

**A STUDY OF THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN NWATA RIE AWỌ AND ERIRI MARA
NGWUGWU**

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Abstract

This study examines the portrayal of women in some Igbo literary works. Literature is an aesthetic creative work of art viewed from different dimensions. The three major genres of literature are prose, drama and poetry. Each genre has its structure and form peculiar to it. Prose is known to be verbose in nature, play takes the form of dialogue/conversation while poetry is concise in the choice of words. One common thing about these three genres of literature is that they are vital in mirroring societal norms from positive or negative perspective. This study examines how women are being portrayed in the society with particular reference to the themes of betrayal, satire and corruption as exemplified in the plays of Onyekachwụ: Nwata Rie Awọ (2004) and Eriri Mara Ngwugwu (2006). The study adopts a descriptive approach and data were elicited from the selected plays as well as any other relevant work. Findings indicate that the character exhibited by some of the women involved in the play include betrayal of husband/betrothed, corruption and other societal ills. Often times, it is the society that pushes the women to act in an awkward manner in the bid to redeem their self-worth and esteem in the society in which they found themselves. The study advocates that women should be more proactive with the men in their lives and desist from actions inimical to their personality wherever they find themselves. The study among other things recommends that women should endeavor to be firm over certain issues of life and not allow the society to push them around.

Keywords: portrayal, women, plays, betrayal, satire, corruption.

Introduction

The society is made up of the masculine and feminine gender. Each gender is known to have a particular way of viewing societal happenings. The men usually have choice of words used in their daily expressions while the women also have their stereotyped form of expressions peculiar to them. In all, the society tilts towards granting the men freedom of speech and action more than the women, hence, women actions are viewed with high level of seriousness. Literary works of art serve as mirror to all actions and activities happening in the individual and communal daily living. Relationships between men and women, husbands and wives in their families, friends and close associates in work place or wherever one finds himself/herself are not left out. A good number of literary artists capture these in their literary works of art to make for realism.

Obviously, there are two major types of literature; oral/traditional literature and written/modern literature. Each of the two parts has three genres namely-prose, drama and poetry. For oral/traditional literature, just as the name implies has oral performance as mode of delivery and centers majorly on the traditional world view and belief system of the various dialect groups in Igbo land. Some of the prose narratives which are based on folktales are culture specific meaning that there exists variant forms of the tales but with similar moral lessons capable of making a positive influence in the upbringing of the child. For traditional drama, masquerade takes the lead across various parts of Igbo land while for poetry, aspects of the Igbo traditional daily living such as work, religious activities, joyous occasions (marriage, child birth), and sad occasions (death, mourning, loss of valuables, etc.) are fully represented in relevant songs and poems.

For modern/written literature, authors of prose narratives, drama or poetry are at liberty to choose their subject matter and expands it in a way that various themes are implored in mirroring societal events from different perspective of life. To some of the authors, the focus of their work might be on men and their activities in the society, women and their activities in the society or children and their behavioural tendencies from the positive or negative point of view. These authors oftentimes showcase the cultural

aspects of the society where they belong or found themselves. This study, therefore looks at the portrayal of women in the Igbo society with particular reference to themes of betrayal, satire and corruption. To achieve this, the works of Onyekaonwu-*Nwata Rie Awọ* (2004) and *Erii Mara Ngwugwu* (2006) are reviewed to establish the facts about women in the selected themes.

The arrangement of the paper is based on a concise contextualization of the study, a discussion of the methodological approach used to investigate the existence of the portrayal of betrayal, satire and corrupt practices in the selected plays.

Review of related literature.

In this section of the study, various scholarly works focused on the selected plays will be reviewed first, then, some of the previous works on portrayal of women based on different cultural perspectives as seen from the use of proverbs and other minor literary genres to reference the image of women in positive or negative perspective will also be reviewed. This enables the study to bring to the fore the already existing literature and proffer the need for the gap in literature which this present study sets out to fill.

Some researchers have been able to carry out some research works on the selected plays. For instance, Uzochukwu (2014) studied a critical analysis of *Nwata Rie Awọ*. The studied explored everything about the tragic hero, Awọrọ by looking into the structure of the play. Through the structure, the following pattern such as exposition, the inciting force, the rising action, the climax, the denouement, the dramatic convention and language were critically analyzed. This shows that the structure of *Nwata Rie Awọ*, being the first play by Onyekaonwu falls in tune with the accepted structure of tragedy by playwrights.

Akpu (2014) examined the narrative structure of incest as a taboo in selected plays of Onyekaonwu. The study reviewed three of Onyekaonwu's plays-*Nwata Rie Awọ* (1980), *Erii Mara Ngwugwu* (1985) and *Oku Ghara Ite* (1994). The issue of incest were identified and analyzed alongside with other societal ills such as kidnapping, murder, stealing, prostitution, materialism, and bribery.

