figures. These female characters fight , frenziedly against the exploitative agencies in order to find the solution to the problems ,they face in their immediate environment. Dramatist 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 .”(Uko 43) . In an interview , Tess Onwueme states : ‘We live in a society where women have it hard. Their lives are manipulated by others’(Uko 271)

In this paper we propose to have critical overview of the dramatist’s treatment of the question of the African Igbo woman’s position and identity in a society which deprives her of socio- political rights .The paper analyses prominent female characters from the three dramas: *The Broken Calabsh ,The Reign Of Wazobia* and *Tell it women*, respectively and attempts are made to study the strategies they follow in order to solve their socio-political problems. Through out the paper , *The Broken Calabash, The Reign Of Wazobia and Tell It to Women* are abbreviated as *TBC*, *TRW* and *TTW* ,respectively .Although the discussion treats the topics separately , in the dramas , they are integrated as a part of the organic whole.

In the drama *The Broken Calabash* Tess Onwueme presents a female protagonist Ona, a teenager girl who challenges the outdated tradition of *Idegbe*. Ona, the only daughter of Courtuma and Oliaku belongs to Igbo community and her parents who are in real sense clinging to old traditions and custom are seen to be exercising Christianity, superficially. Ona has been exposed to modern education. However, her parents fear modern education might make their daughter emotionally independent and she will not oblige the traditions. This fear is reflected when Courtuma says, “Ona has acquired the white man’s knowledge and wisdom ...But at times, our customs are, too entrenched, too old to bend or be married to the new ways ..”(TBC 34). Out of fear Courtuma controls Ona’s social life, restricts her religious choices and prohibits her from wearing modern clothes. Courtuma, flatly refuses to offer his daughter’s hand in marriage to her lover Diaku and brings bad omen by breaking auspicious *Calabash* offered during this meet. Courtuma declares his daughter cannot marry Diaku because she is an *Idegbe*.

IDEGBE: As per *Idegbe* tradition, a girl as only child must either be kept at home as *Idegbe* to bear children for her father or marry a wife to propagate that line. Ona, being Courtuma and Oliaku’s only child, she needs to follow the tradition of *Idegbe* to keep the family tree (parent tree) alive. Ona has a choice: A choice to bear children for her father alone or marry a wife who can help bear children to multiply the stock. She can neither marry nor bear children for any other man. Osony Tess Onwueme comments on this tradition:

This (*Idegbe*) status makes enormous demands on the daughter because she is expected to perform several male roles in the family and the whole society also recognizes her dual identity (Uko 257)

Victor Uchnendu (1979) comments on the importance of the *Idegbe* tradition or woman marriage in the Igbo community:

Woman marriage is a recognised Igbo institution by which women can validate status in the society. Under this system, women “marry” in their own right by paying the bride wealth and have right to dispose of their rights in their brides. (50)

It is unfortunate that Ona’s parents do not give Ona any choice of her own and pressurize her to follow *Idegbe* traditions. Ona refuses so exercise a custom which degrades a woman by forcing her to behave like a prostitute. She, ironically challenges the moral fibre of the society which sanctions such prostitution in the name of customs and traditions. She declares:

“Let the wind blow -let the shaky homestead be blown. Anything that can not stand the force of change must be uprooted or be blown into oblivion by the storm heralding the new seasons. !”(TBC 56)

Ona, further doesn’t have liberty to father her lover, Diaku’s child because, Diaku belongs to Osu community which is looked down upon as low caste

among African communities and there is fear of carrying forward the lineage with impure blood. The tragedy with African girls are, in any given social set up, they are not allowed to think independently as Osony Tess Onwueme (1993) mentions Gay Wilentz observation:

[A]lthough the women are in charge of education and initiation of young girls into adulthood, they are not free ... Upholders of traditions, they are compelled to act 'in line with past practice' (Abraham 4) whether they agree with custom or not. In a dual sex role culture, this aspect of women's responsibility in one which demands great respect from the society .. (Umeth 310)

