

## Female Self-affirmation and Self-fulfilment in Nwapa's *One is Enough* (1981)

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### Abstract:

The portrayal of women in most African male-authored novels which appeared before and after the independences, frustrated many African female intellectuals. The latter considered that some African menwriters have not presented a fair image of women in their writings. For them, they have marginalised and relegated women to second-class citizens. Thus, these female intellectuals set out in their turn to write literary texts in which they correct what they considered to be shortcomings in African male writings. Among these women writers stands out Flora Nwapa who deals in *One is Enough* (1981) with issues such as gender, sexuality, tradition, postcolonialism, modernity, culture, sociology, psychology and materialism in Nigerian society in particular and African societies in general. Leaning on African feminism, postcolonialism, sociology and psychology as theories, this article analyses female self-fulfilment and self-affirmation in *One is Enough*. In this perspective, the paper zeroes in on the awareness-raising about women's right to defend their opinion and physical integrity. It also sheds light on the possibility for women to find fulfilment outside marriage.

**Keywords :** *female, self-fulfilment, self-affirmation, marriage, feminism, postcolonialism.*

### I- Introduction :

With the introduction and spread of western education and Christianity in Nigeria, power relationships between men and women have changed considerably. Traditional norms and values have not been spared either by the change which began during the colonial period and gained more ground after colonialism and the Nigerian Civil War. Adeline Apena states that the Nigerian Civil War also known as the Biafra War (1967 – 1970) transformed social values and almost revolutionized gender relations and attitudes towards sexuality (284)<sup>1</sup>. Among the social effects which Apena identifies is the emergence of a new breed of women who are very different from those often depicted in African male writings. In fact, in their literary production, African male writers very often marginalize women, urging Kumah (2000 : 6) to contend that :

As a consequence of the male-dominated literary tradition, many of the depictions of African women are reductive – perpetuating popular myths of female subordination. Female characters in male-authored works are rarely granted primary status – their roles often trivialized to varying degrees – and they are depicted as silent and submissive in nature.<sup>2</sup>

Not only are female characters silent and submissive but wife beating, without retaliation in most cases, is also common in African male-authored novels. Ekwefi and Ojiugo in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Agom and Nwadi in *Highlife for Lizards* (1965), Wangari in *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), Ahurole in *The Concubine* (1966), Nyokabi in *Weep Not Child* (1964), Maram in *Buur Tilleen* (1972), Wanja's cousin in *Petals of Blood* (1977), etc. have all undergone this phenomenon.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Mary D. Mears. "Choice and discovery : An analysis of women and culture in Flora Nwapa's fiction." Graduate Theses and Dissertations, 2009, p. 9

<http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/2099>

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Catherine Mibenge. "The Depiction of Women by African Women Writers: Culture, Education and Power." p. 1 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304571182>

Another thematic commonality of African male writings which characterizes female subordination is the paramount importance which is granted to marriage for a woman. In *Caught in the Storm* (1963), for example, Mama Téné tells her daughter : “*A girl’s noblest goal is her own home. Yes, her home, a husband and children. This is the greatest happiness.*” (52). Also, in Onuora Nzekwu’s *Highlife for Lizards*, Udezue is so keen on his daughter and her fellow women teachers getting married that Nwakego asks him : “*Do you ever think, Father, that girls are good for anything else but marriage?*” (190). Again, in Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine*, Okachi is distressed by the fact that : “*she – an old woman – should still be enjoying the protection and joys of a husband while her daughter, a mere child, was playing the widow.*” (51). This great importance accorded to marriage for woman can also be found in *Maimouna* (1952), *The Old Man and the Medal* (1956), *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *Three Suitors, One Husband* (1960), *Agatha Moudio’s Son* (1965), *Chirundu* (1979), etc.

This misogynic portrayal of women frustrated some African women intellectuals who set out to write so as to depict a fair image of women. In order to deconstruct these two patterns of the literary production of African men writers, African women writers, in their novels, would give the woman the “*freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely into action.*”<sup>3</sup> These female writers also show women that marriage is not the only way, they “*make their female protagonists burst the marriage institution when it becomes too subjugating.*”<sup>4</sup> This is illustrated in *Efuru* (1966), *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *Woman at Point Zero* (1975), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *So Long a Letter* (1979), *Kehinde* (1994). This can also be seen in *One is Enough* (1981) where Nwapa depicts female characters who are remarkable by their freedom of expression and who retaliate when their husbands beat them. Nwapa also presents Amaka, the heroine, who not only leaves her husband but refuses to remarry as well.

