



International Journal Research Publication Analysis

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QUEST MOTIF: A STUDY OF IFEOMA OKOYE'S *CHIMERE*, ONYEKACHI PETER ONUOHA'S *MOONLIGHT LADY* AND O.O. SANGOYOMI'S *THE MASQUERADE*

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Article Received: 19 December 2025

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Article Revised: 07 January 2026

Mini Otudor Street off Culvert Woji Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Published on: 27 January 2026

DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.5264>

ABSTRACT

This work examines the quest motifs in Ifeoma Okoye's *Chimere*, Onyekachi Peter Onuoha's *Moonlight Lady*, and O.O. Sangoyomi's *the Masquerade*. The subordination and humiliation of women in most African society has led the woman to the quest for self-realization, self-rebuilding. Self-actualization, freedom, and independence. This study explores the motivation that triggers these quests and also demonstrates the impulse behind the motifs. The theory that informs this study is the African feminism. This is qualitative research as information are gathered from the internet, unpublished works, text books and other sources. Findings shows that patriarchy and African society are the biggest challenge women face. This work recommends that societal expectations and stereotypes that limit women's choices should be challenged. This work concludes that, women despite their limitations, challenges and yearnings, still fight for self-actualization and a better livelihood. This study contributes to knowledge, that irrespective of the circumstances surrounding women, they still fly high to make their dreams a reality.

INTRODUCTION

This work refutes established stereotypes about women in Africa. It counters any ideology that projects women as inferior subjects to the opposite sex. It showcases the dilemma that ignites the women's quest for self-realization, self-worth and rebuilding their identities, as we see in the main characters of Chimere, Ikukuoma and Ododo.

Most writers try to project women in the limelight and attack those cultural practices that delimit women or place them in a position of inferiority in the society, such authors like Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough*. Roye Okupe, Malika *the Warrior Queen*. Nawal El Saadawi *Women*

at Point Zero, Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo's *the Last of the Strong Ones*. Onyekachi Peter Onuoha's *Moonlight Lady* amongst others.

The central idea of this work is the attempt to portray the woman positively. The attempt by women to assert themselves, to show women as deserving respect as an effectual and contributing human beings because the environment a child finds his or herself, without doubt, has a lot of impact on the child.

According to Laura E. Berk, “girls and boys are treated differently right from birth. Male children are seen as tougher and harder, and parents involve them in more physical task than their female counter parts”

In spite of the role's women play in the society, they are looked on as second class citizens, objects of sex, relegated to the background and solely defined in the image of their domestic responsibilities as housewives and mothers. We know that a society attains better development in all aspects when both genders are entitled to similar opportunities. Most writers still maintain that many women still struggle under male exploitation, religious and societal constraints. Many still burn out in their quests for survival.

Akachi Ezeigbo states;

“In whatever form or manner feminism displays or disguises itself, what is constant in all its shades is the determination of every group to uplift woman-hood and strive towards the liberation and emancipation of the woman” (2).

In Nigeria, many factors account for women's quest, and they are, subjugation, the patriarchal nature of African society, marriage, bride price, pregnancy, economic dependence of women on men, amongst others. In most African society, lineage is traced paternally, therefore society recognizes a male surname. In marriage, most women are not allowed to make their choices of a partner. Often, choices are made by parents who impose it on the girls even though it is against their wishes and desires. Also in marriage, the payment of bride price becomes a legal license with which to buy and own a woman automatically and she becomes a subject to the man.

This work expresses the awakening of women's self-consciousness and freedom from patriarchal suppression and a protest of the ongoing degradation of women, a celebration of women's physical and intellectual capabilities and more importantly, the unfolding of a revolutionary vision of the women's role. It exposes the subjugation of women, and extolling their virtues and roles. It is the positive portrayal of the female characters, where they assert themselves against the norms and traditions imposed on them by the men and society.

