



## **‘Dialecticology’: Gendered Language in Elechi Amadi’s Fiction, *The Slave***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Dialectics is viewed by the philosophers as the art of debate used in eliciting positive ‘truths’ and also as a process of negative criticism. Literary artists believe that there is no art for art’s sake’ and that all art is propaganda but all propaganda not art. A marriage of the philosophers’ and the literary artists’ posture which views dialectics as ‘a choice art of debate’ is the premise on which this paper examines the vexed issue of gender in Elechi Amadi’s *The Slave*. This paper posits that Amadi’s dialectics which is his choice ‘art of debate’ in his fiction, *The Slave* uses the female gender as the artist’s ‘slave’. She is used to advance the plot as she is placed at the centre of the disorder that assails the man, the male gender. If the primary destination of the serious African artist is the master craftsmanship that has a regenerative value Ayi Kwei Armah (1984:35), the literary artistry needs deliberately to give a regenerative value to the oppressed sex on the literary tradition.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Literary artists hold firmly that all art is propaganda but not all propaganda is art. Literary artistry is also not conceived in a voidance but is relative, and even to some extent to the societal experiences. Literature thus possesses the ‘Soul’ of the society (made of male and female) and is a product of social experience. From the foregoing, there is no ‘art for art’s sake’, a stance this paper assumes in exploring the title ‘*Dialecticology*’ and gender in Elechi Amadi’s novel, *The Slave*.

Dialectics according to philosophers has to do with logic, a method of eliciting positive ‘truths’, and as a process of negative criticism. However, Dialectics in this paper is viewed as a preferred ‘discourse’ (the choice ‘art of debate’) of the literary artist in question.

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With Literature as a creative writing in which the activities of men are explored, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981:7) opines that:

Literature as a representative discourse and politics as an institution and social process present has a relationship (for they) are reflected in one another.

From the last quotation, Literature is a representative discourse of 'politicking' and socializing views that may become institutionalized and which might become a tradition in favour of disfavor of people concerned. Armed with this understanding, this paper agrees with Ayi Kwei Armah (1984:35) in his expectations of the literary artists in the following lines:

the prime destiny of the serious African artist (is) to combine the craft of creativity with the search for regenerative values.

If the serious African artist is charged with the craft of creativity for regenerative purposes, then the interest of this paper is pepped up to secure a regenerative value for the female gender in *The Slave*.

**The society's decorum and modus operandi**

Elechi Amadi's *The Slave* has as a background and African (Eastern Nigerian) environment, Aliji. The vexed issue is that of legitimacy of a child in the society as prescribed by tradition. Olumati, the tragic hero is the vehicle that conveys the issue home to the reader. Amadi draws a lot from the rich traditions of folklore, riddles and proverbs to dramatize the ruggedness of the road to intra and inter personal harmony of a ma as a microcosm of a whole community. Amadi thus builds the story around Olumati, a 'slave' after whom the novel derives its title. Olumati is caught up in the society's narrow conventional codes which define legitimacy of existence on the basis of where a man is born and/or whose ancestry could be traced back to the fourth generation.

Before he fled to the shrine, Osimini (Olumati's father) had a daughter, Aleru. While at the shrine he had a son, Olumati. *Now by custom this son is also a slave of Amadioha*. He cannot be anywhere else except at Isiali where he is expected to serve at the shrine. (TS. P. 25).

The above quotation castigates Olumati and serves as an undercurrent within which Olumati swims in Aliji, and explains his consequent flight to 'where he rightly belongs' (the shrine of Amadioha). Custom wins, as Amadi celebrates the Africanness. The society of Aliji is divided into the Free-born and the slave (Osu). The concept of Osu, the best bed fellow of leprosy, cuts deep like cankerworm into Olumati's socio-economic and psychological life conniving to eject him out of the society. By virtue of the setting, the author

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puts Olumati in, he is ill-equipped for the socio-political pressure of the Aliji environment Encompassed by contradictions, arising from his birth place. Olumati effort at settling in Aliji is tantamount to 'the fluttering of the feathers of the chicken after its slaughter' (TGP. P. 162).