One may then wonder what inspiration women should draw from Amaka’s uncommon choices. From an African feminist perspective, the article sets out to analytically cast light on female self-affirmation and self-fulfilment in Nwapa’s *One Is Enough* (1981), which figuratively features the changes in social values, gender relations and attitudes towards sexuality in Nigeria after colonialism and the Biafra war. Defining African feminism, Cakpo-Chichi, Gbaguidi and Djossou state that : “*... feminism is the woman’s freedom to decide her own destiny, freedom from sex determined role, freedom from society’s oppression and restrictions, freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely into action.*”<sup>5</sup> In other words, feminism advocates the woman’s right to lead the life which she has chosen without any societal restriction based on her gender. It also advocates the woman’s right to express her opinions and put them into practice freely.

To this end, leaning on sociology, culture, psychology and postcolonialism, as theories and African feminism as literary criticism, the paper analyses the awareness-raising about women’s right to defend their opinions and physical integrity. It also sheds light on the possibility for women to find fulfilment outside marriage.

## **II- Women’s right to defend their opinion and physical integrity :**

As stated earlier, female characters in most of African male-authored books are relegated to the second rank, contrary to male characters who play primary roles. Among the facts which illustrate this relegation of female characters are their silence and their passivity. Helen Chukwuma declares in this regard :

The female character in African fiction... is a facile lack-lustre human being, the quiet member of a household, content only to bear children, unfulfilled if she does not, and handicapped if

<sup>3</sup> Laure Clémence Cakpo-Chichi Zanou and al. “Amma Darko’s Contribution in *Beyond the Horizon* to Contemporary Gender Portrayals”. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol.10, N°1, March 2017, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup> Chukwuma, quoted in Kasonde Angela Kapuka, “Feminist Voice in African Women Novels : Evidence from Flora Nwapa’s *One is Enough*, Calixthe Beyala’s *The Sun Has Looked Upon Me* and Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*,” 2019, p. 35 <http://dspace.unza.zm/handle/123456789/6389>

<sup>5</sup> Laure Clémence Cakpo-Chichi Zanou and al. “Amma Darko’s Contribution in *Beyond the Horizon* to Contemporary Gender Portrayals”. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol.10, N°1, March 2017. p. 113.

she bears only daughters. In the home, she is not part of the decision-making both as a daughter, wife, and mother even when the decisions affect her directly.<sup>6</sup>

Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi also refers to the voicelessness and the submissiveness of women in most of African male writings when she declares that African male writers depict women as “*passive, as always prepared to do the bidding of their husbands and family, as having no status of their own and therefore completely dependent on their husbands.*”<sup>7</sup>

It is a completely different portrayal which one sees in *One is Enough* where there is a prominence of female voice and presence. Actually, Nwapa is, like her African women counterparts, in the dynamic of redefining the feminine presence, that is to say correcting the faulty image of African women in literary texts. According to Amouzou :

Nwapa does not believe a woman should be passive or voiceless. The female characters in her fiction do not exist only for the services they provide inside the home for their husbands and children. They count in significant matters affecting community and national life ; by doing so, Nwapa proceeds to a redefinition of the female gender.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, in her fourth novel, Nwapa presents us with female characters who speak their mind naturally, who do not have their tongue in their pockets even facing male characters. For example, the heroine, Amaka, is severely beaten by her husband, Obiora, on the second year of their marriage because she refused to yield in a dispute she was having with him. Her attitude deeply annoyed Obiora who could not bear his wife trying to win the argument over him in the sense that it was contrary to their social and cultural ideology, as the narrator points out : “*You did not argue with your husband. A woman who tried to win an argument over her husband was regarded as a ‘he’ woman.*” (Nwapa, 1981 : 26-27). However, post-colonialism (with independence and the Biafra War) was changing the times. Women were becoming more and more independent psychologically. So Amaka persisted, she knew she was right and could not accept to give up in front of Obiora simply because he was her husband.