Most female writers and their male counterparts, normally focus on resistance to all forms of patriarchal behavior and the belief that women can live their lives the way they want to and be responsible for their own livelihoods and future. These novels as protest novels against patriarchy, shows the inequalities and abuses inflicted on women by patriarchal traditions whether they are Christian, or Islam. In addition to the focus of these novels as a protestation against patriarchal dominance, they also portray the independent woman. Some African novelists hold in high esteem feminist values which promote independence, togetherness and survival. African writers such as Ama Atta Aidoo, Bessie Head, Calixte Beyala, Mariama Ba, Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo, Roye Okupe, Tochi Onyebuchi, Sulaman Addonia and quite recently, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have led the way. Ifeoma Okoye, Onyekachi Onuoha, and O.O. Sangoyomi, from their points of view, succeeds in elevating women in the society. Women aspire to contribute to societal development and human existence without being looked down upon, and viewing social life from the woman's perspective. Ifeoma, Onyekachi, and Sangoyomi placed Chimere, Ikukuoma and Ododo at the center of their works.

Literature Review

The works of some African writers has attracted lots of attention in the academic world. This is perhaps as a result of the diverse issues that challenge women in Africa and Nigeria in particular.

African women express the need for them and their conditions to be better. In her important essay, "the female writer and her commitment", Molara Ogundipe – Leslie has observed that feminists prescribe two major responsibilities for the female writer. First, to talk about being a woman; secondly, to describe reality from a woman's point of view, a woman's perspective(s)". It is probably in this regard that we acknowledge Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in respect of her successful portrayal of the humanity of her female characters more than the male once. Some African male writers present the female characters to be submissive, and weak in their texts.

Chinua Achebe in "Thing Fall Apart" presents his female characters as weak and dominated by men.

Njoku, Theresa insists that men use the "ideology of patriarchy which emphasizes male importance, dominance and superiority as a way of enslaving women and making them second class citizens" (195). Njoku's definition of patriarchy does not capture the entire

essence of patriarchy because patriarchy is not only an ideology but also practice. If is lived out. It is a practice engaged by men against women, children and other man.

The article, gender roles and society by Amy M. Blackstone argues that even in the early twenty-first century, many cooperation's operate from a perspective that favors traditional beliefs about gender roles. In backing up the argument with an example, he states that women are denied such benefits. This article supports the feminist movement as it recognizes the political movement such as feminist movement. He adds that this movement continues to work and to deconstruct gender stereotypes and other alternative visions of gender roles that emphasize equality between men and women.

In reaction to this overt suppression of African women in African society, writers like Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Akachi Ezeigbo, Mariama Ba, Onyekachi Peter and so on, has risen to challenge, redress, and reposition the posture of women in African society by using literature as a potent medium. It is through the works of these writers that feminism as a literary philosophy has gained its affirmation in African literature.

In Zulu Sofola's play, the sweet Trap, she confronts male domination, gender bias, female misrepresentation and sexual harassment cloaked in culture and duly sanctioned by society. She brings to the fore the issue of authority between Clara and her husband, Sotubo. The response of Sotubo to his wife's decision to organize a birthday party lends credence to this observation thus:

You are a woman and must be treated as a subordinate. Your wishes, desires and choices are subject to my pleasure and mood. Anything I say is law and unalterable. When I say something, it stays, whether you like it or not, clear? (10).

African female philosophers like Ifi Amadiume, Nkiru Nzegwu, Amina Mama and Oyeronke Oyewumi, to mention these few, made African women fully aware of their potential and determined not only to assert their rights but also to break away from evil restrictions shrouded around them by their male counterparts.

Charles Nnolim contends that "As long as women characters strive to escape "traps" of patriarchy, marriage, home, and children, all the fight for total equality remains in the reins of "shadow boxing" (143).

What Nnolim states here, is relevant to this study, in that it mentions the fight for total equality by women. Although this study is to point out the maltreatment of women and them strive to grow beyond cultural inhibition, it has also helped the researcher to know that male scholars share in the women's experiences. In the novel, women at point zero, Nawal El Saadawi portrays men as exploiters. Men in the work, like the Arab prince and Marzouk, had

the aim of doing it sexually and they represent social injustice. Firdaus was weak, marginalized and remained silent without a voice. Her confession to the Arab Prince showed her innermost feelings: she was confused about men around her thus “All the men I had ever known, one after the other in a row – my uncle, my husband, my father, Marzouk and Bayoumi Diaa, Ibrahim – from my early days, all of them take me as a prostitute” (99).