Olumati could not clear himself from the slave issue as the wars fought before his birth claimed the lives of many of those who would have attested to his true background.

Many years ago, slave raiders swooped on Echela village (Olumati's) one rainy night and carried off many members of that family... Only Wakwakata, the spider, then the champion wrestler in Aliji, and a few other members of the family survived the raid... when Wakwakata and his wife Nyege (Olumati's grandmother)... and a few other members of Echela family returned several years later, they were feeling very angry, and who could blame them? All families in Aliji sympathized with them and did everything to help them... 'Suddenly, for reasons no one knew, the few members of Echela who had returned began to sicken and die fast. Soon only Wakwakata, his wife Nyege, their son Osimini and their daughter-in-law Ndem (Olumati's parent) were left. When Wakwakata died suddenly, Osimini became so frightened that he sought refuge at the shrine of Amadioha at Isiali. As you know, having taken this step, only a ransom could release him from the shrine. Nyege was very sick at the time, so no one paid the ransom. After one year, Osimini became a slave of Amadioha, an Osu, according to custom (TS pp 24-25).

The above narration sanctioned Olumati's existence in Aliji.

The war in *The Slave* is between the two big families of Echela and Okani. The enmity and consequent wars and raids between the Echela and the Okani families were as Echela does even when divination proves otherwise. The last quotation also weaves a myth around the history of Echela family serving as a source of fear and tension early in the novel, and causing the gloomy atmosphere that dominates the novel.

As Achebe does with Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Amadi builds into Olumati, a strong will to survive despite the odds that surround him. It is on his determination to survive, that Amadi launches in a few women to help advance both the hero and the plot.

### **The portrait of the woman**

The women in Olumati's life cut across three generations: his grandmother Nyege, representing the older generation, his sister, Aleru representing his generation and Enaa representing the future generation. Enaa is expected to carry forward Olumati's generation by marriage. Amadi arranges in his artistry the activities of the women in question to ensure Olumati's survival in Aliji as well as his flight to the shrine, ironically.

Written in twenty-four short chapters, Amadi begins *The Slave* by locating Olumati in a journey motif. Right at the cross road, he is to take a crucial decision on which way to go:

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... His eyes caught a movement. It was that of *a woman* coming towards him along the branch road to the sight ...  
'welcome', she said and hurried past.  
'Wait!'  
She paused, then asked: 'Have you lost your way?'  
'No'  
'Then what?'  
'I am not a stranger'. (TS p.9).

From the foregoing, the very unsure steps of Olumati are straightened by the timely appearance of Enna on the scene and the lively conversation they engage in. Thus, the initial physical and psychological orientation of Olumati is by the woman, Enaa. Ironically, at the end of the novel she is the cause of his frustration and flight. Amadi in his artistry of Enaa uses woman as an object of both integration and disintegration. Enaa ushers Olumati into Aliji and leads him to his sister, Aleru who has been expecting him. 'Aleru was harvesting some okro from a garden in front of the house' (TS p. 15) when Enaa brought Olumati. The reunion of Olumati with his sister, Aleru and Aleru with her friend. Enaa, *enlivened* Olumati. Olumati is further taken home by Enna and Aleru to his grandmother, Nyege who sets an official societal machinery in motion to integrate Olumati. She causes the council of elders' meeting to be held to defend the legitimacy of her grandson's existence in Aliji;

'when Osimini ran to the shrine of Amadioha for protection, his wife Ndem was already three months pregnant. Olumati was born six months later. So, Olumati does not belong to Amadioha. Before I brought him here, I spoke with the priest at Isiali and he said that Olumati was free to go. You see, Amadioha does not claim what does not belong to him, unlike some big-eyed human beings I know'. (TS p.25)

Establishing her case with the above premise on why Olumati belongs to Aliji, Nyege is ready to offend even the elders to ensure Olumati is accepted. She wins temporarily.