Ona completely breaks down when her lover Diaku marries to her best friend, Ugo, Ona is convinced that her father has caused all the miseries in her life. She implicates Courtuma, holding him responsible for her pregnancy. Shocked Courtuma begs for mercy, but ultimately, he is being expelled from the community. Ona's act to implicate her father is nothing but her way of rebelling against the patriarchal Igbo society. Ona's fight can be justified with the comment by Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie (1993) who considers the 'man' as the fifth mountain on African women's back. This 'man' symbolizes burdening women with his centuries old patriarchal social norms. Mqlara Ogundipe -Leslie further urges women to fight against it and she notes:

...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 ... 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. (36)

If Ona, in *The Broken Calabash*, fights against the outdated tradition at individual level, Wazobia, in the drama *The Reign Of Wazobia*, fights with her gang of women, collectively to gain socio-political rights. Wazobia is educated and socio-politically conscious, elected female regent (King - surrogate) to the throne of *Ilaaa* in Anioma Kingdom. She encourages women to be united, to educate themselves, to spot own potentials, and exercise their energy towards self-reliance to earn self respect and live with dignity. Fortunately, Omu, the King of Women and other women, too, supports Wazobia; urging for the need of united sisterhood to fight against agencies that attempt to marginalize women socially as well politically. Tess Onwueme claims that *The Reign Of Wazobia*, "is a historical fact", since 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 for a variety of rituals for three years" (Uko 251-252). She also claims to be inspired by real

life story of a newly elected , educated modern and westernized female regent in Yoruba land who once caused uproar in the society because she ignored the traditions and her role as a female regent which she was expected to play as per the pre-established norms .

Wazobia, is elected female king –surrogate who is supposed to rule only for three seasons , until new male king is crowned .However, Wazobia doesn't want to quit so early and she intends to exercise her political power for the upliftment of the women in her kingdom. The male chiefs lyase eyes the throne who presents Wazobia a steaming pot with the burning herbs with an intention to dethrone her (This act conveys a message to step down). But Wazobia is hard nut to crack and determines not to give up so easily as she insists : “Three seasons Wazobia has reignedand men are sweating in their anuses... I , Wazobia , Will show them That women bear elephant tusk... I am the Earth itself ...I, Wazobia , have tasted power and will not go”(*TRW* 130-131)

Tradition: In the drama, Wazobia, takes revolutionary decisions for the welfare of women in general : First, she decides that that women should not dance as the sex objects to please men. Wazobia believes that her successful inning as a female regent of the kingdom proves that women are brainy and versatile and can take up any challenge, successfully .In her second decision , she asks all four queens(Wa,Zo, Bia and Anehe) to live with self respect than to creep next to Female regent to attract her attention and favor of the king “It is no time to kneel but a time to stand .. The task ahead calls for abstinence and sacrifice .”(*TRW* 143) .She decides to erase the hierarchies among queens and ask them to cook together to bring harmony among themselves. In her third decision ,Wazobia allows women and youth to attend the intellectual meeting to share thoughts on the rules of governance ,since she believes that matter of state affect women and youth much as they affect the princes. In her fourth decision, she introduces a *Manifesto* which could be considered as a stepping stone towards the political empowerment of women in Anioma Kingdom and further , she even punishes an abusive husband, adhering to the said manifesto . This women centric Manifesto declares : All women and men children must be schooled nobody should oppose other to (the process) of actualizing his or her full potential . Women will have equal representation in ruler ship. Women will be tutored to bring out the best of their potentials to sharpen their awareness. Women shall have equal right of in heritance in natter of land and property and finally Wives are not slave to man. According to Uko (2004) 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 .(94).Mqlara Ogundipe –Leslie comment(1998) on the sixth mountain on woman's back is nothing but 'herself'. She notes :

Woman are shackled by their own negative self image by centuries of interiorization of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy .. Woman react with fear , dependency complexes and attitudes to please and cajole where more self-assertive actions are needed ...(36)