To these reflections, there have been various literary and critical responses by women in position with this perceived marginalized status of women in society. Some of these female members of society initiate struggles that will release womanhood from the restrictions, which had been imposed upon them and which place them at disadvantages by using various avenues like feminism or ‘femineity’ (which Zaynab Alkali states that it is a kinder and perhaps a more decent word for feminism).

Theoretical Framework

This research employs the African feminist theory to articulate the concerns of three West African authors, Ifeoma Okoye, Onyekachi Peter and O.O. Sangoyomi. A feminist analysis of these novels is justified because, feminism functions as a variant of African feminism, which emphasizes the basic idea of the survival of the female. When people talk about feminism in Africa, they referring to a version, that has been adapted (or a variant) to fit African cultural, social, and historical contexts. They are many forms of African feminism including motherism, a theory propounded by Catherine Acholonu, which places motherhood, nature, nurture and respect for the environment at the center of its theory.

Feminism could be seen as a burning desire not just to reduce female dehumanization anchored on sex-related issues, but a total eradication of such. Feminism is a conscious committed quest by women for equal opportunities and rights alongside their male counterparts. Feminism is a set of political ideas or strategies that allows women to create a world where women are safe, living dignified life, economically, socially and politically liberated. This work adopts African feminism as theory framework. African feminism which is a theoretical approach was developed in the early 1970s by Anthropologist Filomina Chioma steady.

African feminism specifically, addresses and centers in the lives, needs and experiences of African women in general and in the diversities in multiple ways of existence. It is formed by African women’s peculiarities, problems, and socio-cultural institutions. We exist in a culture where women are not used to being loud, loud in terms of resisting, in terms of being at the forefront of movement. Loud in terms of challenging the patrificial system of been behind

closed doors. Women yearn for their voices to be heard. Feminism is just about women refusing to be treated differently, just because she is a woman. In her opinion, Helen Chukwuma sees feminism as;

“A rejection of inferiority and striving to recognition. It seeks to give the woman a sense of self as a worthy, effectual and contributing human beings” (25).

Scope of the Study

This work centers on female identity, resistance, self-actualization and the struggle against patriarchal constraints. It represents a gradual awakening of the Nigerian woman, while balancing tradition with a push towards liberation.

Chimere: Search for Identity and Self Worth

In the novel *Chimere*, Ifeoma Okoye presents the female character from the perspective of a brand of feminism, which is peculiar to her; this is called African feminism by Chukwuma Helen. This brand of feminism encourages the union and complimentary of the man and the woman, it is family centered. Okoye employs this brand of feminism to write what is best known to her, the ideal of family existence in Africa. Chimere is the heroine and protagonist in *Chimere*. Chimere struggles with her identity in a patriarchal society that often devalues women. Her quest is internal to define herself beyond societal expectations and limitations placed on her as a woman. She is an undergraduate in the university. She is faced with the mystery of who her father is. Chimere is determined to unravel this mystery of who her father is. The vacuum created by lack of father recreates a psychological imbalance in her life. Tracing her root and obtaining an identity becomes Chimera's priority and obligation. She affirms “I want to search for my father to prove to my friends that I'm not a bastard.” (82) Chimere is miserable and unhappy. She is said to be illegitimate by her boyfriend's mother, and this causes her boyfriend Jide to jilt her. Chimere angrily comes to a decision to sever her relationship with men and ex-communicate them permanently. At this point, she starts realizing why her mother, Mrs. Fidelia Ato has previously warned her against relating with men.

She was now beginning to understand Why her mother had always hammered It into her head that men were callous, unreliable, and should be avoided at all costs (25).

Chimera's decision to sever her relationship with men is not an easy one. There is an urgency to discover who her father is, so that she would have a legal identity to project. She decides to

embark on a search for her father. This search marks the beginning of the quest motif. Okoye uses quest for the father to show the importance of the family as a wholistic entity.

Chimere's quest is a search for the real self. In African feminism, the importance of the man is eminent and for Chimere to be complete as an African, she needs to trace who her father is. This quest is a psychological and physical adventure which sorely needs to anchor Chimere for life. Even though Chimere's search is difficult and painful, it is noteworthy, as she becomes the pioneering instrument to salvage the man (her father) in the novel. Chimere and Weluche are the instruments of reconciliation between Mrs. Ato and Mr. Enuma. This reconciliation is anticipated at the end of the novel.

