

## Social Commitment in Female Song: a Functionalist Study of *Agbachaa-Ekuru-Nwa* Oral Performance of Mbaise Igbo

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### Abstract

Women artistic performance is a well-known cultural phenomenon in Africa. They use poetries or songs as a medium to perform moral function of social criticism and thus control the excesses in behaviour, extol exemplary members of society and also uphold the culture and tradition their societies. Women songs, which are oral art forms at the centre of their performances in themes and characterizations, serve as a vehicle for transmitting cultural values and civilization from one generation to another. Their target audience is everybody in society: the men, the women, the youth, the politicians, the religious people, and indeed all classes of people both high and low. Through this means, they entertain, instruct and evoke adequate emotions in their audience toward building a virile society. However, the relevance of their songs to social change has not been given adequate attention. This study undertakes a critical appraisal of the oral poetries or songs composed and performed by women for social commitment. In order to expose the contributions and relevance of this oral art form as an agent of change in its different communities, we examined oral poetry or songs collected from *Agbachaa-Ekuru-Nwa* women performance group of Mbaise Igbo, using the functionalist approach. Since social commitment in literature is a product of functionalism, our approach here becomes relevant. However, it is discovered that female poetries or songs as oral genre of social commitment use a great deal of satire and lament, or admonition and hortative as thematic devices in a repeated manner to express issues of great concern in the communities they occur. The study also reveals that, issues of great concern like child upbringing and its implications diffuse from the domestic domain into the public domain. The paper concludes that it so because women as wives and mothers recognise the fact that the family as the basic sociological unit is responsible for situations found in the larger society. In that wise, female poetries or songs where ever they occur, contribute immensely in satirising deviant behaviours while applauding exemplary ones, and by so doing they serve as commentaries or documentaries of socio-political and economic lives of the people.

**Key words:** Agbachaa- Ekuru-Nwa, Social Commitment and Functionalism.

### Introduction

Agbachaa-Ekuru-Nwa is a female performance group in Mbaise Igbo of south east of Nigeria. Literally, it means “after dancing a child is begotten” or “after dancing, whatever child that is involved in any act of misdemeanour would change for better and in that wise, such a child is redeemed.” Whichever way, the meaning revolves around the child, who in the Igbo world view is at the core of lineage continuity as well as valued above any other gift from nature. The Mbaise Igbo are predominantly farmers and long distant traders, who trade within local and neighbouring communities, and the latter exposes both their men and women to environments other than their own, hence they say, *Onye ije ka onye isi awọ ihe ama*, “The one widely travelled is more knowledgeable than the grey haired.” Before the advent of the white man in Africa and indeed Igbo land, the traditional societies were well organized and structured with functional institutions. Such societies could not have existed without a culture and civilization peculiar to them in terms of their value system and social norms, which guaranteed social control and at the same time expressed African world view (Ohaegbu 1993). Their culture and world view was enshrined in myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, poetry or songs for various occasions etc. This body of knowledge, which formed their literature, and which was largely oral served as a vehicle for transmitting their cultural values and civilization from one generation to another. In the same manner, the lore of the Igbo form a body of knowledge, which was transmitted through myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, poetry or songs etc, hence male and female performances. In recent times, however, much of the oral literature have been documented and stored in both print media and electronic media.

After gaining independence from their colonial masters, many African countries undertook to re-examine and overhaul their political institutions as well as their cultural identity, which hitherto had been heavily eroded by contact with western culture. In Nigeria, for example, the colonial masters brought with them their language, culture and religion, and the Igbo more than any other ethnic group, were very much attracted by the white man’s culture and imbibed it to the extent of almost losing their own culture and identity. European goods and way of life launched, as it were, an assault on the Igbo psyche and culture. Material culture like fashions, make ups, electronic and print programmes, films and even food from the white man’s land invaded the Igbo society destroying local productions. Hair (1967:99) captures the scenario in these words:

...The Ibo (sic) experienced an upsurge of interest in literacy but it was not a genuine and continuing interest in VERNACULAR literacy. Ibo children, having been taught to read vernacular primer, were hurried on by their parents to acquire, and read English, the language of opportunity, in this way the Ibo gained a position of power in the colonial and post-colonial social and administration order in Nigeria, but the Ibo language was neglected.