Ikwubuzo (2014) study focused on the revisiting the question of tragic protagonist in Onyekaonwu's plays. He reviewed four plays namely-*Nwata Rie Awọ*, *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*, *Uwa Ntọọ*, and *Oku Ghara Ite*. His analysis on characterization is based on the protagonists in the four selected plays-Awọrọ (*Nwata Rie Awọ*), Ochonganooko and Okwuike Ogbunanjo (*Erii Mara Ngwugwu*), Ebubedike and Oguamalam (*Uwa Ntọọ*), and Ukpabi (*Oku Ghara Ite*). He discovered that most of the tragic characters in Onyekaonwu plays are seen as bad men who contributed immensely to their downfall from the characters they exhibited from the beginning of the play. This brought about their death at the end of the plays which justifies the plays as tragic.

Onwudiwe (2014) reviewed some selected plays of Onyekaonwu from the literary artist as a sociolinguist. The selected plays were-*Nwata Rie Awọ*, *Oku Uzu Daa Ibube* and *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*. He examined the selected plays from the sociolinguistic consciousness point of view. The social and psychological cum linguistic variables that influenced the playwright's artistry decision were employed. The playwright's manipulation of time (ancient and modern era) were put into consideration especially in *Erii Mara Ngwugwu* which makes his works a masterpiece to behold.

Having reviewed some of the various extant literature based on the selected plays, it is discovered that no scholarly work to the best of the researcher's knowledge has been done on the portrayal of the major female characters in the selected plays and this, therefore, points out to the gap in literature which this study sets out to discourse.

Balogun (2010) examines the proverbial oppression of women in Yoruba culture. He sees proverbs as channels for the oppression of women, thereby creating gender imbalance. The objective of Balogun's study hinges on the pervasiveness of oppressive proverbs and how they can be overcome using Yoruba proverbs. To Balogun (2010), some Yoruba proverbs present women as having child-like characteristics to err and be disciplined by the male folk, beings who are unpredictable in sexual and marital matters,

covetous and known for unpredictable characters, prone to be married off at a certain given age, jealous beings, incapable of keeping secrets and should try never to have only female children for the propagation of family lineage. He notes that the points raised has oppressive representations on the identity, freedom, rights and empowerment of women. These proverbs depict women as differing from men in diverse ways. He recommends that through proper education and commitment to the justification of feminine gender, oppressive proverbs can be restructured, and possibly make reference to both genders (male and female).

Mmadike (2014) studies the Igbo society perception of womanhood using sexist proverbs. The aim of his study is to show how women are conceptualized in the Igbo language. In the study, Mmadike uses fifteen proverbs. From his findings, the proverbs present male domination, sex differentiation and women as sex objects. Under male domination, women are seen as individuals that are incapable of performing certain given tasks, this is evident in the way men and women urinate-*nwaanyi si na ya na nwoke ha, ya nyulie mamiri elu* (if a woman claims equality with a man, let her urinate upwards). Nonetheless, he notes that modern-day women now stand to urinate, unlike the olden day's contemporaries. This to a large extent shows the changing roles evident in contemporary Igbo society. Women are also seen as people who can only earn the respect they deserve when they are married-*mma/ugwu nwaanyi bu di ya* (the beauty/prestige/pride of a woman is derived from her husband). For sex differentiation, the physiognomy of the female genitals is explored and ridiculed-*Otu ma uma egbu amuma, o gaghị ezo mmiri* (the vagina is feigning in vain as lightning, it will not bring rain). Mmadike (2014) further observes that the proverbs are laden with sexual symbols and images. As sex objects, the female genital is ridiculed and its depending on that of the male to function effectively shown to a large extent-*ikpu ukwu a na-asọ anya, o bu ya ga-ara onwe ya?* (a large vulva that is regarded with awe, will it be sexed by itself?). The proverbs help in sustaining the cultural biases of the males towards their female counterparts, thereby enforcing cultural stereotype in the Igbo society.

Emeka-Nwobia & Ndimele (2019) study is on the cultural conceptualization of women in Igbo proverbs. The objective of the study is to examine the nexus between language, gender and culture. By applying the Lakoff's concept of Women Language and Critical discourse Analytical theory, the study specifically analyzes the traditions, views, perceptions, and roles of women in traditional and contemporary Igbo society. Forty-five Igbo proverbs about women were selected from both written and oral sources. These proverbs literarily mentioned women (old women-agadi nwaanyi, young woman/lady-nwaagboghọ, wife-nwunye and the woman's body) and explored its portrayal without much attention to the contextualized meaning which may vary according to usage at different context, though being one of changing role of the fluidities of proverbs. In the findings, they reveal that notwithstanding the changing role of women in Igbo society, the cultural interpretations/connotations attached to these proverbs are still untainted. Women are still stereotyped as subservient, weak, vulnerable, and evil, using proverbs. The study concludes that this cultural representations extols hegemonic masculinity and femininity.