Illegitimacy is a prevalent issue in *Chimere*. It is a motivating factor for the quest. Chimere's happiness and freedom is impeded because she cannot explain who her father is. The issue of illegitimacy is controversial in a Nigerian society where the premium is on the child, where the need and emphasis are on having children to enlarge the family size and enhance communal living. It is therefore a social controversy to label a child illegitimate, simply because her mother is not married to her father. Every child is borne by a man and so directly has a father. Weluche affirms to this argument by telling Chimere about his custom.

"Our custom allows a woman to bear children after the death of her husband" (169).

The essence of a male/female relationship is another important issue in the novel. Okoye devices a means to unite two ideal characters to suit and complement each other. She shows her rejection of the separation[^] ideology and encourages a mutual relationship between both sexes. For the relationship to be realistic, Chimere develops a quest to know her father and ensure to the success and respect in the relationship.

The issue of role abandonment is highly criticized. Enuma could not stand by the woman he put in the family way because he was fearful and could not take up his responsibility. Okoye technically elevates virtues above vices, betrayal and disappointments are debased as she introduces a new and perfect man to correct the stereotype of men and encourage mutuality between the man, woman and offspring.

The reality of Chimere's female consciousness and assertion comes to betrayal from Jide, her boyfriend in the university. Her unhappiness is as a result of her presumed illegitimacy. She resolves to find out who her father is, she states categorically.

"I must know the truth from my mother, no matter the consequence". (31)

This truth is concerning all that her mother knows about her father. At this point, in Chimere's life, emanates the strong feminist spirit, to gain her identity and self-realization. This

feministic drive is aimed at redeeming Chimere's disparaged image and giving her an identity. To achieve this, she needs to embark on an adventure. She is determined to succeed in the discovery.

CONCLUSION

Chimere firmly maintains her determination to embark on her search for her father without letting anything discourage or prevent her. She is bent on unrevealing the mystery behind her father. Her resolution in spite of her mother's opposition, reflects a feminine trait. The geographical migration for a new discovery is also a feminine trait of an adventurous woman. Chimere's unflinching consistency at finding her father, marks the woman as an achiever, a success and a 'go-getter'. The ideal and virtue of the woman's determination in life, her boldness and strength, her ability to execute her role in order to fill up the gap created by the man, presents her as a pacesetter in the society.

Her ability to function as the instrument of parental reconciliation is a sign of feminist victory. Her sympathy and kindness towards her mother are noteworthy. Chimere's willingness to forgive and identify with a father who has never cared for her since she was born is an epitome of the tender and forgiving spirit of the woman. The quest motif in Chimere is not just a personal journey, but also a socio-cultural commentary. It highlights the courage required for self-discovery and transformation in the face of societal constraints, making Chimere both a character and a symbol of resistance and hope.

Moonlight Lady: Quest for fulfillment

In a feminine novel like *Moonlight Lady*, female subjugation gives rise to conscious rising. A situation whereby the oppressed in this case the woman, realizes her limitations and the injustice against her, seeks for a solution or a way out. Ikukuoma's feminine consciousness is realized through the development in the stages in her life. These stages comprise of her life in Nigeria and her life outside the country. This consciousness in *Moonlight Lady* arises as a result of the humiliation and subjugation that Ikukuoma suffers. Ikukuoma searches therefore, for a life that is befitting of a woman and as a human being. Ikukuoma's quest is for fulfillment. The core of her quest is for self-definition, to live on her own terms without being defined by traditional roles of wife or mother. It is a personal and emotional quest for fulfillment in a society defined by patriarchal norms and expectations about womanhood, marriage, and motherhood. Onyekachi succeeds in narrating emancipation from cultural biases. This work illustrates the capacity of the woman to be good, better, courageous, focus and determine. *Moonlight Lady* expresses the awakening of women's self-consciousness, liberation, quest for

survival and freedom from patriarchal suppression. Women subordination and relegating to the background has been long-term ideology coupled with African culture and tradition.

We see in the *Moonlight Lady* Ikukuoma's father, telling the wife that training Ikukuoma in school is a waste of money, for her place is in the kitchen and she belongs to another man. Mr. Chima says: "who do you want to assist you? Are you not a woman? Have you forgotten that the place of the woman is in the kitchen? Now get inside the kitchen and continue your work efulefu" (10).