Further ,Wazobia challenges the publicly celebrated tradition where widowed queens are supposed to dance naked in the market place as final mark of their innocence regarding their husbands death . When chiefs and the entire kingdom awaits the women, to make their appearance at the market place, Wazobia prevents all Queens (Wa,Zo, Bia and Anehe) from dancing naked in public as a part of last funeral rites . 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 wants to eliminate , outdated customs/tradition that would position women in society as inferior and backward group . Mqlara Ogundipe –Leslie (1988)claims the third mountain on African woman’s back is her ‘backwardness’ : “Her backwardness is a product of colonization and neo-colonialism , comprising poverty , ignorance and lack of a scientific attitude to experience and nature”. (35) 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. Wazobia’s decision challenges , the traditions that don’t pass the test of time need to be discarded.She insists to Omu that those widows have other important roles to play: “ Longevity is no measures of wisdom ...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 142)Mqlara Ogundipe –Leslie claims (1998) heritage of Tradition is the second mountain ,that slows down the African woman’s progress.

African women are weighted down by super structural forms deriving from the pre-colonial past in most African societies , whether patrilineal or matrilineal , male hierarchy , male supremacy or sex asymmetry was known The ideology that men are naturally superior to women This ideology prolongs the attitude of negative discrimination against women (34)

Wazobia, decides to save Omu from the “intellectual menopause” (TRW 154) and she proceeds to promote, Tess Onwueme’s message of the urgency of “United sisterhood” for African women’s upliftment . Wazobia explains to Omu , that she is the Queen, the mother of tribe / first among women and most powerful women around , in traditional sense , who is in position to motivate her fellow women Her fellow women look up to her as their role model .Omu should facilitate the minds and energy of fellow women in the productive activities rather than living as shadow of men.Wazobia says: “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 (2004) that through the character portrayal of Wazobia, Onwueme as a writer urges women 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) how 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.(100)

Omu realises the value of united sisterhood and thanks Wazobia for opening her eyes: “our... great king opened my eyes , Is not aware what heat women steamed in.. .you women Together join hands...” (*TRW* 166) .At the end of the play ,Omu senses Iyase , Idhen and Anehe , conspire to dethrone Wazobia. Omu determines to save Wazobia and asks her women to be courageous like her and use all ‘ force’ to sabotage the evil conspiracy against their King : “..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 the ‘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 (Iyase , Idhen and their men)force Wazobia to sacrifice , women will attack them. This strategy works and 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”(102).

In the drama ,*Tell It to Women* , Tess Onwueme , brings the light upon the intra – gender conflicts between educated city women and their rural counterpart .Daisy and Ruth both are city women whereas Sherifat ,Yemoja, Tolu ,Adaku , Ajaka etc are the groups of rural women .In the post –colonial Nigeria, the city women are fortunate enough to have access to western education and as a result they are holding higher positions as professors , officers etc .In the drama, Daisy holds a government post; though married ,she shares lesbian relationship with Ruth who is a single and an academician .

Both consider themselves “torchbearers of sisterhood”(TTW 54) but ,unfortunately they are pretentious and fake . They are assigned to introduce a Government approved programme to Idu rural women .This programme is called, ‘Better Life For Rural Women’ which intends ,to bring “comfort ,laughter and power (to rural women)....” by offering , “ all the modern appliances that lighten the burden of womanhood”(TTW 47); since it guarantees rural women access to electricity ,air conditioner, refrigerator , gas cooker etc. Rural women ,too wants to benefit out o f this program and wish to “long for stars...” (TTW 29) .Molara Ogundipe-Leslie posits out that rural women want power, wealth and status like the men. She wants to ride a car rather than walk; use plastics or metal instead of calabashes; use a gas or electric stove instead of firewood, despite all our middle class nostalgia for that past.(Uko 112). The Idu village women choose Yamoja, a semi –educated women to be sent to the city for further training who will serve as liaison officer between government and as the representative of rural women for women. Later ‘Better Life For Rural Women’ programme is supposed to be launched in the city by the wife of the President who is the champion of women’s cause.