Ezebube, Chukwunke & Okeke (2021) study is on the conceptualization of women in Igbo riddles. The study examined how Igbo women are conceived and portrayed and try to ascertain the Igbo ideologies behind such conceptualization. They adopted the Conceptual Metaphor Theory using twelve purposely selected Igbo riddles on women that cut across the five core states, qualitatively analyzed. The findings indicate that the women are conceptualized as plants, animals, and celestial bodies. As plants, the women are represented using flowering plants such as maize (ọka), palm tree (nkwu) and African star apple (udara). In the analyzed riddles, plants are used to communicate the reproductive ability, beauty, tenderness and the marriageable status of Igbo women. As animals, Igbo women are seen as millipedes (ariri/esu) indicating women's beauty and gait. As celestial bodies, Igbo women are also portrayed as the moon (onwa), which shows the radiation of their beauty. They study concludes that even though riddles are considered as one of the minor literary genres/aspects of oral literature, they are very richly laden with information on the Igbo society.

Onukawa (2021e) study is on the pejorative portrayals of women in some Igbo proverbs: An aspect of hate speech. The study brings to the fore some of the Igbo proverbs involving the women folk and

which are non-complimentary and may generate ill feelings. The study adopts the Feminist Theory and descriptive approach in the analysis of data elicited from texts on Igbo proverbs and speeches from people (elders), as well as introspection, as the researcher is a native speaker of the Igbo language. The selected proverbs made mention of women in different categories-young and old. The proverbs portray women variously as irresponsible, weak, unreliable, inferior, foolish, and wicked in the context of their usage. The paper argued that these pejorative portrayals of the women in the Igbo selected proverbs are evident of hate speech capable of violation of human dignity, causing violence, provocation of distress, violation of aspects of our cultural norm, dangerous to societal development, endanger economic development, and threat to security all depict aspects of hate speech. The study concludes that the stereotype and derogatory representation of women in the Igbo culture system abound and recommends more studies in this direction to add to the body of knowledge.

The above reviewed studies are very insightful and relevant to the present study but none of them reflect the portrayal of women in *Nwata Rie Awọ* and *Erii Mara Ngwugwu* with particular reference to the themes of betrayal, satire and corruption but reveal how women are conceived in literary genres such as proverbs and riddles. The purpose of this study is focused on how the women, who are major characters in the selected plays are portrayed.

Objectives

The study sets out to identify the various themes of the portrayal of women as available in the selected plays *Erii Mara Ngwugwu* and *Nwata Rie Awọ*. The specific objectives are:

- To identify the major female characters portrayed as betrayal beings, satiric beings and corrupt beings
- To establish the reason behind such portrayal

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive approach and data are elicited from the selected plays of Onyekaonwu-*Erii Mara Ngwugwu* (2006) and *Nwata Rie Awọ* (2004). The major female characters represented in the plays were identified and analyzed.

Data presentation and analysis

In this section of the study, the portrayal of women with particular reference to *Erii Mara Ngwugwu* and *Nwata Rie Awọ* in the themes of betrayal, satire and corruption are exposed one after another.

Women as Betrayal Beings

In *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*, some of the female characters exhibited some characters presenting them as people who betrayed the trust invested on them as wife to the husband and/or betrothed. Betrayal occurs when one of a party involved in a relationship carries out an action capable of bringing a breach of peace and harmony between them. The two female characters portrayed in this light are Oriaku Okwundu (Okwuike Ogbunanjo's wife) and Uduaku, her daughter (betrothed to Ndubuisi).

In *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*, Oriaku Okwundu, who is Okwuike Ogbunanjo's wife, at some point in their marriage discovers that her husband is involved in some kind of shady dealings three months after the birth of their daughter, Uduaku. She made some frantic efforts to caution the husband to desist from such acts capable of tarnishing his image and personal integrity but to no avail. She put her ears and eyes to the ground and discovers that the husband is not only involved in stealing but is also into kidnapping, ritual killings and selling of human parts. Upon this discovery, she couldn't bear the shock and had to report the husband to the police. After thorough search and investigation by the law enforcement agents and upon conviction by the court of law, her husband, Okwuike Ogbunanjo was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment as seen in the following excerpts she narrated to their children, Okoto and Uduaku:

ORIAKU	Mụ na nna ụnụ na-ebi n'udo	Your father and I were living peacefully
OKWUNDU:	Tutu ruo ọnwá atọ e jiri	Till three months after
	Wee mụchaa Uduaku	Uduaku's birth

<p>Mgbe ahuzi, nwoke a maliteziri Na-eme o puo ma o richaa nri anyasi, O dighi alatazi wee ruo na chi ofufo; Otutu mgbe o noo abali abuo Ma o bu ato n'uzo tutu o larute ulo. Ka ihe a mekataziri, Amalitere m juwa ya ajuju Gbasara ije ya, Ma o dighi ihe o kwere korom. Udi ndi mmadu m na-ahuzi Ya na ha, Na udi ihe di iche iche O na-ebulata n'ulo ma o latawa Mere m ka m tinye anya na mmiri Tutu ruo mgbe m choputara Na o bu ohi ka o na-ezu ...Nke izu ohi bu obere okwu Achoputakwaziri m na nwoke a Na-ato mmadu ma na-azutakwa ufo du azuta, kidnaps and buys humans Na-egbukwa, na-ewere akuku ahụ ha di iche iche kills and picks some parts Na-eresi ndi na-agwo ogwu ego.</p>	<p>hen, this man started living after night food and coming back next day oftentimes, he stays two days or three outside before coming home as this continues, I started questioning him concerning his movement but he refused to tell me anything the kind of people I do see him with and different kinds of things he brings back home while returning moved me to keep an eye on him till I discovered that he is into stealing stealing is even a small case I also discovered that this man azuta, kidnaps and buys humans kills and picks some parts to sell for rituals</p>
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(pp. 6-7)

Upon this discovery, she did not raise alarm immediately. She took out sometime to plead with the husband to desist from such actions and lifestyle capable of tarnishing his image and that of his family but he remains adamant. He resorts to beating her up black and blue that resulted to her being sick for a whole week. The last straw that broke the camel's back was the day she stumbles into a parcel but behold human parts such as head, tongue, eyes and fingers happens to be the content of the parcel. This excerpt confirms it as follows:

<p>ORIAKU OKWUNDU: Akporo m ya otutu mgbe, Rio ya ka o wepu aka enwe n'ofe Ma ihe o mere bu I jide m, Kuo m ihe tinka kuru 'paani' Nke mere ka m ria ahụ otu izu uka. Ubochi m huziri ihe ka m anya ele Bu ubochi m gara na nnukwu Ochie igbe di n'ulo anyi icho ihe Wee hu otu ngwugwu Ka m topere ngwugwu a, Ahuru m isi mmadu, ire mmadu, Anya mmadu na mkpisi aka mmadu.</p>	<p>I called him severally, pleaded with him to desist from such acts but what he did was to hold me and panel beat me Which resulted in my being sick for one week the day I saw it all was the day I went to a big old box in the house to look for something and saw a parcel as I untied this parcel I saw human head, human tongue, Human eye and human fingers</p>
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(Pp. 7-8)

This discovery heightened her fears but she could not shout to raise alarm rather she resorts to inviting the police to the house to see things for themselves. The police put up a search for the husband and arrested him. He was taken to the court, tried, was found guilty and consequently sentenced to twenty (20) years imprisonment. This did not augur well with the husband as he vowed to kill her upon his release as reported by those present at the court on the day the judgment was given. This prompted her escape from Iduma (their home town) with her two children (Okoto and Uduaku) to Iguedo where they were living now. Not only that, she also changed their surname from Ogbunanjo to Okwundu. She was cautious of their safety that was the reason behind not disclosing their where about to anybody except her friend, Ikodi as contained in the excerpt below:

<p>ORIAKU Akpata oyi wee juputa m ahụ. OKWUNDU: Ujọ di egwu turu m Ma o nyeghi m onu iti mkpu Ihe m mere bu igbaga ozigbo Ga kporo ndi uwe ojii. Ha sooro m ozigbo ozigbo Gaa wee hu ihe ndi a nile; Ha malitere ozigbo chowa ya, Tutu na aka ha akpara ya Ebe ya na ndi otu ya na-anu mmanya. E mechara tuo ya mkporo Iri afọ abuo, ...Ndi huru ya ubochi amara ya ikpe Biara kporo m na o siri na Ozọ anya ya ga-akpara m Na ya ga-eji mma wee gbuo m Umụ m o bu osisi nuru Na a ga-egbu ya kwuru Ma mu bu mmadu nuru Wee riwe mbombo; O bu ya bu na anyi No n'Iguedo taa. O bu ya bu na anyi Hapuru Ogbunanjo zawa Okwundu. O dighi onye o bua m gwatara ebe m Karia enyi m nwanyi Ikodi, n'Iduma.</p>	<p>My body was filled with goose pimple I became really terrified But I remained speechless What I did was to run immediately To inform the police They followed me immediately To go and see things for themself They started to search for him immediately Until they apprehended him Where he was drinking with his group He was later imprisoned For twenty (20) years Those who witnessed his being sentenced Came and informed me that he said that Any time he sees me He will kill me with matchet My children, it is only a tree that heard That it will be killed can stand still But I as a human being heard and ran away That was why we Were at Iguedo today That was why we Left Ogbunanjo to Okwundu na-aga, No one knows my whereabouts Except my friend, Ikodi, from Iduma.</p>
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(p. 8)

