

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF JULIE OKOH'S EDEWEDE

OJEDIRAN, Oludolapo
Performing Arts Department
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State
ojedirano@yahoo.co.uk
08185980827

Abstract

Julie Okoh's Edewede (2000) explores harmful cultural practices among the Nigerian women. Consequently, Okoh depicts female characters who suffer and refuse to be victims of patriarchal cultural rites through linguistic behaviour. She also identifies certain contradicting attributes such as silent and womanly, and being aggressive and manly. Thus, this makes her use of dramatic language as a powerful tool to aid the female characters as they transgress or take control of the domestic arena to enter the public sphere. Through the textual analysis of Edewede, the paper discovers that women liberation is not becoming a man or envying what a man possess, but by appreciating femalehood, female subjects and valuing the expression of their own sex and gender. In plain terms, women need to appreciate their positions not in a passive way, but as a way of creating a variety of recognisable identities for themselves. However, this work shows that when women express themselves through such an avenue, it depicts their self-articulation and self-determination through aesthetics of assertiveness.

Key words: rites, cultural practices, liberation, gender

Introduction

Julie Okoh's play challenges the audiences/readers to scrutinise the assumptions that gender and power are related when it comes to any patriarchal society. Her play sees the barrier of language as a powerful tool and significant indicator of femininity in the society which legalises female expectations or stereotypes. The idea that women are more conservative, naturally cautious and reserved is re-addressed in Okoh's writing. Okoh does not only explore motherhood in relation to personal identity, but also expose the situation of female to female oppressive perception in upholding patriarchal culture. Osita (2012:204) observes that the root of social oppression against women in Africa can be traced to traditional society where social roles are assigned to men and women along sex lines – male and female. Osita's observation defines gender as its best but Okoh sees that not only patriarchy as an ideological or political system devoices women within the society, but also the older generation of women who view modern changes to femalehood as an alien culture that should not be encouraged or accepted.

This older generation of women are viewed as traditionalists whose belief in the cultural norms makes them adamant, ignorant and unchanging as their gender has been an integral part of their socio-cultural life which Walker describes in her explanation of the elder women's in the community who try to caution the younger females from being audacious and wanting to know more than what is required of them. These women see

themselves as upholders of the same culture that limits them to the private sphere, which encourages domestic violence, rape, genital mutilation amongst others, women who ignorantly sacrifice their 'selves' against their own will and at the same time expected to remain silent in the public domain. In line with such behaviours from two different categories of older and the younger generation of women, this creates a clear distinction for them to choose between their rites and rights in the society. While the use of rites in most cases are enforced and make women silent even though they might have something important to say, rights give them an alternative to live a more fulfilling life as females in any patriarchal society.

While these female characters are presented as sexually less important except for their reproductive capability, they are seen as examples of women who show realistic portraits of women in active search of a voice. For example, the portrayals of the female gender in Okoh's plays show the extent at which women are treated with disdain in the patriarchal society. This raises the question of the negative treatment on female gender and the psychological impact of such on them. Okoh presents these women as the innocent souls who are blamed for any negativity that happen in the society; she exposes the inability of many women to see their gendered positions. The playwright's treatment of female circumcision explores women who are sexually, emotionally and socially abused. This reveals the role of sexism within the society that corresponds with Greer's (2000:135) view that a woman's body is a battlefield where she fights for liberation. It is through her body that oppression works, reifying her, sexualising her, victimising her, disabling her. This shows the woman's body as a medium through which she is brought under continuous socio-cultural control.

Okoh's *Edewede* reveals female circumcision as a form of socio-cultural silence that encompasses physical, emotional and sexual exploitation of women. One notices that Okoh as a writer explores metaphorical violence through physical violence against the female body. She notices that female circumcision reduces the female autonomy in the society whereby *Edewede*'s character is portrayed as determined and audible woman who refuses to allow the younger generation of women to be denied their autonomy through such rites. *Edewede*'s rebellion against the practice that may be seen as a means of upholding their culture is the breaking of the transmission chain amongst three generation of women in the society. Okoh makes *Edewede* to serve as a link between the other two, the old and the new generation of women which provides a clash between the new and the old culture.