Motherhood

The intra -gender clashes between rural and city women take place because of the cultural differences among both the parties .For instance, Adaku is angry to find, ignorant Diasy and Ruth use English to explain the government scheme to rural women than speaking in indigenous tongue. Further ,Ruth read out readymade speech in English which shows she lacks spontaneity to connect with rural women . Ruth hardly cares when Yamoja fails to translate her heavy and fast English in indigenous tongue for rural women . Ignorant about Igbo cosmology , Daisy in her speech asks rural women to follow the western radical feminist notions to progress in their lives and insists in her speech “... (to) leave husband and go to school...(your) lives can be fulfilled outside motherhood ...Mothering should be matter of choice ”(TTW 48). Ruth, too talks of taking power from men and giving it to women .Daisy and Ruth both fail to understand the fact that their that the western notion of feminism is not at all suitable in the African rural socio-political situation .Rural women disagree with Diay and Ruth .For the women of Idu, *motherhood* is not simply something imposed on them by men but a means of providing access to power that men can never claim. .Adaku insists for women who “....motherhood is the ultimate power..”, since woman is in a position to, “create and carry another life”, unlike men who are ,“outsiders in the process of giving birth”(TTW 36) . Adaku criticizes the modern woman’s attitude of rejecting the right of ‘motherhood’: “ I wish someone could tell them that they do not need to crush the life eggs that gives them the power of womanhood” (TTW 36) 161) .

Adaku further stresses the fact that there is no need to snatch away power from men and give it to women since Idu women, already have power and they are, in fact badly in need of another power i.e. “power of money”(TTW 37). Ajaka finds modern woman ‘strange;’ who are ‘no longer woman... (and) try to be men”(TTW 174). Adaku accuses modern woman for her ‘atrocities’ like aborting children, tearing family apart, dominating the men etc. and she further adds: “Modern women burn their men, bury them alive! And they think this is what give them power”(TTW 166). Tolu criticizes modern women for ‘brandishing a pen and using it to poke the eyes and the faces of men’ (TTW 177) and calls these women underdeveloped and illiterate for considering “motherhood burdensome. Carol Byce Davies (1986) brings light upon the importance of *motherhood* in African culture.

In many African societies *motherhood defines womanhood*. Motherhood is then crucial to woman’s status in African society. To marry and mother a child [a son preferably], entitles a woman to more respect from her husband’s kinsmen for she can now be addressed as “Mother of _____”

Further he quotes Steady as below:

The most important factor with regards to the woman in traditional society is her role as mother and the centrality of this role as a whole. Even in strictly patrilineal societies, women are important as wives as mothers since their reproductive capacity is crucial to the maintenance of husband’s lineage and it is because of women that man can have a patrilineal at all. The importance of motherhood and the evaluation of the childbearing capacity by African women and her western counterparts in their common struggle to end discrimination against women (1981: 1-4)

Dual Sex System

Diasy’s mother-in-law Sherifat, sees the world as complementary, with male and female relations as part of a whole. Daughters are named *Nnebueze* (explains Daughters have immense Mother is supreme), *Nwayibuife* (The female is something precious). The sons are also named as *Okeibunor* (A male child is the root of the homestead). The female child is supposed to branch out elsewhere as a male child is considered the root of the family. Further this principle of life is best articulated by Sherifat when she explains:

“...We see the world in circles: male is male and female is female. No one can take the place of another; no one is greater than another. Their value is not measured in terms of greater or lesser value. Each one is priceless in the order of things. Each one is part of the other, male and female. It is not a matter of male or female. ...Maize cannot take the place of yam in the cooking pot. And yam cannot take the place of maize. Each one has its own place and value in the barn” (TTW 126)

Zulu Sofola in her article “Feminism And Africa Womanhood ”(Nnaemeka ,1998) comment on Dual Sex System that gives women space in socio-political fields in African lives :

Consequently , the woman has always had a vital place in the scheme of things within the African cosmology, ...dual sex system of socio-political power sharing fully developed by African people and based on following perceptions of womanhood : (1) as the divine equal of man in essence (2) as a Daughter (3) as a Mother , (4) as a wife ...In traditional Africa there exists a dual sex system in theory and in practice from the smallest family unit to the governing council of the kingdom .Consequently , both male and female citizens have parallel channels for self – expression , self – realization and relevance on all levels .It is not battle ground whereat women fights to clinch some of ‘ men’s power ’.Foreign culture have both ignited and fuelled a perpetuated gender conflict that has now poisoned the erstwhile healthy social of traditional Africa(54-62)