In her literary text, Nwapa also calls on women to defend their physical integrity against masculine violence. Indeed, the lesson Amaka learned from the beating which she was subjected to was that never again would she let her husband or any other man beat her without retaliating. Therefore, to a newly married girl who was victim of physical violence by her husband, the heroine advised :

[...] be ready at all times to defend yourself. Never cry out when he is beating you, without finding something to retaliate. So I say fight back. Get a stick nearby. If he lands a blow on your face, get the stick and land a blow on his body. But I must warn you, never on his head or you might kill him. (1981 : 27-28)

To show the girl that the advice she was giving her was a solution, Amaka went on to give her the example of the so called philosopher who repeatedly beat his wife until the latter could bear it no more and stood for herself one day :

This academic cum philosopher for no just cause beat up his wife so mercilessly that this senseless beauty learnt her lesson fast. A day came when there was another fight. Before he pounced on her like a bull-fighter, she had this heavy iron rod which she landed on the man's back. The man was on the floor and wept like a child. She called in an ambulance and the husband was taken to hospital. He was there for three months. Dare he beat his wife again ? (1981 :28)

Once bitten twice shy, as the old saying goes. Yet, the fact that her husband beat her once has not mellowed Amaka. She is unable to keep quiet about the attitude of Obiora who has two sons by another woman and

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Wanjiku M. Kabira & Amos Burkeywo. “Creating women’s knowledge : A case study of three African women writers.” *American Journal of Academic Research*, 1, 2016, A25-A37.  
<http://www.asraresearch.org/ajar-vol-1-no-1-2016/>

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Sarah Namulondo. "Imagined Realities, Defying Subjects: Voice, Sexuality and Subversion in African Women's Writing." *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*, 2010, pp. 4-5  
<http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/3435>

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Celestin Gbaguidi (2018). “The Myth of Men’s Supremacy in Flora Nwapa’s *Women are Different.*” *AFRREV*, Vol.12(2), S/No.50, APRIL 2018, p. 81  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v12i2.8>

has married the latter without informing his first wife. So Amaka points an accusing finger at her husband, which can be taken as a warning as well : “*You have changed a good deal my husband. I too could change, you know.*” (1981 : 26). To Obiora who wanted to know what she meant, the heroine explained : “*Meaning that I could do a lot behind your back without your ever finding out.*” (1981 : 26). Through the exchange between husband and wife here, Nwapa reminds of the feminist struggle as “*the challenging of gender inequalities in social systems and institutions.*”<sup>9</sup> The challenging of gender inequality is more stressed further when Obiora, very angered by his first wife’s answer, tells her : “*I am a man*” and Amaka replies : “*I am a woman*” (1981 : 26). This was the last straw for Obiora whose patience came to the breaking point. Therefore, he rushed to his wife in order to beat her.

By retaliating against her husband’s attack, Amaka backs her words with action. In fact, she has put into practice the suggestion she had made to the newly married girl, that is to fight back when her husband is beating her : “*Amaka dodged as her husband came after her bare-handed. Then she sprang up quickly and landed a heavy blow on her husband’s chest with the hammer. He simply sprawled down on the toilet floor, unable even to cry out.*” (1981 : 29). The point is Nwapa believes that “*women have to stay strong...*”<sup>10</sup> Again the Nigerian writer advocates this balance of power between husband and wife through the illiterate woman whose husband refused to give food money. When she got fed up with it all, she did not hesitate to hold his pocket in the street on his way to work and demanded what she rightly claimed. However, Nwapa has not failed to regret, via Amaka’s mother’s words, the fact that educated women would have the complex to act like the woman because of their ‘education’ :

“You must give me food money, this very day.” Passers-by collected as usual in Onitsha streets. The man was embarrassed. He fought, but the woman was resolute. “Soup money, no soup money, no work.” That woman did not go to school. If she had, do you think she would have had the face to fight on the street ? Of course not,’ she went on, ‘but she got what she wanted. Her husband was so ashamed that he wished the ground would open up and swallow him. That’s it. That’s what our men want these days. [...]’ (1981 : 89)

Nwapa’s call on women to defend their opinions and not accept to yield in order to satisfy other people is more pronounced through the heroine’s refusal to get married with Father Mclaid (or Izu). Amaka makes it clear that she will not marry the priest though she enjoys being with him as her lover and has born him a set of twin boys. She “*had told him that she was not going to change her mind. She cherished the relationship all right, but marriage, no. She was through with it.*” (1981 : 135). Izu has difficulty understanding Amaka’s attitude in a society where women yearn to get married. Uchendu illustrates this reality when she contends that an Igbo woman’s “*great objective in life is marriage ; that a woman’s glory is her children, and that to have children she must have a husband*” and “*That this is a chance she cannot afford to miss.*” (1965 : 53).<sup>11</sup> However, times were changing following the Nigerian Civil War and the independences and more and more women had new aspirations. For example, for many of them, the priority was to get educated, find an employment, therefore, acquire financial independence before turning to marriage.