Ikukuoma's quest for education and desire for academic advancement showcase her determination to fulfilling her dreams, achieving her goal and conquering the world without letting anything deter or hinder her ambition. The book showcases the effects of patriarchy and cultural challenges in women's fight for freedom and self-actualization. Ikukuoma defies the bounds of the patriarchal society and caves out a niche for herself in a male dominated world.

The narrative is structured around Ikukuoma's life, beginning with her early years in a family where the father subjugates and relegates her to the background for the singular fact that she is a girl. Her upbringing was unconventional and fraught with challenges, including, insults, emotional abuse and outburst, each contributing to the tumultuous, yet inspiring journey in her education and self-discovery.

Resolution and Transformation

The quest motif here is internal which is centered on Ikukuoma's pursuit of dignity and identity in a world that marginalizes women outside traditional roles. Ikukuoma's self-determination and hope for a better and a fulfilling future is part of her traits. This trait is necessary for her to realize her set objective and success. Her self-realization and assertion put her on the offensive, where she becomes the subject. Ikukuoma's mother Nneoma, played a major and significant role in her life. She encourages her daughter to pursue and achieve her dreams. Ikukuoma's heroic equality gives her access to victory and survival beyond the strict limitations of a traditional milieu. Ikukuoma is a principled and an assertive character.

If you love me, you will trust me enough to make the right choice. Won't you want me to be happy? I only ask that you allow me to explore my destiny to its fullest. Won't I bring the glory to your house as my husband? (71-72)

Ikukuoma applied Akachi Ezeigbo's snail sense feminism. This theory proposes that women should borrow from the gentle qualities of the snail in approaching issues of female marginalization. This view holds that women should behave like the snail, which does not

confront any obstacle but negotiates its way out. Snail sense feminism bases its tenets on wisdom, sensitivity, resilience, and determination, which are attribute that are metaphorically derived from the qualities of the snail in female discourse. Ezeigbo urges women not to see these qualities as weaknesses but as formidable qualities that would hasten the achievements of their emancipation without causing conflict.

Quest here means search. A long search for something. It's could be a long search for happiness, knowledge, truth, adventure etc., and in this particular situation, Ikukuoma searches for fulfillment. She searches for long lasting happiness that will make her a woman that she is. By the end, Ikukuoma fulfills her dream, rejecting societal pressure and achieving her goals. It redefines the heroic journey from a woman's perspective, challenging cultural expectations and celebrating personal liberty.

The author's writing style is engaging, clear and poignant. He narrates the extraordinary life experience of Ikukuoma with blend of objectivity and emotion, making the reader feel deeply connected to the text. This ability to describe Ikukuoma's internal struggles and the physical landscape of her childhood with equal finesse adds a rich layer and depth to the text. Most of the characters are known by their native names, this signifies that the author appreciates the mother tongue. Also, Nneoma enchanting praises upon her daughter in the Igbo dialect "Adaugom, Akwaugom" and Mr. Chima heaping insults on his daughter also in the Igbo dialect "Efulefu, Tufiakwa".

CONCLUSION

This piece portrays and projects the potential of the womenfolk, their abilities, yearnings and capabilities. This text succeeds in narrating women emancipation from cultural biases and patriarchy. The moonlight lady's struggles are faithful. She wriggles free from the manacle of cultural limitations that her society imposes on her, beneath her feet, determination spurs her on. Ikukuoma's rejection of inferiority and a strive for recognition gives her a sense of self-worth and a contributing human being. This text seeks to rise in the woman, a consciousness to realize and recognize her contributions, take up action to fight against any form of alienation, obtain a positive result and place herself in her rightful position in the society, especially women who are eager to pursue and fulfill their dreams, and men who still believe in the old archaic tradition and belief, for women are achievers, despite the challenges and hurdles to achieving such a feat. Ikukuoma's quest for academic advancement despite her position as a lecturer and business woman is fascinating. She was never deterred by her husband's outburst towards her furthering her academic and

achieving her dreams. The *Moonlight Lady* explicitly explores this “awakening” as Ikukuoma struggles to break free from the “manacles of cultural limitations” and rise to prominence. Her rise to stardom is a gush of fresh air – Ikukuoma.