The husband, Okwuike Ogbunanjo, upon release from prison searched for them and made true to his threat by killing his wife as seen in the excerpt below:

<p>OKWUIKE: I ghoola ozu ugbu a Olee ebe umu m no? Olee Okoto? Olee Uduaku? Kpotara m ha ozigbo ozigbo!!</p>	<p>You have become a corpse now Where are my children? Where is Okoto? Where is Uduaku? Bring them to me immediately!!</p>
<p>ORIAKU OKWUNDU: O dikwaghi nke di ndu n'ime ha Mmiri riri ha mgbe anyi Na-agbalata ebe a. Biko, Okwuike, egbula m, Hapu m ka anyi kpezie Biko, biko, biko,biko!</p>	<p>None of them is alive now They got drowned while we were escaping to this place Please, Okwuike, do not kill me Leave me let's settle Please, please, please, please! (Tightly hold her on the throat)</p>
<p>OKWUIKE: (Todosie ya aka ike n'akpiri) Na umu m mere gini? Na mmiri mere gini? Ka anyi kpezie gini? Na ndu ka o bu i onwu. I chere na o bu i ga kporo m Ndi uwe ojii? I chere na mu anwuola? I ga-ebu uzọ ga mata Ka onwu na-adi ugbu a, ugbu a.</p>	<p>That my children did what? That the river did what? For us to settle what? In life or in death? Do you think it is inviting for me The Police You thought I was dead? You will first go to experience How death is now, now.</p>

(Pp.17-18)

The unfortunate situation is that the son, Okoto out of anger after hearing the mother's side of the story mistakenly killed the stranger from Iduma sent by the mother's friend, Ikodi to warn her of the impending danger. Okwuike Ogbunanjo felt that the wife betrayed him by calling the police into their house which led to his arrest and subsequent sentencing to twenty (20) years imprisonment. To him, if anyone should betray him, it must not be his wife.

On the other hand, Uduaku, who was betrothed to Ndubisi, met Ochonganooko few days to her wedding, who expressed his head over heels in love with her. He (Ochonganooko) promised to pay back to Ndubisi double of what he spent on Uduaku, take her abroad to wed her, help her learn a trade, and upon their return from abroad, buy a car for her and give her a job. These promises that made Uduaku to betray Ndubisi are seen in the excerpt below:

<p>UDUAKU: O siri mu kwerehaa nke taa nke echi Na ya ga-akwuchigha Ndubisi Ihe nile o mere, mmaji Duru m gaa ala Bekee anyi agbaa akwukwo. Na tutu anyi aloa na mu Ga-amuta otu aka oru, Anyi lota, ya egonye m moto, Bidoro m oru,o (p. 28).</p>	<p>He said once I accept without delay That he will pay Ndubisi back All that he spent, double Take me to Oversea for us to wed That before our return that i will learn a skill, Upon our return, he buys a car for me, start a business for me.</p>
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However, Uduaku, while still contemplating on what will be the consequences of her action considering the fact that Ndubisi has already spent a lot on her marriage rites and preparations for the wedding ceremony, her friend, Adaaku quickly convinced her to damn the consequences and accept Ochonganooko's proposal in order not to miss these mouth watery and juicy promises of a better life which is better than what Ndubisi has to offer her now or in the near future. The excerpts below confirms her opinion:

<p>ADAAKU: Agbamakwukwo nsi ka o bu nke ahuru? Nwoke m leekwe gi Ka i ga-ahuchaa isi n'anya gaa kpoo? Ka m juo gi, e ji ahuhu anya isi? Gaa choo ebe Ochonganooko no ugbo a, Gwa ya na I kwerele n'ihe nile o kwuru. Nke a na-eme echi, ya buru taa (p. 29).</p>	<p>What type of nonsense wedding? My guy see you Are you going to act foolishly? Let me ask you, is suffering beneficial? Go and look for Ochonganooko now, Tell him that you've accepted all he said Let everything begin to happen now.</p>
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This is a clear indication that both Uduaku and her friend, Adaaku are partners in crime. They are being driven by material things, not in any way ready to suffer or pass through hard times in life. Uduaku took to her friend's advice, dumped Ndubisi on their wedding day right there in the Church and eloped with Ochonganooko, her new found love.