Upholding Tradition at the Women's Expense

Once a society tries to uphold tradition, a group of people will surely suffer from such. In Okoh's play, *Edewede* disregards what her society perceives as the importance of female circumcision, which they believe helps to keep females' purity by avoiding promiscuity, uphold a man's social honour and maintain female dignity. *Edewede* explores how the custom of female circumcision bonds these women in companionship that helps them live through the experience. *Edewede* is faced with making a choice. She either allows her only surviving daughter go through the same crude process of female circumcision or disallow her and break away from the tradition she feels inhibit women's autonomy in her culture. The playwright exposes the exploitation of women's bodies in

some parts of West Africa which allows some opprobrious practise she believes are culturally imposed on women against their wishes by customs and religion. Okoh (2002:43) observes that all the time wasted in nursing wilfully inflicted injuries in favour of female circumcision can be used in pursuit of basic means of subsistence which can be achieved through the contribution of the female quota to the economy of the community. This is observed by Ezeigbo (1996:35) that:

In most communities where female circumcision is practised, the aim is primarily to ensure virginity before marriage and chastity throughout married life. The excision of the clitoris would ensure that a woman derives no pleasure from sex. It would also reduce her capacity to achieve orgasm . . . it seems to give girls sound moral upbringing than to rely on the unnatural mutilation of their bodies to make them upright.

Communities that practice female circumcision do not publicise the adverse complications leaving people unaware of the dangers involved and thus they continue in their ignorance. *Edewede* discusses this barbaric practise being imposed on innocent girls, its implications and general belief in some West African countries like Nigeria, and the Republic of Benin. To countries that practice female circumcision, it is assumed to have cultural and religious values which advocates of cultural relativism have argued in its support to be continued. The play opens with a dialogue between a grandmother, Ebikere who tries to cajole her granddaughter, Oseme, to undergo the assumed rite of passage into adulthood but Ebikere is opposed by her daughter-in-law, Edewede who does not support the idea.

In *Edewede*, Okoh shows the older generation of women as the upholders of the rite of passage and tradition. She exposes Ebikere as the one who encourages female circumcision to continue:

EBIKERE: Circumcision is part of our culture. My mother was circumcised.

So also were your grandmothers; great grandmothers; and great great grandmothers. It is a rite that every woman in this land goes through . . . your bravery in the camp of circumcision will be the pride of your family and lineage (3).

While these young girls do not have the idea of the painful experience they are about to go through, Ebikere believes that circumcision is an occasion that every young girl should look forward to anxiously. On the one hand, it is the barbaric excision of the clitoris in a crude way; but since it brings the society pride, they have to undergo the process in order to honour their societal values. On the other hand, it is a moment of bravery and heroism that allows these females to show the dichotomies of the public and

¹ Rite of passage in drama is described by Adrienne Scullion in *Feminine Pleasures and Masculine Indignities: Gender and Community in Scottish Drama* (1995) as a 'turn or series of ceremonies or rituals of initiation' (8).

private sphere which underscore African patriarchal victimisation of women. These views are also summarised in Kassindja's (1998:13) description of what female circumcision entails by those who have gone through the whole process:

I've heard that during the procedure, four women spread your legs wide apart and hold you down so you can't move. And then, the eldest woman takes a knife that is used to cut hair and scrapes your woman parts off. There are no painkillers, no anaesthesia. The knife isn't sterilised. Afterwards, the women wrap your hips to your knees and you have to stay in bed for forty days so the wound can close.