The Masquerade

This text is about the powerless, working their ways into powerful situations and the cost they must take to get there. It illuminates how women are depicted, highlighting their resilience, creativity, and the societal challenges they confront. The story follows Ododo, a young blacksmith girl from Timbuktu, whose hometown was invaded, conquered, and was abducted by the warrior king of Yoruba land as his intended wife. She was whisked across the Sahara Desert to the capital sāngote after giving a stranger a rose in her shop. However, she was shocked to discover that her kidnapper was none other than the man who had visited her guild just days prior. Ododo realizes that he was a warrior king by name Aremo, who has taken over Yoruba land including Ododo’s home town Timbuktu.

The novel explores themes of power, freedom, and self-discovery as Ododo navigates the complexities of court politics and her own transformation from a social outcast to a powerful figure. The novel delves into issues of gender, corruption, and the length people will go to, for freedom and self-discovery. Ododo is a strong, morally complex character who grows from a naive young woman in to a powerful leader. Ododo soars to the very heights of society in a sudden Chang of fortune, after a life time of subjugation. She finds the power that saturated this world of battle and political savvy too enticing to resist. As tensions with rival states grow, revealing elaborate schemes, and enemy hidden in plain sight, Ododo defies the cruel king she has been forced to marry by reshaping the shaking loyalties of the court in her favor.

The warrior king was captured by Ododo's beauty, singing and blacksmith skills, that he longs for her to be his wife and rule by his side. This is pure patriarchal branding of women as we see in (pg3). “Men call us witches, they thought us demons, and yet, it was them who wished to possess us”. This captures the contradiction of women's. This captures the contradiction of women's subjugation, demonized publicly, but desired privately. As Ododo steps into becoming his wife and her role in the court, political and court intrigue ensues for the quest of power.

The author weaves a basket of storytelling, world building and character development in the eyes of Ododo and how women are treated in general. Her character development from a 19 years old girl, a blacksmith taking from home to marry the warrior king, to being the most

powerful woman in Yoruba land is perfectly crafted. She did what she had to do in order to survive. Ododo never fully loved him but loved the fact that she could gain with him power and social standing. Like sure, he was a walking red flag that she should have walked away from, but each day she stays, she realizes that she likes the power and freedom it gives her being with him, not until she realizes that he will never appreciate the things she does for him, which she had to take matters in her own hands. She was put in situations that were not ideal and she thought about her own survival/place in the kingdom which she learned quickly.

This book is a social commentary on how women are treated and how they can get back to their feet quickly, like the black smiths who are women and are called witches for no reason at all. Ododo learns fast that kindness can conceal cruelty, and tenderness can be a distraction from tyranny. Eventually, she learns how to make allies and take control of her own life. She has many enemies at court, from a general who thinks she must have bewitched his ruler, to the king's mother who thinks nobody is good enough for her son, to a complicated relationship with her husband's first wife (a marriage of political alliance) but she quickly learns the value of information after her suitor is impressed by the utility of some gossip. She reports to him and later she deliberately creates an information network of overlooked women, children and slaves. Despite her quickness in learning, and the intelligently creative solutions to problems that she offers at the advisory council meetings, most people dismiss her impact, and she constantly has to strive and submit to keep her place in the court and in her suitors' heart, as others undermine her. It is repeatedly driven home to her that despite her high status, she has very little power. Until she finally learns how to take what she wants for herself. Ododo turns out to be fairly ruthless, having scrabbled for survival and made some very hard choices. Eventually, she decides to stop at nothing to achieve her goals. She tried kindness at first, but this brings her few rewards. However, when she finally finds her footing, she helps the blacksmiths achieve fairer treatments and guiding the country towards more productivity and less aggression.

Trials: Navigating Subjugation

The abduction of Ododo under oppressive rule, underscores systemic subjugation through coercion. She evolves from victim of coercion to a woman who asserts autonomy, questioning and resisting patriarchal structures. Within the palace, Ododo must survive in a world where women are possessions, rivals, and pawns in political games. She learns to mask

her fear, adapt, and outwit opponents. Women are demonized for their independence, yet coveted for their power.