In the play, *Nwata Rie Aworo*, Obioma, who was betrothed to Anene decided to pitch tent with Aworo after Aworo's show of prowess in defeating Akatoosi, the chief/lead wrestler of Amudele clan in a wrestling match competition. Despite her friend, Ekemma's advice/warning to desist from her plans of disappointing Anene who was coming with his people to perform Obioma's marriage rites that day, Obioma went ahead with her plans as her heart beats very strongly for Aworo. In the Igbo traditional set up, it is an aberration for a woman to first profess interest in a man. This is a very wrong move by Obioma which cheapens her before Aworo and also added to Aworo's less value for her. The following excerpts supports the claim:

<p>EKEMMA: Ma ka m jukwaa, Gini mere obi ji atwa gi, Ebe e kwuru na Anene ga-ebutere</p>	<p>But let me ask, Why are you heartbroken? Since Anene is bringing</p>
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<p>OBIOMA: Nna gi mmanya n'isi gi taa? Akuko! mmanya onye ka o na-ebute? Di buru maka nke Anene Anoro m anughi di Onye ga-eri awo ga-eri nke mara abuba. Eji anya ama oka chara acha.</p> <p>EKEMMA: Obioma, I bidokwa Ogba nho di aghaghi iluta eke ogba I jula Obi, chuo Chike Gbanahu Oti, hapu Eke Ugbu a Anene eluwela; gi ilu</p> <p>OBIOMA: Ekemma, o putara na mu amaghi ihe kwesiri m? Ka m gwa gi, kemgbe m jiri huchaa ike Aworo kpara unyaahu, amaghi m ebe m no. O bu Aworo kwesiri ilu m, Obi m na-achosi ya ike Obi na-atuwa m ma m cheta Anene Tumadu n'ije a o na-akwado ibia be anyi taa. Agaghi m adi ndu luo Anene- Nwa okuko, nwa uchicha, nwa mbe, n'ebe Aworo no. Tufia! Ngwuro mmadu agaghi alu m O bu Aworo ga-alu m Aga m agbalakwu ya n'abali taa. Ya ka m siri ka m bia gwa gi.</p> <p>EKEMMA: Nne! amakwaghi m ihe m ga-ekwu Aka di gi mma hinye n'isi Ma otu ihe m ga-agwa gi bu na gi bu ochu ihe ukwu ga-ezute agba enyi. Ma gi bu nwa aturu ga-epu mpi ekwo di kwa gi aru</p>	<p>Wine to your father on your head today? Story! Whose wine is he bringing? If husband is like that of Anene I rather stay without husband A toad eater must eat the fattest A ripped maize is seen with the eyes. Obioma, we have started again Husband selector is bound to marry python You rejected Obi, drove Chike away Refused Oti, left Eke Now Anene is now bitter to you Ekemma, does it mean that I don't What is good for me? Let me tell you, since I witnessed Aworo's powerful display yesterday I don't know myself Aworo should be the one to marry me My heart is so desirous of him My heart breaks when I remember Anene Because of his intending visit to our family today I will not be alive to marry Anene a chick, a cockroach, a cat Compared to Aworo. God forbid! A disabled person will not marry me Aworo will marry me I will run to his house tonight. That's what I came to inform you My dear! I don't know what to say Do as you pleases But one thing I will tell you is that you Seeker of huge things will surely meet obstacles. You should be ready to bear the consequences of your actions.</p>
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(pp. 41-42).

Quite unlike Adaaku, (Uduaku's friend) Ekemma, (Obioma's friend) is vehemently opposed to Obioma's plans to betray Anene, her betrothed without mincing words. Obioma, being strong willed is hell bent on carrying out her plans which later landed her in a terrible tragedy.

Women as Satirical Beings

In the traditional Igbo society, there are certain situations under which women are seriously ridiculed, though not their own making. One of such situations is as it concerns childbearing. The Igbo culture has high premium on procreation that once marriage is contracted between a man and a woman, everybody is full of expectation to hear the cry of a baby in their home in the next nine (9) months. At the expiration of nine (9) months and nothing is heard, tension and pressure begins to mount on the woman. A woman who gives birth to only female children is not regarded and it is worst for her if she remains childless. No one reckons with her and the likelihood of bringing in another wife is highly guaranteed except in some very rare situations where her husband loves and values her more than any other thing.

In the selected plays, Uduaku, (Ochonganooko's wife) and Obioma (Aworo's wife) happen to fall into the category of women whose inability to have male children for their husbands' results to ridicule not just from outsiders but from their own husbands. In the case of Uduaku, (Ochonganooko's wife) getting pregnant is always difficult for her and when she succeeds, she gives birth to only female children.