The above described scenario stimulated advocates of African languages and cultures, and indeed the Igbo to finding ways of arousing the consciousness of their people to the fact that their culture was fast eroding. To bring people back to their roots, literary artists launched a cultural rebirth or revival campaign with their writings and oral compositions. They engaged in what we term as a 'corrective revolution' in the drifting from their cultures and norms to a foreign way of life. Ngugi (1972) renders the Kenyan perspective to this revolution in this manner:

My writing in Gikuyu language was part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan people. Our Kenyan languages were associated with negative qualities of humiliation and punishment. We were meant to hate the people and the culture and values of the languages of our daily humiliation and punishment. I do not want Kenyan children growing up in that tradition of contempt of the tools of communication developed by their community and history...I want to help in the restoration of the harmony between all aspects of language so as to restore the Kenyan child to his environment fully so as to be in a position to change it for his collective good... (37).

This paper attempts to examine the contributions of women through oral poetry or song in bringing about the much needed socio-cultural revolution. The type of revolution is what Hair (1967), Ngugi (1972), Afigbo (1982), Ejiofor (1984) among others call 'cultural rebirth', 'cultural rethink' or 'cultural revival' and they advocate this not for the Igbo society alone but for the entire African continent. To validate the effectiveness of the oral genre in its objective, this study attempt to answer the following questions: Who are the target audience of this oral genre? What impact does this genre have on its target audience? In answering these research questions, the selected poems or songs from the Igbo female artists will be studied. The study will employ the functionalist and the descriptive approaches in the analysis of the songs.

#### **Review of Theoretical and Empirical Studies**

The functionalist theory contends that literature is and ought to be relevant to the society that has given birth to it as well as nurtures it. The theory, which is psychological in nature, examines mental processes and how they relate to human behavior. By so doing, literature plays a major role in effecting and affecting social and intellectual changes within the community. In this way, literature becomes a potential weapon used to bring about enduring positive changes in the community that engenders it. Finnegan (1977) says that the role of literature can either reflect the society or uphold its status quo. The functionalists also believe that any cultural phenomenon that does not have any use in the society will not endure. Ikeokwu (2007) notes Udeh (1994) as saying that functional literature or functionalism is an approach of literary study. Its principle or precepts are based on those of "social commitment" (Udeh 1994). Social commitment is an aspect of social criticism that has received a considerable attention in the pens of modern literary critics. The functionalist approach is used to press the point that literature is and ought to be relevant to the society that has given birth to it and as well as nurtures it. Lostraco and Wilkerson (1979:8) buttress this point when they note that "literature distills life and condenses human experience. It presents us with a concentrated imaginative vision of ourselves and the world in which we live." Functional literature to us in this study is that literature, which uses advocacy devices to sensitise individuals or groups in fighting or struggling for a common course in order to achieve social justice. In Igbo traditional communities, oral poetry or song is accorded a high position because it is a part of everyday living. This accounts for why the oral art forms have persisted over generations while new ones in terms of composition, performance and entertainment are evolving and enjoyed by the people.

Our choice of the Igbo society in this study to represent what obtains in other ethnic groupings of Africa and other cultures of the world that share similar oral art forms is justified by the views of Beier (1956), Fabb (1997), Gunner (2007) and Oyebade and Mbah (2008). Fabb's (1997:59) study notes a seemingly universal tendency of similarities and dissimilarities in poetic literature when he suggests a universal patterning and counting of meters for cross-cultural oral art forms. Beier (1956:23) had already pointed out this universal poetic tendency in Yoruba culture, thus,

There is no occasion in Yoruba life that is not accompanied by songs. Births, marriage, and funeral are all occasions for lyrical songs of great beauty.

Everyday life is also accompanied by a great deal of impromptu singing, a kind of musical thinking, in which the singer puts everything to a tune, which happens to pass through his head.

Beier's view cuts across cultures and genders in both composition and performance. For example, in the study of Oyebade and Mbah (2008), there is an illustration of similarities among cultures when they draw attention to Igbo and Yoruba equivalents in poetries performed in the Igbo and Yoruba cultures, thus: *Abu alumdi* 'Igbo marriage songs' translates to *Èkún ìyawo* 'Yoruba marriage songs', *Abu nhimura nwa* 'Igbo lullabies' equates to Yoruba *Ewi iremolekún*, Igbo *Abu egwu onwa* 'Moonlight songs' has Yoruba *Ewi tàbí orin Ereşùpá qmòde* as its equivalent, and so on.