The Quest: We see the idea of self-discovery and transformation. The journey to find her true self. Ododo's primary quest is to reclaim her agency and find a way to wield power in a world where she has been stripped of her autonomy. As she navigates the complexities of palace life, she learns to adapt and make strategic decisions to ensure survival. Ododo's quest starts not from choice, but from coercion and displacement. She is a blacksmith in Timbuktu, already marginalized as an unmarried woman in a stigmatized guild. Ododo is uprooted when she is abducted into the Alaafin's palace and forced into royal marriage, embodying patriarchal control over women's bodies and choices.

Survival and Resilience: Ododo's quest is also driven by her need to survive in a hostile environment. She faces numerous challenges, including rejection from Alaafin's mother and the complexities of palace politics. Through her experiences, she develops the skills and wisdom necessary to thrive in her new surroundings.

The quest motif: Motif is internal and political journey in which she strives to redefine her identity, claim power in a hostile environment, and navigate love, betrayal, and legacy. Her quest is both perilous and transformative. It illustrates how survival, autonomy, and purpose are forged amid upheaval and oppression.

Transformation and Resistance

Ododo slowly reclaims control. Her artistry intelligence and refusal to be fully silenced allows her to carve out space in a hostile environment. "Daffodils do not fear dying, for they have conquered Death himself" (p4). This is a symbol of her endurance. Though oppressed, she refuses annihilation. She begins to redefine freedom not as belonging to a man, but as self-possession.

Personal Growth: Throughout the story, Ododo undergoes significant personal growth, transforming from a naïve young blacksmith, to a confident resourceful individual.

Resolution and Empowerment: By the end of her journey, Ododo embodies the paradox of the quest motif. Her journey began in chains, yet it leads to a profound self-discovery. She recognizes her strength, and though still within a patriarchal system, she has carved out autonomy and influence.

CONCLUSION

This piece of work unfolds a compelling journey of self-discovery, empowerment, and survival. The journey embodies increasing autonomy, resilience, and leadership. The journey

is marked by moments of triumph and sacrifice, ultimately shaping her into a strong and determined woman. Overall, the quest motif in masquerade is a powerful exploration of identity, culture, and resilience driven.

Sangoyomi presents a deeply feminist narrative that examines the intricate ways women navigate power struggles and defy patriarchal constraints. The story acknowledges the injustices women face, but also celebrates their resourcefulness and resilience in the face of adversity.

Similarities in the Selected Texts

These similarities share a primary focus on feminist themes and the struggle for female empowerment. All three texts explore how women navigate and challenge patriarchal societal structures in Nigeria, with the main characters often acting as a medium to express this resistance. All three novels depict societies where women are largely seen as subordinate to men. The female characters face societal expectations and limitations that confine them to specific roles, such as being a wife or homemaker, often suppressing their individual ambitions and self-worth. Women do have similarities and as such we will look into the similarities of these female characters as the writers portrays them in *Chimere*, *Moonlight Lady* and *Masquerade*, before we proceed to discuss their differences. It is through female characterization that the reader appreciates the experiences of women. In the characterization of the protagonists, Okoye, Onyekachi and Sangoyomi, presents Chimere, Ikukuoma and Ododo as encountering problems and difficulties, which are not caused by either of them. These are the problems of matter of identity, trust, subjugation and subordination.

In *Chimere*, the protagonist's journey highlights the operative's acts perpetuated against women through language and social norms. Chimere is downcast when Jide her school boy friend jilts her just for the simple fact that Jide's mother tells him about her (Chimere's) family background, Jide's mother sees Chimere as an illegitimate child because the mother is not leaving with this father. Mrs. Ato tells Chimere of her experience with her father Mr. Enuma. How he gets her pregnant and runs away, leaving her to care for herself and the unborn child which results to be Chimere. This doctrine about men to Chimere makes Chimere loss her trust in men even when Weluche comes in to the picture. This question of being an illegitimate child makes her to move to action as she quest for her identity.

Similarly, *The Moonlight Lady*'s center character, Ikukuoma, actively fights against cultural biases that seek to limit her freedom and self-determination. Ikukuoma's determination and will-power is quite assuring and a proof to the father that a girl's life should never end in the

kitchen. She is humiliated by the father for just being a girl. Ododo, is initially seen as a possession to be owned by a powerful man.