Therefore, in her third pregnancy, her husband threatens to marry another wife if she ends up in giving birth to another female child making them three (3) girls in a row without a male to continue the family lineage. The following excerpt confirms it:

<p>ỌCHỌNGANOOKO: Ghuchaa ntị gị nke oma Ọ dị ihe m ga-ekwu, ọ dị ihe Na-abughị ezi okwu na ya ị gwa m Nke a bụ ya afọ iri na ise Anyị jiri buru di na nwunye. Ikoeze, ada anyị nwanyị Agbaala iri afọ na otu ugbo a Kemgbe e jiri mụchaa Ọluchi, Ime na-esiri gị ike Wee rukwee n'ime nke a Ị dị ugbo a. Ugbo a anyị lotarala Ịkpangwu, Ma gaakwala mechaara ndị be unu Omenala fọdurụ n'isi gị, Ọ bụ uche m Ikwu okwu ịlụbata nwanyị ọzọ Ọ bughị nanị n'ihi na ime na-esiri gị ike Ka m ji eche nke a Kama isi ihe o jiri dị m mkpa Bụ na ọ dibeghị nwoke ị mụtara (pp. 45-46).</p>	<p>Listen attentively There's something I will say, if there's Anything that is not true, you tell me This is fifteen (15) years We became husband and wife Ikoeze, our first daughter Is now eleven (11) years old Since after giving birth to Ọluchi, You are having infertility issues Till this pregnancy You are carrying now Now that we are back to Ịkpangwu, and I have completed your traditional marriage rites, I have it in mind To plan to marry a second wife Not because of infertility issues That am thinking about this But the most important thing Is that you have no male child</p>
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The fear of this threat led Uduaku to do the unthinkable to enable her retain her position in her husband's life as his one and only wife.

For Obioma, (Aworo's wife), her husband as a warrior expected his first child to be a male but her inability to give birth to a male child first aggravated her husband, Aworo. He develops hatred for her and apart from going after other women, he accused her of poisoning his food, sends her away with the child and consequently ended up kidnapping and selling both mother and child into slavery. The following excerpts speaks:

<p>NWAMGBOGO...Na di gị na-ekwu na ya agaghị alukwa gị ọzọ; na ị gbasoro ya agbaso, na onweghị mgbe o jiri buru uche ya ịlụ gị, Na ị gara ịmụ nwa mbụ mụọ nwanyị (p.66).</p>	<p>That your husband is saying that He will not marry you again; That you forced yourself on him, that it was never his intention to marry you, that You gave birth first to a female child.</p>
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This is how Aworo went about castigating Obioma before his friends as narrated by Obioma's friend, Nwamgbogo. The following words of Aworo confirms it that he is not happy that Obioma gave birth to a female child, thus:

<p>AWORO: Nwa anụ ohia, ị na-ebechu ebechu Taa ka ọ ga-ebiri mụ na gị. Ị na-agbaso onye amaghị ihe Ka ọ lụwa gị; O wee buru mụ bụ Aworo, nwa Obidike, Agụ ndu ga-alu nwaanyị mgbakwute. (p. 68).</p>	<p>Foolish one! you are yet to cry Today marks the end for you and I You are running after a fool To marry you then, it is me Aworo, son of Obidike, a living tiger will marry A woman who forces herself on man.</p>
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In *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*, women are satirized as being valueless and demeaned specie incapable of propagating the family lineage. This prompted Ochonganooko's desire and threat to bring in another wife peradventure Uduaku happens to give birth to another female child.

Women as Corrupt Beings

Women are seen as corrupt beings in the society by some kind of character they exhibit often times. The same society that pushes the women to act in self-defense will still turn around to judge them. Ochonganokoo, (Uduaku's husband) threatens to marry another wife if she gives birth to another female child. In order to maintain her position as the only wife, coupled with the fear of having yet another female child thereby creating room for her husband to make well his threat, she hired the services of the Nurse attending to her and other pregnant women visiting the clinic for ante-natal care for a switch of her baby with that of another peradventure she eventually gives birth to a female child. This is an aspect of child-trafficking which is very rampant in our society of today. Bribing a Nurse to render such services to her is a very corrupt practice that can land one into many years of jail term if proved in court. The following excerpts between the Nurse and Uduaku corresponds to the claim:

<p>UDUAKU: Na mu amutabeghiji ya nwoke, Na o buru na mu amuo nke a, O burukwa nwanyi Na ya ga-agba m alukwaghim, Gaa luru nwanyi ozo; Na o dighi ihe a ga-ekwute ya. Biko noosu, nwanyi, ibe m Nyerenu m aka. Obi ga-atuwa m, Ma a lukpo m nwanyi ozo n'ulo a Biko, i mara ihe o ga-eri kwuo.</p> <p>NOOSU: Gini ka i na-ekwu? Abu m Chukwu na-enye nwa, Ka si ka m nye gi nwa nwoke?</p> <p>UDUAKU: Ihe m chorọ bu nwa nwoke, Uzo abula uzo Gwa m ihe o ga-ewe m (Pp. 49-50).</p>	<p>That I have not given birth to a son That if I give birth to this one It turns out to be a girl That he will divorce me To marry another woman That it is not negotiable Please, Nurse, my fellow woman Assist me I will be heartbroken If another woman is married in this house Please, say what it will take What are you saying? Are I God that gives children For me to give you a male child? What I need is a son, No matter the way out Tell me what it will take me.</p>
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Uduaku, out of desperation had to deposit four hundred thousand naira to the Nurse, promising to give the remaining balance of one hundred thousand naira to her when the deal is done. The Nurse accepted to help her out of persuasion. Thus, the society has a way of roping one in to take actions which are regrettable at the end, if discovered. Nneka, the real product of Uduaku's pregnancy committed incest with her father, Ochonganooko. Thus, bribery and corruption an ill wind that blows the society any good even in our contemporary society has been an age long practice. Uduaku, out of desperation bribed the Nurse to get involved in this corrupt practice, while the Nurse out of quest for material possession and love of money could not resist the juicy offer. However, any evil committed towards humanity cannot be covered up forever. One thing leads to another and it was not long before the Nurse falls into another grievous mistake and in the bid to proffer a lasting solution in order not to lose her job, every damn secret that was hidden become exposed. Her insatiable quest for material possession made her to be living a promiscuous life that led to committing incest, a very serious abominable act in the Igbo traditional society.

Summary and conclusion

Literature is an aesthetic work of art through which the society is being mirrored. Authors in their wisdom tend to waive in the various themes around the societal happenings as it concerns the portrayal of men and women in a given society. The study focused on the selected plays *Nwata Rie Awọ* and *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*. Some of the existing scholarly works based on the selected plays such as Uzochukwu (2014), Akpu (2014), Ikwubuzo, (2014), and Onwudiwe (2014) were reviewed and it is discovered that

none of the existing literature examined the themes of betrayal, satire and corruption as it affects women. This study, therefore, examined the major women characters portrayed as betrayal beings, satirical beings and corrupt beings as the gap in literature it sets out to fill. This study among other things discovers that oftentimes, the women folk were pushed by the society to exhibit these negative tendencies in order to protect their self-worth in the society and not necessarily that they are prone to evil tendencies.

Oriaku Okwundu (Okwuike Ogbunanjo's wife from Iduma) after discovery of her husband's dirty secret lifestyle of ritual killing and marketing of human body parts, could not withstand the shock, hence she reported to the police to exonerate herself as partner in crime. Although the husband's way of life is not welcomed in the Igbo traditional society, the same society frowns at the fact that the wife is the one that betrayed her husband to the public, especially to the police, knowing fully well what will be the consequences of her action. To her, this is a way to sanitize the society of bad eggs, but at last, it cost her the precious life she was trying to protect. In the same vein, her daughter, Uduaku, out of quest for fast and insatiable lifestyle (but with the consent of her friend, Adaaku, her chief bridesmaid) betrays Ndubisi, her betrothed, on their wedding day despite all he, Ndubisi spent on her, for Ochonganooko, who promised her heaven on earth, damning the consequences of her actions. Nneka, (Ochonganooko and Uduaku's daughter) secretly betrays Tagboo, her fiancé by having amorous affairs with a married man who turns out to be her real biological father. Obioma betrays Anene, her betrothed, for Aworo (the champion wrestler) the very day Anene and his people were to visit her family to perform her marriage rites despite being warned by her friend, Ekemma. The themes of satire and corruption are not left out. In the Igbo traditional society, a married woman giving birth first to a female child or giving birth to only female children is seen as a taboo as if female children are not human beings. This is exactly what landed Obioma and Uduaku into the serious problems the both found themselves. For Uduaku to come out of this reproach, she ventured into bribery and corrupt practices just in the name of having a son for her husband. For Obioma, her husband Aworo hated her to the extent of wrongly accusing her of poisoning his food, followed by domestic violence, ending the marriage as well as kidnapping both mother and daughter and consequently sold them into slavery.

Therefore, the study posits that women should desist from actions capable of portraying them in bad light in the society and adopt a better way of protecting their self-esteem in the society to avoid a situation whereby their personal integrity will be at risk. The study recommends that instead of staying in an emotionally and physically abusive relationships, it is better to walk away quietly alive.

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