Although several descriptions have been made by different writers about how circumcision is done and its assumed benefits to the society practising it, the Nigerian society which Okoh portrays its own practice is not explained in detail. Some of the reasons why communities practice female circumcision apart from being seen as form of good tradition include religious purpose, cleanliness, preservation of virginity, better marriage prospect, enhancement of male sexual pleasure amongst others. Okoh however exposes that the excision of the clitoris is deeply rooted in tradition and African mythology which allows the older generation represented by Ebikere to hold firm as it is their believe that such practice helps to maintain social cohesiveness and harmony. This society sees the clitoris as a 'peanut' (39) that causes confusion, impurity and imperfection which should be 'carved out of its pod' during the initiation ceremony before young girls move from girlhood to womanhood.

Also, it is at this initiation camp that girls learn the taboos of the land, their future roles as wives and mothers which eventually makes them the stereotypes of their mothers in the society. Edewede believes that the unchanging culture does not benefit anybody, rather it claims innocent girls' lives, leaves some with psychological trauma, but in as much as the society sees nothing wrong with the practise, it must continue. This is revealed in the argument between her and Ebikere:

EDEWEDE: What about those girls who do not return to the village and are never even mourned, after bleeding to death? Regarded as sacrifice, they are left behind for the vultures to feed on. Tell her also about the girls who do not live long enough to see the days of their marriage and motherhood because of the infection contacted during the operation. Go on, tell her about all of them. (6-7)

As mentioned earlier, the dangers such as anxiety, severe depression, psychosomatic illnesses in the process are not publicised, which Edewede tries to use against its acceptance by other women. Edewede's zeal to effect change in the course of such tradition that does not benefits the private sphere but glorifies the public sphere makes Ebikere see her as a woman with vile words, a woman not well brought up, a woman who does not know her womanly role in her marital home, a woman without cultural heritage and a woman without any sense of humility. Ebikere sees that Edewede's action goes in

line with masculine power of asserting one's position of dominance and maintaining audience in the presence of inhibiting powers. This portrays the societal perception of any woman who dares to be heard, powerful and resilient to some cultural practices that makes her valueless.

The remembrance of the victims of circumcision like her sister and her elder daughter in that same society makes her determined to change the situation which also helps to prepare the mind of other women of her generation. Edewede's elder sister's death creates in her the fear of female circumcision, as does that of her elder daughter, Ize who dies of infection contracted after the operation makes her more determined. She is encouraged by Erialala who sees the women's lack of voice as a central problem; it hinders them from expressing themselves and contributes to the underlying inferiority complex. This is a means of undervaluing femininity, which makes these females 'cripples' and incapable of doing anything reasonable for themselves as they have not been given alternative tools to protect themselves against any form of social pressure. Therefore, the older generation of women find their means of survival on the pride of their 'self and social' honour. Edewede's reply to Erialala's question if she is really a cripple baffles the latter who feels such retrogressive traditions that makes women powerless can be changed if only they are willing, determined and ready to change it for their own good.

EDWEDE: What do you expect? We live in a land where men are born to dish out commands and women to carry them out and suffer in silence.

ERIALALA: You are a human being, capable of doing many things men can do if only you'd try. But you wouldn't try because your mind is weak, weakened by fear. That is why you lack confidence in yourself (22).

To the readers, Okoh's writing in this respect present female characters as liberating forces who acknowledge the importance of their sexuality and autonomy. Erialala's call for action to Edewede to change her situation and that of other women in her society or else see the death of innocent girls continue is a step towards their gender autonomy. She summons courage to use her voice, to dismiss her fear and resignation and to see herself as a superior being instead of crying and lamenting over issues that can be changed only if she is determined. She raises Edewede's consciousness at that time to use her anger and the grief over the death of her daughter to reverse the order of things if she does not want her only remaining daughter to go through the female circumcision process. Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:17) recognise that consciousness-raising is taken from the idea of 'speaking pains to recall pains' used by peasants during the Chinese revolution as noticed by Echols (1989:84). Echols sees consciousness-raising as a form of idea whereby women should regularly come in small groups to recount their own lives and how they 'became' women. Pilcher and Whelehan see that such consciousness raising group of women are expected:

to look askance at their own lives and realise the extent to which they share with other women of various backgrounds and ages; that their problems are not unique

and individual, but rather all too common and produced by wider social relations and institutions.