With Amaka refusing Izu’s marriage proposal, Nwapa questions and challenges the paramount importance that society gives to marriage for a woman. The Nigerian novelist does not incite women to reject matrimony but she indicates that women, from Amaka to her sister, Ayo, in addition to their mother, have begun to see marital union differently from the vast majority of the society. It is noteworthy that Mclaid is young, handsome, has a high position in government and, therefore, is influential. These advantages, plus the fact that he is the father of Amaka’s twin boys, should have pushed the heroine to accept his proposal without hesitating. Yet, she has not changed her mind. Even Izu’s resort to Amaka’s mother and her sister who are in favour of the marriage has not moved the heroine either. She tells Ayo : “*As a wife, I am never free. I am a shadow of myself. As a wife, I am almost impotent. I am in prison, unable to advance in body*

<sup>9</sup> Ifi Amadiume, *Male daughters, Female Husbands. Gender and Sex in an African Society* (1987), London and New Jersey, Zed Books, 1998, p. 10

<sup>10</sup> Cakpo-Chichi *et al.* “*Amma Darko’s Contribution in Beyond the Horizon to Contemporary Gender Portrayals*” in *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.10, no.1, March 2017, p. 119

<sup>11</sup> Victor C. Uchendu. 1965. *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*. New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Quoted in Francisca Hadjitheodorou. 1999. “*Women Speak : The Creative Transformation of Women in African Literature.*” dissertation.pdf;sequence=1 (up.ac.za) p. 50



*and soul.*" (1981 : 127). One can see here that a woman must not accept to be engaged in anything whatsoever against her will, she must not keep quiet when she has to express her opinion.

In *One is Enough*, Flora Nwapa has also demonstrated that it is possible for a woman to find fulfilment outside marriage.

### **III- The possibility for women to find fulfilment outside marriage :**

As early as the third chapter of *One is Enough*, Flora Nwapa makes the narrator pronounce the main message in the novel. As a matter of fact, referring to the heroine, the narrator announces : "*She would find fulfilment, she would find pleasure, even happiness in being a single woman. The erroneous belief that without a husband a woman was nothing must be disproved.*" (1981 : 23-24). Still, concerning the message in her work, Nwapa herself, in an interview with Adeola James declares :

I think the message is, and it has always been, that whatever happens in a woman's life ... marriage is not the end of this world and childlessness is not the end of everything. You must survive one way or the other, and there are a hundred and one other things to make you happy apart from marriage and children.<sup>12</sup>

The first courageous initiative which Amaka takes towards self-fulfilment is putting an end to her marriage in a society where a woman who leaves her husband is considered a bad woman and therefore submitted to psychological pressures. Nwapa makes sure the reader sees that this is not a light heart that the protagonist has taken this decision. The point is Amaka has been pushed to leave her marital home by the unfair attitude of her husband and her mother-in-law. Her only wrong is that after six years of marriage, she was not able to have a child.

To rebuild her life, Amaka went to settle in Lagos. In this town, she continued her activity as a contractor with the help of her brother-in-law (the husband of her sister Ayo) who put her in touch with an Aladji working at the Ministry. If the collaboration with this man has been very fruitful for the protagonist, it also marks a change process of the woman. To begin with, the Aladji gave Amaka a contract for the supply of toilet rolls worth ten thousand naira from which she earned three thousand naira. Then, he helped "*her secure more contracts and... in the execution of them.*" (1981 : 66). Besides, whereas it usually took people two or even three years to make their company registered in Lagos, Amaka had hers registered in a matter of days thanks to the Aladji. Finally, with the help of this man, the heroine bought a site where she store timber and blocks and where she later built a house. Her friend, Adaobi, couldn't help expressing her admiration : "*You have arrived. You are about to conquer Lagos.*" (1981 : 68)