The portrait of the woman as the agent of integration is an adorable one which Amadi has carved in *The Slave*. However, the adorable image fails to redeem Olumati from the strangle-hold of the Osu custom of Aliji as his failure in the end attests, riddled with contradictions of patriarchal custom, *the woman's redemption mission of the integration of the hero*, is aborted. Amadi artistically prepares the tragic ending of the novel and finds the women in question useful tools to propel the plot to its tragic end.

Another central focus of *The Slave* is *mgbede*, the traditional seclusion for Erekwí girls who have reached puberty in preparation for marriage. Enna is the village belle in *mgbede*. Olumati's sister, Aleru works hard on the farm in

a bid to get her brother economic strength with which he can support himself, build his house and marry a wife – probably Enna. This economic venture claims Aleru’s life as she over-labours even during pregnancy. Nyege had earlier died of old age. With Nyege’s and Aleru’s deaths, sorrow overtakes Olumati. Wizo, the village carver is plotted in her in Olumati’s ambition to marry Enaa is kept secret; only revealed in the overwhelming shock that overtakes Olumati in witnessing Wizo of all people marry the girl he most desires. In keeping with Amadi’s late revelatory moment technique, Olumati only witnesses what he never dreamt of during the *mgbede* outing of Enaa. The elective love advances of his best friend to the woman he nurses secret marriage plan for, is an ironic twist of fate in Amadi’s design of tragedy. The heavy shock-value of Enaa-Wizo marriage bids Olumati farewell from Aliji-a farewell he obliges and quits the struggling in Aliji and flees to the shrine of Amadioha. His disillusionment in Enaa-Wizo affair, Aliji society in general, and himself, sharpen his nostalgia for the shrine and speed his departure:

The shrine of Amadioha where he was brought up the miniature temple would not only protect him but also cure his nostalgia. True, there could be no substitute for the tall solemn trees, the rich dark foliage, the many strange birds unafraid of men; but he could see these in his mind’s eye whenever he chose. As to the rituals, he was much used to them. Every eight days he performed them with much devotion (TS pp. 85-86).

The myth around the shrine captured above is a source of tension and gloom in the novel. Again in the last quotation, Amadi humours the escapist stance of Olumati and of anyone in a similar situation.

The deaths of Nyege and Aleru create confusion, tension, and fear for Olumati. They also spell gloom and doom for the hero. Enaa’s ‘infidelity’ to Olumati by marrying Wizo is a death on the first intimate relationship Olumati had ever known in Aliji - that between him and Enaa. Olumati’s return to the shrine of Amadioha is a death on the free-born status won for him by his grandmother’s careful articulation, establishing him as ‘free’ and nullifying the council’s decision taken on the issue of legitimacy of existence. Here, Amadi’s dialectics aborts the “joy of motherhood” of these women over Olumati.

*The Slave* concerns itself with the customary rites of passage centring on birth, marriage, and death. These phenomena do not favour Olumati. They create confusion and tension for the hero and the inevitable mood of gloom in the novel. In each of these passages, the woman is ‘negatively’ central.

It is worth noting that Nyege, Aleru, Enaa and Adiba are very kind especially to Olumati. Nevertheless, they have ‘peculiar female traits’ of weakness, quarrelsomeness, and gossiping. These traits are designed to bring out the theme of female subjugation and male domination. Amadi sets the theme in the scene where Enaa is leading Olumati to Aliji. Enaa is said to be afraid that Olumati might be a spirit. It is after a while she got over her fear and measures height with Olumati. Olumati is amused by the silly of of

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measuring height with him and the confessional statement of hrs that she used to do same with her brother. Enaa also adds that she even used to fight with her brother when they were younger. The male Chauvinism in Olumati immediately concluded she 'was always defeated by her brother' being a man and she a woman.