Such consciousness raising groups help women to relocate themselves within the society; hence they are seen as another element of female discourse that strengthens the female bond. Although this consciousness raising group has its own advantages and disadvantages, writers such as Carol William Payne (1973) and Susan Brownmiller (2000) have identified women's problems associated with it which will be discussed later in this study with some of Okoh's female characters. Okoh's call for action is similar to Walker's published novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) where she purports to document female circumcision in Africa. At the end of the novel, readers of different genders, ages, and viewpoints are educated about the destructive effects of female circumcision and are ready to stop the act infringing on female autonomy. Okoh and Walker's writings on female circumcision are different in their analysis as Okoh, as an African woman living in Africa, presents a way forward by encouraging women to take actions that will stop the act while Walker sees the stock characterisations of her African female characters from the western view.

Although readers cannot separate Walker's view of the female gender from their representation of social and racial stereotypes, one also sees Walker's womanism as a theory that calls for autonomy through the conscious efforts of knowing more than what is considered good for the females in any patriarchal society. Through individual consciousness that leads to group consciousness, Okoh explores consciousness as a means of creating female autonomy in different ways that are not always relatable. However, Okoh presents Edewede as a woman whose life depends on choice. She encounters a situation which will either help to assert her own individual needs or to fulfil the societal obligation towards others that will limit her to the domestic domain, destroy her emotionally, physically and mentally without achieving anything.

Sisterhood and its Importance

The concept of sisterhood does not exist in abstraction; rather, it brings many women of different backgrounds, age groups, peers, social status and economic segregation together. Sisterhood is a way by which many of the deprived women are able to identify with women who are going through the same situation as themselves, to discuss and to chat their causes over. This creates an avenue for such women to voice out their sufferings, maltreatment and subordination in any patriarchal society. Sisterhood is examined in Okoh's *Edewede*. The coming together of the women described by Okoh for the first time to educate each other about the female body's autonomy is a great step towards making their voices heard in the public domain. Edewede and these other women of her age group create an unbroken bond amongst them to rise against their agonising indigenous culture that make women weaklings, properties and objects of sexual gratification, after being enlightened by Mama Nurse. This effort of Mama Nurse, Eriala and Edewede to educate these other women on the complications of female circumcision practice make them determined to eradicate the practise and the cultural beliefs behind it. At the end of the meeting, these women disapprove of female circumcision and the society's justification that it promotes female purity and cleanliness and prevents

Socio-Cultural Context of Julie Okoh's *Edewede*

women's promiscuity. Instead, they see it as health hazard, psychological torture and physical mutilation which make them powerless and voiceless. Okoh's *Edewede* is a motivated woman with a sense of sisterhood to help other women who suffer in silence. She calls them into action by seeing female circumcision as a form of slavery imposed on women to dominate them in the society that sees no value in femalehood except for their domesticity, obedience and ignorance:

EDEWEDE: Our mothers practised circumcision
Because they knew nothing about anything
Except for laws and taboos imposed on them
To stop them from thinking for themselves
So that from childhood, they learn
To be shy, silent and docile.
Until they see themselves
As objects for men's pleasure
They got so accustomed to this condition
That they see any deviation from it as a crime . . . (37).

Here, Okoh explores women's shyness, silence and docility which allows them to surrender to the masculine power that creates fear and ignorance in them and that reiterates a psychoanalytic view of bringing up children in the society. The belief that a woman is expected to be polite, shy and dependant on men is readdressed by *Edewede* and Mama Nurse's explanation of how the older generation of women were enslaved by such traditions, which infuriates these market women who have just been educated and want to stop the practice immediately. These women see the practice from a new perspective from that moment on, and develop a determined mindset that none of their children will go through it any more. Eriala prepares these women to oppose the practice when she asks,

ERIALA: But woman! For once in your life, stop and think.
Think for yourselves. Think about yourselves.
Think! Think! Think!
Do you think with your brain or bottom?
Do you think with your eyes or bottom?
Do you think with your heart or bottom?
Go on! Open your mouth! Speak out! (39).