However, Amaka who was playing the virtuous wife no longer cared about chastity. In return for the contracts and the other favours from the Aladji, she slept with him. In an interview with Marie Umeh, Flora Nwapa states : "*I feel that every woman, married or single, must have economic independence.*" (Umeh, 1995 : 26). Therefore, Amaka is determined to be economically independent but the novelist points out the obstacles which women in Lagos often have to face in order to achieve financial autonomy. So the heroine confides in her friend, Adaobi : "*You know Lagos. No man can do anything for a woman, even if the woman is the wife of a head of state, without asking her for her most precious possession – herself. I must confess to you. I have slept with the Aladji.*" (67-68). On the other hand, in Lagos, Amaka has decided to abide by the advice of her mother. The latter urged her daughter to follow the example of her elder sister, Ayo, who did not hesitate to use a man to achieve independence.

In effect, Ayo left her husband when he "*came up with his pranks, she... got herself 'kept' by a Permanent Secretary whose wife went to the land of the white people to read books.*" (33). In four years, not only did the Secretary give her four children but he also sent her to school to improve and she qualified as a teacher. When the man's wife came back in the fifth year, the man had bought a house for his concubine. So Ayo moved into her house with her children. Hence, Amaka's mother's question to the protagonist : "*In her position, what does she want from a man ?*" (33).

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Kwatsha, Linda, 2015, "The portrayal of single women characters in selected African literary texts." <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/lit.v36i1.1209> p. 3

It is Ayo who enabled her younger sister to make Father Mclaid's acquaintance. Amaka's relationship with this priest is even more profitable than the one with the Aladji. Mclaid first put her in touch with a Brigadier who gave her a contract worth half a million naira and twenty-five of the amount was hers, which enabled her to pay back the dowry to her former husband and validate their divorce. Still, thanks to Izu, she bought a car and built a house in three months. In return for the favours which Izu does her, she also sleeps with him.

At this stage, one can see an illustration of Katherine Frank's statement in "Women Without Men : The Feminist Novel in Africa" that "*bottom power, sexual bargaining, prostitution are all woman's tool towards economic independence and selfhood.*" (Frank, 1987).<sup>13</sup> As far as Amaka is concerned, the reader cannot lose sight of her new socio-economic well-being which results from her relationships with the Aladji and Father Mclaid. She has bought a house, a car and she has a driver. Hence, the compliment of one 'Cash Madam' : "*Amaka, you are doing very well in Lagos. Congratulations.*" (78). She also joins the 'Cash Madam' club and the fact that she gives her subscription to this club by cheque is another illustration of her very good financial situation. Amaka has neither a husband nor a child and yet she is happy thanks to her work, her friends, her economic independence. To her mother who wants to know if she is happy in Lagos, she answers : "*I am reasonably happy. I work hard and I have friends. Ayo is of course there, and she has introduced me to her circle of friends. So I am quite contented.*" (85).

The protagonist's position and her fortune have revealed her generosity. She helps her friend, Adaobi, in the execution of her contracts, enabling her this way to get enough money and build a house. Amaka's gesture is all the more important as she made it possible for Adaobi, her husband, Mike, and children to move into their own house when Mike was ejected from his official residence, following the military coup. Actually, the heroine is useful to her community insofar as she shares her wealth with her friends and relatives : "*And so relatives and friends poured in and she gave them money, raw cash.*" (116). She makes no distinction though she is aware that among those who come to tell her their financial problems, she has enemies : "*Those who say nasty things about you are the very people who come to you with their monetary problems.*" (116). Therefore, Amaka only confirms Mike when the latter, celebrating the car which the woman had just bought, declared :

*Your sojourn in Lagos  
Has been a blessing  
To you and to your friends* (81)

Amaka is now respected by the very people who unfairly treated her with disrespect, namely Obiora and his mother, because she could not give birth. Yet, her inability to have a child is still there. Their change of attitude towards the protagonist is justified by her new position which makes Obiora desire her helplessly : "*...she has got a lawyer to start divorce proceedings. I don't want that, Mother. I hear she is very wealthy now. She has built a house in Lagos, she owns a car and she moves in very high circles. She could be very useful to me. I want her, Mother. I am miserable without her.*" (91-92). As for Obiora's mother who had labelled Amaka a prostitute and had opposed her son's will to reconcile with the heroine, she is simply seduced when she sees her former daughter-in-law again : "*You look so well, my daughter. Lagos is kind to you.*" (95)