Daisy is obsessed with the western notion of feminism. ,Diasy’s husband ridicules her for replacing “ bookish sense of wisdom” with the “common sense” and choking her family with the western notion of feminism . He asks her to know about her own people and their culture before joining the “ feminist bandwagon”(TTW 92.) When Okil questions Daisy to identify her actual enemy against who she wishes to wage the war , she fumbles. Okie further informs Daisy that the binary logic of Either/OR is not applicable in the Idu world/Igbo Cosmology :“(in Idu world)where everything is : man AND woman , good AND evil , night AND day etc ...rural women wont let you take them for ride ‘(TTW 93)

Clenora Hudson – Wheems in her article entitled “African Womanism”(Nnaemeka ,1998) explains the dynamics of the relationship between Africana men and women claming Africana men and women and does not view the former as the enemy of the latter and she quotes Africana sociologist Joyce Ladner as below : “ Black women do not perceive their enemy to be black men ,but rather the enemy is considered to be oppressive forces in the larger society which subjugate black men , women and children”(Lander 1972:277-78)

De-Womanization :

It is said that the beginning of the *de-womanization* of African womanhood started with introduction of western education with its philosophy of gender bias.Zulu Sofola in her article “Feminism And Africa Womanhood ” (Nnaemeka 1998), quotes Sudarkasa , Niara to comments on *de-womanization* of African womanhood:

The first level of damage was done when the female lines of authority and socio- political power were destroyed and completely eliminated by the

foreign Europeans/ Arabian male – centered system of authority and governance... then, in quick succession , three of four realities of African womanhood – her reality as a woman , the equal of a man in essence ; her reality as a daughter ; and her reality as a mother –were drastically reduced , giving way to the prominence of her reality as wife ..Consequently , she developed an incurable dependence and inferiority complex that had not existed when her active and relevant existence in the other three realities had balanced the fourth reality of wifehood. Gradually she grew to be irrelevant , ineffective radiant and dull..'(1987: 25-42)

The urban women , despite , education and exposure look down upon the rural women. Chosen by Idu village, Yamoja, considers it as a golden opportunity to carve her own identity, and ultimately guide her fellow women .In fact she fights against her husband and parents to join Ruth and Daisy .Ironically, Daisy and Ruth both look down upon Yemoja because she is just another rural woman for them . Daisy perceives Yemoja, just another 31 years of maids and humiliates her calling 'Empress of Gutter" and a 'dense, thick – headed..(women)easier to manage"(TTW 69). Daisy calls rural women 'backward babies' and 'baby factories' . Yamoja is supposed to follow few rules in Daisy's house like :Yamoja should get up 3am in the morning everyday, she should start her day by ironing Daisy's daughter , Bose's clothes and her husbands 'clothes .Later Yamoja should clean entire house,Yamoja should cook breakfast on time and never be late. She should also set the table for Daisy and her family .Yamoja should ,strictly wash her hands while cooking the food.Yamoja's duty is to cook the meal .Never she should 'steal" the meal.Yemoja has been told never to touch Daisy's food.Yemoja shouldn't piss in Daisy's toilet.Yamoja shouldn't touch the food with her fingers because as per Daisy's observation Yamoja is used to dig her nose with her fingers, .Daisy will always dish out the food for Yamoja and finally Only Daisy will dish out the food for other family members and not Yamoja .

Daisy's constant 'dressing down' breaks Yamoja's confidence.. Yemoja's dreams of 'strength in sisterhood' , 'oneness', and 'equality of men and women' are shattered and she feels disconnected to herself like a 'newly relocated hen"(TTW 98). She loses her pride , self esteem and concludes "...the city takes away the power of women." (TTW 101). She questions to Idu women later on : "Have we not gained new master , deceptively speaking in feminine voices and all in the name of Liberation (TTW 207) Yemoja claims that 'Better life' for rural women, in real sense is possible only when city people would restrict themselves by offering infrastructure to rural people without imposing their ideology on them and damaging the indigenous culture . Sherifat explains to Yemoj that the village women don't need to copy blindly the lives of city women but stick to their own life pattern /ideology :. " What we need to live is

not their life , but our own...better life means where we have a hold ,not where we remain strangers and objects to be ordered around at the will of others” (TTW 102) .Obima Nnaemeka(1998) quotes Zulu Sofola’s comment on *dewomanization* of African women :