Immediately the women sense the truth in what has been said, the question of female circumcision brings about the conscious effort to think about the evil inflicted on them by their husbands, brothers, fathers and sons. The use of 'Think, Think, Think' (39) is placed as an emphasis to call these women into the intellectual reasoning that the men and older generations have denied them. At that stage, the women view female circumcision as

wish, which allow them see female circumcision as an pointless exercise besides a painful experience.

Eriala's enlightenment make these women see themselves as being capable of sexual enjoyment as well rather than being mere objects for men's sexual pleasure. Their behaviour mirrors Wood's (2005:279) assertion that in combining conventional femininity (sexuality) and masculinity (weapons and violence); women challenge the sex/gender divide and personify erotic fantasies that merge sex and power. The coming together of these women help them to realise that they can combine their own feminine attributes with that of the masculine weapons in order to propose a change to their existing situation. The women use their inherent power and the masculine attribute of assertive language to ignite public sentiment about women's fragility and vulnerability. This mirrors Kristeva's (1982) overall assertion in the book that women need to make language their own in order to acknowledge their feminine experiences and present it in new ways. By using language, these women destabilise the phallic system of operation through their clitoral autonomy.

Eriala and Edewede's motivation to these women through their use of voice help the readers recognise Walker's second aspect of the womanist principle's women-centeredness which creates an avenue that allows women to seek unity amongst themselves. They bond collectively and publicly to end this form of unrecognised female oppression through what Okoh calls 'bottom power' or 'lock it up'; they decide to starve themselves and their husbands of any sexual enjoyment which eventually leads to their leaving town in order not to fall into the temptation of breaking the agreement amongst them. This form of sex strike is noticeable in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* in which women deny their husbands sex to end the war between the Athens and Sparta. Ironically, Okoh's play seems to be synonymous to Aristophanes' play because of the sex strike, but looking into the two plays, the readers discover that while Aristophanes presents a physical war with emotional, social and psychological trauma, Okoh presents psychological war with physical, emotional and social disability amongst the women in their society.

Eventually, the meeting leads to Edewede's public repudiation by the older generation of women who sees the determination of other women as an act which originates from her jealousy, which makes these other women move into solitude as well. This reiterates the sense of sisterhood that Oyewunmi (2003) identifies as political solidarity, which speaks for women's activism and helps in shared oppression, common victimization, community interests, solidarity, and collective activism. This type of solidarity binds them with Edewede, a woman whom they see as someone trying to help secure the future for female children, and to save them from crying over the loss of loved ones or keeping awake throughout the night to watch over the infected ones from the camping grounds. Edewede demonstrates the importance of female solidarity as these women come together to secure their future with the hope of liberating themselves.

These groups of women need change to take effect as soon as it can as they are determined not to go back to the town leaving their husbands to take over the nature and nurture aspects of the domestic domain. Their action explores a sense of true sisterhood that helped them attain the autonomy they longed for which the men find difficult to cope with especially in the domestic domain that is left in their custody. This is expressed in their different conversations during the meeting which highlights the plights of women in

the society, what they go through in their respective homes without being appreciated, and how they are expected to be enslaved and remain silenced through the practice of female circumcision that make them sexual toys for men. It is at that stage that the men realise what they have often taken for granted in the female gender, especially in terms of taking care of the domestic domain which they always see is an easy task; some of them immediately call for the change of practice while some remain adamant and view the women's actions as unacceptable in the patriarchal society.