'Do you quarrel often?'  
'Not now. When we were smaller, yes'.  
'We fought a lot'.  
'And you were always beaten  
I suppose'.  
'It can't be otherwise. But I am not weak;  
It is ... er ... er just that I am a woman  
(TS p. 14).

Amadi makes Enaa accept femininity as weakness and masculinity as strength by articulating through her. Amadi's design here throws light on the extent of internalization of the assigned portrait on woman herself. The above quotation also shows Enaa accepting she used to quarrel often. Again, Amadi designs woman to tear down herself or another woman as Aleru says of Nyege, "if talking were fighting, Gege (short form for Nyege) would beat the whole village" (TS p. 17). This is captured in an episode where Enaa asks Aleru of her Mgbede. In another scene located in Nyege's house, she is made to rain curses on whosoever knocks on her door:

'Tufia! Let your witchcraft stick to your body'.  
Olumati rose to open the door.  
'Sit down!' Nyege ordered.  
(Another knock.)  
'Knock down your entire family'.  
'He who pursues an innocent chicken is bound to stumble'.  
'that is what I say to you the voice replied.  
'Who are you?'  
'Ovunda'.  
'Ovunda?'  
'... Open, Nyege. I am not equal to your talking this night  
(TS p. 35).

The above dialogue exposes Nyege's quarrelsome nature. On the impression of woman as a gossip, Amadi again makes Enaa call Aleru "a chatterbox" (TS p. 10) when she discovers that Olumati, the stranger knows her name as well as the proposed *mgbede* ceremony for her. Driving this image on, Amadi repeats the impression he has in *The Great Ponds* of Olumba's wives in particular, and women in general. Articulating through Eze Minikwe, the chief of aliji, Amadi creates a scene where the Eze in counseling Olumati on how to settle down asks him to beware of Nyege in particular and women in general:

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'You may go, Greet Nyege. Don not listen to all she says. The thoughts of women are nearly always crooked, and the older they get the worse'. That is why they are not allowed to run the affairs of any community'. (TS p. 81).

Patriarchy holds words of elders as those of wisdom. If the Eze tells the younger one like Olumati that the thought of women are always crooked, one wonders how much credibility the Eze has left on womanhood. The Eze's perception of woman debases the female image.

The arbitrariness of woman's femininity and man's masculinity comes out in Amadi's sexist language. This ranges from the male egoistic statement to the woman's humble acceptance of her sex as a handicap. The issue of the inseparable nature of woman from man's protective enclave is also reenacted in *The Slave*. Enna's parents put pressure on her to accept a man before she is out of mgbede as a form of protection. Besides, only silly girls have a choice on who to marry:

Many suitors had come and she had turned them down. Her fellow girls had begun to warn her that she might end up marrying a skull handsomely made up with borrowed limbs. The men blamed her father Bekweri for allowing his daughter to be so choosy. How could a young girl who knew nothing of the world be entrusted with the difficult tasks of choosing a husband? (TS p. 37)

... All a woman needs is a strong man to protect her  
(TS. P. 60).

Using a conversation between Olumati and Oriji (Enna's brother), Amadi exalts the male gender and subjugates the female:

'What does Enaa think?' (Olumati asks Oriji)  
'She has no voice. She takes whatever we decide'.  
*There was an authority in Oriji's voice which Olumati admired.*  
'She is a silly choosy girl'.  
(TS p. 60).

Enaa was not only silly in being choosy about a husband; she was also troublesome as recounted by one of her unsuccessful suitors, Aso. In the dialogue below, Amadi bares the minds of the two young men. Aso and Nyeche about girls:

'*Beautiful* girls are troublesome, And the trouble does not end in marrying them. Until they have had many children and become ugly you have to be on the look-out to keep other men off. They are not worth the trouble, I believe'.  
'So you will marry an *ugly girl*'.  
'Yes, an *ugly woman* like my mother'.  
'*Tall woman* tend to be difficult'.