Amaka's mother has also changed attitude towards her daughter. It is noteworthy here that the older woman had told the younger one, after the second year of her marriage, to leave Obiora or to go to other men in order to have children. The mother was not pleased by Amaka's refusal and was very pained when, four years later, her daughter came back home, pushed as she was to leave her marital home by her husband and mother-in-law. Amaka's mother was merciless and blamed her daughter at length with harsh words. But now the older woman is respectful of the protagonist : "*Her mother had changed quite a bit. She was no longer harsh, and there was some respect in her voice when she spoke to Amaka now.*" (84). Amaka's mother's respect towards her daughter grows into pride after the latter eventually gives birth : "*She now had two lovely sons and wealth. What could be better than that ? She was very proud of her daughter and rightly*

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Fatima Zahra El Arbaoui's "Barrenness as A Weapon for The Women Oppression in Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough.*" *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies* – June 2018, Volume 6 – Issue 10, p. 72

so. *Who wouldn't be ?*" (117). The reader realizes that, in her quest for self-fulfilment, Amaka needed to procreate in a society where "*motherhood defines womanhood.*" (Boyce, 1986 : 243)

Despite the fact that she has given two sons to Izu, despite the latter's high position in government, Amaka refused to marry him. She needs him as a lover but not as a husband. One marriage has been enough for her because : "*As a wife, I am never free. I am a shadow of myself. As a wife, I am almost impotent. I am in prison, unable to advance in body and soul.*" (127). It is true that her experience in Obiora's home justifies her unwillingness to get married again. But it is also clear that Amaka is doing very well without a husband. As a matter of fact, she has got two assets which women are urged to achieve in the novel : financial independence and children. Amaka's mother even considers her daughter a lucky woman for having achieved both because, according their belief, a woman "*either had children or...had money.*" (116). Through the heroine's refusal to yield to the will of her mother and sister and marry Mclaid, one can also see an illustration of Valerie Bryson's observation that : "*Women should be free to follow the career of their choice, and should not be forced into marriage through economic necessity.*" (1992 : 56)<sup>14</sup>

#### IV- Conclusion :

Flora Nwapa, in *One is Enough*, has shown the advent of new breed of Nigerian/African women, women who emerged after the independences and who are very different from those depicted in most African male writings. If the female characters of the majority of African male writers are silent or not often heard and are not included in decision-making, in *One is Enough*, they are prominent. The reader of Nwapa's fourth novel sees women who speak their mind freely and resist men physically. Amaka refuses to marry Izu despite the twin boys he has had with her and the urgings of her mother and sister to do so. The belief that a woman should not talk back to her husband or try to win an argument over him does not apply. Wife beating without retaliation, common in African male-authored novels, is challenged as well. The heroine refused twice to yield to her husband in a argument and, when he attacked her on the second dispute, she simply administered him a hammer blow which sent him on the floor.

The wife of the so called philosopher too, being fed up with her husband's frequent beatings, lands a heavy iron rod on his back. Besides, Mike, who keeps blaming Amaka, is silenced by his wife, Adaobi, who makes it clear that "*she was not to hear any more nonsense from him. So Mike was careful in conversation about Amaka and her twins.*" (113). The example of the woman who held her husband's pocket in the street because he repeatedly refused to give her food money is also illustrious in this regard.

Flora Nwapa has also demonstrated through her novel that a woman can be happy, fulfilled outside marriage. She has proved wrong the belief that a married woman is luckier than the single one. Amaka is filled with happiness in Lagos and yet she does not have a husband. Her happiness stems, on the one hand, from her economic independence which has given her very good living conditions and enabled her to move "*in very high circles in Lagos.*" (92). The protagonist even admits to her mother that she is quite contented. It is true that she has a lover (Izu) but when he went to Dublin, she did not feel his absence, she did not miss him. Her fellow 'Cash Madams' are also doing very well in Lagos thanks to their wealth. If they have children, none of them has a husband. More to the point, Amaka turns down Izu's marriage proposal because she prefers celibacy to marriage. On the other hand, the heroine's happiness results from the fact that she has finally borne children, escaping the misfortune which barrenness constitutes for a woman in her society. Therefore, with economic independence and/or children, a woman can be happy outside marriage.

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