Okoh portrays Ebikere as an aggressive, rigid and archaic mother-in-law who tongue-lashes Edewede because of her zeal to stop female circumcision. Ebikere's belief in tradition exposes the social acceptability of the practice; her unwillingness to change the barbaric culture that makes women's autonomy impossible. She sees the practice as a thing of joy, prestige and cultural identity for femininity. She takes Edewede as too determined, active and firm to be a woman in such a traditional society that does not respects a woman's opinion, but accepts women's silence as the pride of their husband, and thinks a well brought up female fulfils their domestic obligations. In the argument that ensues between both women of whether or not Osemere will go for the initiation ceremony that year, Edewede's total rejection of the system irritates Ebikere:

EDEWEDE: Please, go home. Go and take care of your other grandchildren.
That child is mine, 'Osemere'

EBIKERE: Listen to her. (Mimicking her) "That child is mine, Osemere".
Since when have women started to claim children as theirs in this village? If you want to become a man, why don't you first of all grow a tail between your thighs? Go on and do it. Let's see. . . . You have always been headstrong. Too stubborn! Humility means nothing to you. A well brought up woman should know her place and respect her limits. But you, oh no! You want to be in every place, have a word on every issue. You don't even know that you are only a wife in this house. And as such, your place is in the kitchen (7-8).

Ebikere does not see her action as subverting her daughter-in-law, thus, she blames her son for Edewede's zeal to change the long term traditional roles of women and for her claiming the paternity of a child. She reminds her daughter-in-law of the cultural position associated with her as a mere woman who has no right to decide on matters like that, which should be left in the hands of the elders or her husband as her action is no longer a wish but a selfish desire. Ebikere's view is the opposite of what Walker's womanism connotes which is identified by Patricia Hill-Collins. Hill-Collins' (1996:59) comments on Alice Walker's theory about the universality of womanism reveals some of the reasons that hinders womanist theory from becoming a universal theory. She observes that:

Despite her disclaimer that womanists are "traditionally universalist," a philosophy invoked by her metaphor of the garden where room exists for all flowers to bloom equally and differently, Walker simultaneously implies

that black women are somehow superior to white women because of this black folk tradition.

Some aspects of this black folk tradition in West Africa are condemned by Edewede and her contemporaries who see such traditions as limitations to the female gender through their womanist knowledge. Rather than becoming intimidated at that stage of decision, Edewede voices out her anger and resistance, refuses to silence her desires, rejection and antagonism towards her mother-in-law's socio-cultural belief. Her determined mind baffles Ebikere who now sees her son as a weakling, questions his manliness and ability to govern his home, and a man with feminine attributes because he is voiceless like a vulnerable woman which hinders him from controlling his wife's excessive nature. Edewede rejects her husband as a weakling but sees his understanding in view of Walker's description of the collaboration between a man and a woman to help give the woman a voice rather than relegating her to the domestic domain alone, which Walker sees will help build confidence in such a woman.

Okoh's portrayal of Edewede's husband, Ordia, as being an understanding and a loving man reveals his acceptability of changing the tradition that allows a young girl to go through such an archaic and dehumanising practice. Ironically, Ordia is drawn to Edewede's wildness which he sees as an additional advantage to make the positive change needed in the society, although he warns her to be cautious of people especially his mother whose hatred towards his wife is glaring. Ordia's action portrays him as a male womanist who engages in exploring female motivations for redressing dented female history. Such men like Ordia are saddled with the responsibility of serving as allies in efforts to cripple patriarchal powers and effects on women, especially the ones that are ready for the change.

Ordia's male womanist feature seems accommodating of what society believes to be Edewede's excessive female behaviour even at the point of the public repudiation given to his wife. Ordia's attitude longs for women who are able to break away from the socio-cultural relegations. Edewede and the other women of her generation represent the marginalised, the other, and the repressed women in any society as analysed by the writer who use these characters' plights to summarise that of 'other' women from any sphere or level of life.

However, while the plot of Okoh's *Edewede* is built on the characters' acceptance of motherhood, the rejection of barbaric practices that leaves some women childless and sexually handicapped is exposed. Rather than seeing the 'Otherness' of the female gender as a means that silences them and sets them up against a lifetime of inferiority which some of the female characters try to change, Okoh uses the 'otherness' position to celebrate feminine culture, bodies and sexuality.