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(TS pp. 41-49)

The Aso-Nyeche dialogue is negatively critical of girls even of generous gifts of nature as height and beauty. This explains why Ihuoma in *The Concubine* with similar fine traits is the trouble young men have. Although in *The Concubine*, the beauty and height of Ihuoma are appreciated, they are torn apart in *The Slave*. Amadi's deliberate design to make a woman's rich natural endowment bring evil to her, and the man, creates a world of confusion for her and makes her life a puzzle. This is part of the "inner demons of self-doubt and guilt and outer monsters of ridicule" which Linda Nochlin (1979:365) decries.

The theme of female subjugation and male domination is expressed in Amadi's language. Woman is presented as a sex symbol fulfilling the lustful desires of man. The sexist language re-enforced by repetition of the sexist impressions, lend credence to this. In a conversation, Amadi presents this:

Her breasts were very well developed, almost embarrassingly so.  
They pushed out with a vigour that suggested intense vitality  
(TS p. 64).

The men turned round and saw Aleru and Enaa coming, their  
bosoms heaving in near unison (TS p.43).

In another instance, (Enaa) studies the four figures worked into  
the stool by Wizo the Carver. They had large breasts and ample  
buttocks.

'Wizo, you are crazy!'

'Why?'

... whoever had such large breasts ...? (TS p. 124).

Wizo's carving of Enaa exaggerates the breasts. The foregoing shows breasts as the more observable parts of the woman. They are also the subject of fun and joke by the young men:

Adiba smiled shyly and came forward. As she bent forward to  
pick up the pot *her breasts nearly grazed the man's head.*

'Hm, Adiba, you carry a lot of things!'

'Oh, please! Another word and I shall drop the pot.'

The man laughed loudly

(TS p. 65).

The joke that is made of the woman's breast is intimidating to the young woman on one hand and confusing as to whether large-sized breast are sinful. Adiba and Aleru are timid while Enaa is not. Enaa tries to choose her husband, she is not shy like Adiba and Aleru, she is tall and beautiful. Enaa's features defy the prescribed traditional qualities for a woman which stipulates that she should be "small, shy, and soft-spoken. She must look down much of the time, but each time she looked up her eyes smiled in a very charming manner". (TS p. 61). 'She is to be short to ease the problem of beating her by her husband (TS p.61). Wife-beating is encouraged on 'the notion that pain



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and submission are essential components of female sexual pleasure.’ It is the significance of pain and victimization that enshrouds femininity in myths according to Angela Carter (1987:703). Carter sees man’s exploration of equality in securing woman’s subordination as “female castration”.

Female castration is an imaginary fact that pervades the whole of men’s attitude towards women and our (women’s) attitude to ourselves that transforms women from human beings into wounded creatures who were born to bleed.

Enaa’s insistence to choose her groom and other ‘deviant’ traits about her are a celebration of woman’s desire to be liberated from self and obnoxious social taboos. Enaa’s liberation stance, robs Olumati of the wife he would have married, flouts societal norms, and creates tension and gloom for the hero:

‘It is true that marriage is an affair between families, but that time is past when the man and women involved were not expected to have a say’. (TS p. 95).

The like of Enaa and Nyege are what the Chief Eze Minikwe loathes, and generalizes about womanhood:

All women are the same ...

The thoughts of women are always crooked and that is why they are not allowed to run the affairs of any community. (TS pp. 82, 31).

Adiba is another girl Amadi uses to show that women are gossips. Adiba takes Olumati into confidence and shares the whispers of the people of Aliji with him. She tells Olumati the truth that many in Aliji still think he is a slave of Amadioha:

‘There is something you must know.

I have been hesitating to tell you, but I should do so now.

It will save you much trouble and disappointment in future. You see.

‘Go on’.

‘Many in Aliji are still not sure you are not a slave of Amadioha. I know you are not, but people are stubborn ...’ (TS p. 156).