Ododo background as a blacksmith, a trade traditionally practiced by women in her community, makes her an outsider. Those who practice the trade are often misunderstood and considered “witches”. She is loyal to her heritage and her journey involves her learning to survive and gain power in a new and dangerous environment. While she is initially naive, she evolves to become a strategic and diplomatic individual.

Chimere, Ikukuoma, and Ododo, are rejected by the society for the above facts. Both undergo psychological suffering. They faced the same fate of unhappiness in life. Ikukuoma , just being a girl child, Chimere not knowing whom her father is, and Ododo being abducted into marriage, makes their lives lack a glow that is supposed to be a feature of a happy life. These quest for fulfillment as a source of happiness is manifested in their lives.

Chimere, Ikukuoma, and Ododo in order to be fulfilled in life, goes extra miles to have those fulfillments. Chimere goes to a publishing house, publishing her name and requesting that anybody who knows about Mr. Enuma should contact her. She gives information of her fathers, too, and hopes for a favorable answer or information. Ikukuoma in her own case, ventured into writing and publishing of poems. She also stood her grounds even when Mr. Ugochukwu try to intimidate and scam her, while Ododo’s journey involves shedding her naiveté and learning how to navigate the court’s politics and intrigues.

Other similarities between characters are determination and industriousness. Chimere is hardworking and determined. She goes in search of a vacation job during vacation, just to help her mother out and to make ends meet in her family, when paid, she saves part of her earnings just to save enough money for her search, and gives the remaining part to her mother Mrs. Fidelis Ato to add to what she has for her petty business to flourish. Chimere is determined even when one of the executives attempts sleeping with her before she gets the job, she goes home but makes up her mind to meet the main boss for the job and at last, she gets what she wanted. Ikukuoma on the other hand, gets a lecturing job and also has a business by the side. Ododo quickly learns how to trust, and gather information. She offers intelligent and creative solutions to problems at divisor council meetings.

These novels emphasize independence for married or single, every woman should have this economic independence. Another similarity between these women is that they are educated. In *Moonlight Lady*, Ikukuoma is a lecturer in a university, Chimere on the other hand, is an intelligent, hardworking and brave undergraduate in one of the universities in the country, while Ododo learns strategy and diplomacy.

The narrative in each book revolves around the awakening of the female protagonist's self-consciousness. The women in these stories move from a state of subordination to one of assertiveness. They question the status quo and make conscious decisions to liberate themselves from traditional gender roles.

In as much as they have similarities, the protagonist has their differences, which is noted in the setting of the three novels. The difference is that Ododo is a resourceful, clear, and a "scheming power-hungry female character" who is also fiercely determined. She is a multi-layered character who develops from a blacksmith to a warrior queen, who learn to navigate the complex politics of the royal court. While Chimere and Ikukuoma uses the snail sense feminism to get what they want. These works are set in different times and places. Chimere is set in Enugu, partly Benue and then in one of the universities in the country. While *Moonlight Lady* is set in eastern part of the country.

The main characters are depicted as rebels who defy the traditional expectations placed upon them. They are not content to be passive recipients of their fate. Chimere and *The Moonlight Lady* particularly focus on the contemporary fight against chauvinism and the reevaluation of a women place in society. *The Masquerade* shows its protagonist, Ododo transforming from a kidnapped bride into a powerful leader who challenges the king she was forced to marry.

CONCLUSION

Okoye, Onuoha, and Sangoyomi treats prevalent issue of feminist concern such as personal identity, fulfillment, self-ego and assertion. They arrive at the same point of view about feminism in Africa. Onuoha discusses women as social beings, Okoye discusses the essence of the family and its centrality that the man and the woman need to be united to become partners in progress, while Sangoyomi depicts a world where women are often underestimated and marginalized.

The totality of this study borders on the lives of women, a followed pattern of subjugation and an examination of paradigm change which enables them take charge of their lives, as well as the role played by literature in this change. The study concludes that women have taken active roles in redirecting their lives through any necessary positive means.

These works can all be categorized as a protest literature. They serve as a vehicle for the authors to critique societal ills and advocate for social change. By centering the narratives on women's struggles and triumphs, the authors use their stories to "engender value reorientation and sanity" and present a strong feminist perspective.

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