Okoh displays women as victims of exploitation, deception and persecution in the analysed play which allows some of these female characters to feel anger, disgust and self-pity that are expressed in their language use. Although they speak in the plays, the weaker female characters' speeches depict their silence, their abandonment and their violation. The stronger female characters display some levels of maturity, vocalisation, power and determination.

Way Forward

Oseme is a silent, but important young female character in Okoh's *Edewede* who raises issue of ritual without cutting in the play. Ignorantly, she provides a valuable solution from the beginning of the play in her discussion with her grandmother to stop the argument between her Ebikere and Edewede, which at the end of the play tends to be what the society accepts. Ironically, as a young girl who wants to enjoy the camping period of the initiation process, she wants the practice to continue, but she is not ready to go through the excision process which her mother fights against because of the pain and trauma involved in it. Oseme intends to be a good female with good feminine cultural attributes, but she views the process of excision as a cause of death among innocents which she experienced during the loss of her only sister. She is a girl with womanish attributes. Her role in the play seems to be ignored even by the playwright, because of her constant disappearance. In summoning all her young mates together, she encourages them to reject the 'other' position from a tender age by refusing to go the initiation camp without their mother coming back to the village, which evokes a positive conclusion by the king and the men in the village. Okoh's characterisation of Oseme portrays her as very inquisitive young girl who uses her own voice to question certain traditions, encourage other girls not to go to the initiation despite all cajoling from her grandmother who wants her to go through the barbaric tradition.

Conclusion

Okoh explores motherhood as a means through which women are recognised and esteemed, she also uses the patriarchal structure in the play to transform the timid, shy, immature women into fully grown, mentally developed and sexually intelligent women who are confident enough to question the authority of men. Despite the niche created for these women in the play, they are still limited in their autonomy and choice which has to be approved by the men before the women can forge ahead. This mirrors Sen's (2010:78) observation that women all over the world experience male violence as they talk about the devastating impacts of the belittling, of physical injuries and emotional destruction, of fearing for the safety of their children, of shame and embarrassment of speaking to anyone about their experiences and the fear that violence brings with it. This hinders them as they experience the psychological and emotional torture that creates dented identity for them.

References

- Ezeigbo A. (1996) *Issues in Nigeria: A feminine perspective*. Lagos: The University of Lagos Press.
- Greer G. (2000) *The whole woman*. Lincolnshire Gender: Anchor Books.
- Hill-Collins P. (1996) *What's in a name? Womanism, Black feminism and beyond*. New York: Routledge.
- Kassindja F. (1998) *Do they hear when you cry?* England: Bantam Press.
- Kristeva J. (1982) *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Okoh, J. (2000) *Edewede*. Owerri: Totan Publishers.
- Okoh, J. (2003) *Theatre and women's right in Nigeria*. Port Harcourt: Pearl Publishers.

Bringing our Cultures Home: FESTSCHRIFT FOR BADE AJAYI AT 70

- Osita, E.C. (2012). Culture, gender sensitivity and language use in Tess Onwueme's two plays. In: Adeoye, AbdulRasheed Abiodun (ed.) *The dramaturgy of a theatre sociologist: festschrift in honour of Ayo Akinwale*. pp. 202-218. Ilorin: University of Ilorin press.
- Oyewunmi O. (2003) *African women and feminism: Reflecting the politics of sisterhood*. London: Africa Research & Publications.
- Pilcher J. & Whelehan I. (2004) *50 key concepts in gender studies*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Sen, P. (1999) Difference is not all that counts. In: Deborah Cameron and Joan Scanlon (ed.) (2010) *The trouble and strife reader*. London & New York: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- Walker, A. (1983) *The color purple*. London: The Women's Press.
- Willis E. & Echols A. (1989). *Daring to be bad: Radical feminism in America 1967 – 75*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wood, J. T. (2005) *Gendered lives: Communication gender and culture*. Canada: Thomson and Wadsworth.