Rather than hold the people who gossip about Olumati, Amadi’s art, castigates Adiba for breaking the open secret to Olumati. Adiba’s revelation to Olumati adds insult to the injury Enaa’s marriage to Wizo has already caused him (Olumati). Adiba and Enaa are two of the three girls that are central to the plot and experiences of the novel. The actions of the girls, misconstrued as wicked, generate tension for the hero and the novel. Aliji is not only flabbergasted by the disappearance of Olumati, but is riddled by and faced with the desire to understand the god, Amadioha they serve.

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Amadi uses woman to develop the plot of the novel, but again on a negative axis. Adiba's concern and interest in telling the truth to Olumati is a courageous step that brands her as a 'mouth engineer'. Adiba seeks to save Olumati from being in ignorance of his environment and of himself. If any crime is committed against Olumati, it is not by Adiba but by the men of Aliji whose whispers tactically isolate him. Behind the notion of gossip that Adiba is supposed to bear, is an act of redemption, and selflessness which are strong regenerative values which are covered up.

Enaa is a social deviant. Adiba is a gossip. Patriarchy has to come up with some laws to control the excesses of the likes of Enaa and Adiba:

She must cook and bear children (mostly males) (TS pp.65 and 74).

She must keep the wrestling sessions alive with her shouts of encouragements (TS pp. 106-107)

If the first wife of an Eze, she must perform the passage of year rites (TS p. 118).

She is to grow female crops like cocoyams (TS p. 121). (Yam is a male crop).

She is to fetch fire wood with children (TS p. 157).

A widow is supposed to stay in her husband's compound and bring up his children. (TS p. 133)

And: "Women don't serve at the shrine" (TS p. 15)

"A woman must not be too tall" (TS p. 16)

"A woman must not use parables" (TS p. 84)

"A woman must not eat the gizzard of a bird". (TS p. 107)

"A woman carver was unheard of" (TS p. 123)

The above is part of the catalogue of the laws and taboos against women since they are trouble' as recorded in *The Slave*. The laws enacted for the women leave the freedom enjoyed by men obvious and further support the gender theme of the novel.

The taboos also serve as notes of caution to the men to 'beware of women' even in marriage:

The community had to ensure that the priest's wife had the necessary family background. She had to come from a family that was not in any way linked with deformity, crime or insanity. Moreover, her parents and grandparents had to be natives of Aliji (TS pp. 75-76).

The woman is not that lucky to choose who and where to marry from. As a community, she is also returnable to her parents 'if she is barren or 'if the children die in quick succession before the age of seven years. Such deaths are interpreted as the anger of Ali, the earth goddess on the woman' (TS. P. 76). Woman is thus the guinea-pig of traditional believe' system of Aliji.

In *The Slave*, Amadi uses sexist, language that qualifies manliness with strength leaving the opposite obvious. The language resents any traits in a

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man that are feminine. Amadi gives this impression in the scene where Ovunda pays a condolence visit to Olumati. Olumati who is reduced to a ghost of himself following his sister's death is advised by Ovunda to pack to his compound for companionship. Olumba weighs Ovunda's suggestion and shrugs in disgust. The act of movement would make him look "like a woman newly married packing to her husband's" (TS p. 145). To Olumati, it is absurd. On another parallel occasion, a young man in the novel and a hero-in-the-making, Nyeche, boasts to a girl, Aleru, that he is not a girl to be forced into marriage (TS p. 91)

Amadi builds myths around the woman by virtue of her beauty, height, breasts, age or youthfulness. While in *The concubine*, it is the youthfulness and beauty of women that carry the air of mystery, in *The Slave* it is the great age of Nyege, the rites of passage of the year by the Eze's wife and the *mgbede* environment of Enaa documented below respectively:

Nyege was short. The stoop which the years lent her made her shorter still. Her skin was red and firm, her hair white, her torso bare with flapping breasts; a double naval (the larger of them had grown out after a serious illness) and a deeply wrinkled face lit by grayish green eyes rare in her race all gave her an unusual personality. Even the elders felt uneasy in her presence. They watched her approach in silence. Each time her walking-stick hit the ground she puffed out a cloud of smoke drawn from her short clay pipe filled with Munchu, a strong tobacco. She seemed to derive the energy to walk from the pipe (TS p. 21).