..often , when one hears the western - educated African woman speak in a demeaning manner about her illiterate , rural , “ traditional ” counterpart , one cannot help but pity the former for her false sense of importance and delusion of grandeur. It never occurs to her that while she parrots the phrase , “ what a man can do , a woman can do better ,” her illiterate counterpart asserts : “ What a woman can do , a man cannot do .” While she quotes the European saying , “ Behind every successful man is a woman”, her illiterate counterpart affirms : “ The strength of a man is in his woman ”, or “ A soldier with a mother does not die at the war front ” . While she conceives of herself as someone to be seen not heard ; her illiterate counterpart says : “ If the (*daughter*) says that a day – old chick is a hen , so it is ” While she hangs on to a wicked and bestial husband , her illiterate counterpart throws such a husband off in the spirit of the following proverb : “ The burden of a husband is carried on the wife’s shoulder ,not on her head ; she quickly drops it when it becomes unbearable (12)

Rural women believe that their empowerment is possible only If they stick to their own wisdom , real life experiences (not bookish knowledge as Adaku insists) . Rural women don’t want to follow city counterpart, blindly ,but wish to take what is best for them as Tolu suggests to fellow women that they should “take the meat and eggs and throw away the rest”(48) Adaku believes Rural women shouldn’t have inferiority complex: “ We to have our wisdom .We have our powers .We have our own magic!” (TTW 175). Ajaka believes it is equally important even for rural folks to be given an opportunity to share their knowledge with modern world. : “These people need to be told what we know where we are and then they , can meet us somewhere. We cannot just be running after them” (TTW 157). Tolu realizes that the urban as well as the rural worlds have so many things to exchange and enrich each other’s world and that way life would be better in real sense. She says :

“I think what we are looking for is.. is to add the wisdom of the new people to our own. You know to get richer... in wisdom... That is THE BETTER LIFE! Not wiping out .But adding ...adding new things to our life...not taking away the good things we already have for mere promises of value that is not yet tested ...” (TTW 179)

The rural women fail to connect with city counterparts as Yamoja declares to Idu women “ ... it is clear to us that oil and water cannot blend”(TTW 187) .

Rural women expose the futility of feminism propagated by city counterpart, in following way:

Yamoja : ... We are the story that must be told ...“ if you say ‘ yes’ your Chi says “yes”..They can take all else but not our drums ..

Sherifat: We are the Earth ...I mean we are part of the Earth and the Earth is part of us .

Adaku: ...They say you are nothing .But you know you are jewel of the land ...They say you are suppressed but you know you are the salt of the land ...But they say you lack power ...Earth is women .Woman is power ...

Yemoja: ..We where is the freedom modern women promise? have a place .Lets us return to Idu....where is the power in jungle city .. .where you lose your tongue and others speak for you (200-209)

In the he last scene of the drama Rural women change the performance into their New Yam festival and enact the appropriate ritual drumming rather than doing some artificial marching . Theses women know when “Times are hard and treacherous..”. (TTW 184) ; they need to be strong .The female characters Sherifat , Tolue Ajaka and Yamoja drum for women to express their strength . Their drumming echoes the real strength of sisterhood. Ruth and Daisy both are seen to be confused and scared to see the drumming and dancing of rural women during the programme. In fact ,Daisy tries to interfere when she is aghast to see her little daughter Bose carrying an effigy and dancing with rural women . However, that is how , at the ,end rural women prefer to dance on their own tune rather than taking instructions from the city women .

Conclusion:

In the ala three three dramas :*The Broken Calabash, The Reign Of Wazobia and Tell It to Women* ,respectively, Tess Onwueme’s female character are unapologetic about their reaction or strategies to find solution to their problems .Whether its Ona’s individual struggle to find her identity and her revengeful act against her father , or Wazobia’s political diplomacy or Idu rural women’s show of the strength of the ‘United sisterhoods’, respectively ; all these women represent the modern day perspective of African women in post colonial world .These women deliberately, create and maintain space in social as well as in political sphere to live with dignity .

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