Of Eze Minikwe's wife, Amadi says:

Minikwe's first wife has an important part to play in this. On the last day of the year, she collected half-burnt pieces of wood, rags and other debris which symbolized the important aspects of the lives of the people. She loaded them in a basket and, *escorted by four men with loaded guns*, set out for the waterside. It was a fearful night. Minikwe's wife was sensitive to the struggle between the old year and the new. She knew that the forests were alive although she did not know what with... (TS p. 118).

Of Enna's *mgbede* hut:

'A world of camwood, chalk and yellow dye, a world of decorations of soft mats of edeali and indigo designs of beads and corals and soft shiny skin. It was *the mysterious world of womanhood*- warm and tender, alluring and compelling. Women were the real rulers of the earth, Nyeche thought; men were merely accidents in their lives.' (TS p.79).

From the above quotations, mystery is built around the woman. The woman is the beast of burden as 'Eze Minikwe's wife carried the mysterious basket

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escorted by the men'. The mystery basket is the personified her. Of Enaa's mgbede, which is a traditional mystery attracts a positive emotion but Amadi allows a boy to articulate the warmth and tenderness of womanhood. Amadi's articulation of such a sensitive and strong issue about the woman in the mouth of the youth, Nyeche, is mimicry on "the new vision of *artistic eloquence and revolutionary* commitment to eradicate the myth of male superiority and female inferiority."

#### **The woman**

The concealed portion of womanhood by patriarchy are 'the warmth, tenderness, alluring, and compelling' characteristics that establish her uniqueness as a woman.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Amadi may be presenting the disadvantaged position of the woman in the society but he leaves his women dwarfed, and, in Emelia Oko's (1987:5) words 'lacking the ability of sustainable meaningful enquiry. Amadi's discourse in *The Slave* is thus more of a recreation of history, a perpetuation of the sexist's tragedy of woman's history. Documented over the years, the woman's story becomes a tradition and builds in her doubt. Amadi's woman is riddled by the paradox of her portraits. Amadi uses woman to advance the plot. She like the biblical Eve is central to the experiences of the novel and the hero, Olumati. The painted impression of woman mystifies her. Mystery carries tension and gloom which the author builds into the story of *The Slave*.

Enaa, Nyege, Aleru, and Adiba are the women who serve as it were heroines in *The Slave*; but their redeeming features are dogged by the apparent frustration and failure of the hero, Olumati.

There is therefore an urgent need to reverse the trend and a socio-political wind of change regarding the fate of the woman must blow in a bid to prove Kate Millet (1969:35) wrong who opines that 'the relationship between men and women have always been more fundamentally, a manipulation of power than sentiments' – a typology of artistic propaganda.

There are some truths about the impressions Amadi's dialectics has on women but not total about her. Just as there are exceptions in men so are there in women. The woman is not always a gossip as labelled in *The Slave*. The men who gossiped about Olumati's illegitimacy in the society caused his problem not the woman, Adiba, who only broke the gossip to him.

The woman has in today's world and in Nigeria transcended the negative typology assigned her. She has in almost every field of endeavour not only been complement to men's efforts but hold those posts hitherto firmly held by men with elegance and dignity. It is little wonder then that a woman besides being a wife and mother is also a Civil Commissioner, Vice-

Chancellor of the University, Deputy Governor and so on. In both urban capitalist society and in the rural setting, she has blazed the trail. The status of women has thus changed which this work testifies and updates. Literary dialectics needs to take note of this and swing to action accordingly by updating her story ('herstory').

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