Gunner's (2007) study allays the fear of the disappearance of oral art forms in cultures of the world when she points out that even in this era of literacy and globalization, orality has not disappeared but has often adapted itself in its different forms to become a vehicle for the expression of the fears and hopes of new generations of people. She further observes that oral performances in African societies combine with music in the form of song and dance and, which are performed in public and private plays a crucial role in constituting and reconstituting the social life, ideology and aesthetics of their different societies. Igbo female oral poetry, which is delivered mainly as songs with musical accompaniments and dance, does not lose sight of the socio-cultural functions of such performances. Emenajo (1986) agrees with the view that since literature draws from its milieu, it must be seen performing some function, thus:

Since it draws heavily from traditional literature, creative literature in Igbo cannot afford the luxury of *arts gratia artis*. Literature is fully involved in the Igbo milieu which bring it into being. It is equally involved with the wider Nigerian society and with man as a universal being.

Uzochukwu (2001) notes that traditional (oral) poetry while aesthetically satisfying, is also functional and socially oriented. He further observes that the three principal ways by which social etiquette and societal values are upheld in traditional Igbo society are satire - *ikpe*, admonition - *ndumodu* and praise - *otito*. These three ways, which thus act as weapons for social control find expression in Igbo funeral poetry and other forms of Igbo traditional poetry. The Igbo have some values and norms which they cherish such as marriage, good behaviour, good home making, kindness, respect for elders, care of aged parents and others. They satirise and admonish different types of people who transgress against the social norms in the society: the men and women, the young and old, the rich and poor, the politicians and electorates, even the religious and non-religious. They also use praises and eulogies for those who adhere to the societal norms or provide social amenities to the suffering communities and this help to imbue 'heroic essence,' which is the hallmark of patriotism, into their audience.

We observe that satire is a very effective tool for correcting misdemeanour because the message that the oral poet communicates quickly gets to the person(s) concerned. Deviant behaviours in the society are satirized with the purpose of punishing the delinquent by bringing them to ridicule. The oral artists through this medium invite the culprit(s) to a change in behaviour and this is the essence of the Igbo traditional education. The role and relevance of the Igbo oral artist in the society cannot be over emphasised. Many Igbo literary scholars like Egudu and Nwoga (1971), Nwoga (1981), Egudu (1981), Ugonna (1982), Okebalama (1985), Emenajo (1986), Ezejideaku (1996) in Ikeokwu (2002) and Uzochukwu (2001), have defined the concept of the oral artist and his functions with regard to the Igbo world view. Ezejideaku seems to have captured the nature and functions of the poet more than the others. Ezejideaku (1996) in Ikeokwu (2002) defines a poet as a man or woman of many parts. She is at one and the same time a visionary, a reformer, a political or social and cultural watchdog, a satirist, a praise singer, a chronicler of events, a teacher and the people's spokesman. Ikeokwu (2002) moves a step further and observes that because of the special standing of the oral artists in their different localities, they seem to observe the social life of their localities with keen interest, and by so observing, they see what the ordinary people in society do not see, feel what they do not feel, go to where they do not go, hear what they do not hear and touch what they do not touch. Armed with these privileged attributes, they become better placed or positioned to comment on the social lives of their different localities. They bring to fore all social ills as well as virtues that pervade the community with the aim of bringing about effective and affective revolutionary changes in the behaviour and attitude of the populace.

Ugonna (1982) observes that every civilization has its own tradition, which moulds it and gives expression to such a civilization. He further views Igbo poetry (written or oral) in terms of artistic composition, imaginative language, patterned arrangement, depth of thought or feelings. It follows then that people are defined by their literary tradition which encapsulates their culture and world view. Maduako's (1991) view corroborates Ugonna's when he observes that poetry does not basically consist in arranging words in lines and stanzas as some Igbo poets believe. The words have to movingly convey mental pictures which evoke emotions be they social, political or etcetera values in the mind of the reader or listener.

In Igbo society, oral poetry is practised by virtually every member in the community, men, women and, even children. It can be performed by one person or group of individuals. Women's poetry come predominantly in singing, chanting, dancing and drumming modes, which exist in simple structured words, images and body movements packed with emotions that express the dynamism involved in the cultural and daily life of the people. These include loan and archaic words, borrowings, coinages and neologisms. Since the themes addressed by the women are both traditional and modern, and revolve around their joys and sorrows, it becomes necessary for them to use themes that evoke and reflect the spatial and temporal settings of the desired emotions in the audience.

Okpewho (1990) notes that the text of an oral composition is as important as its context without which, it remains lifeless. The context of Igbo oral poetry includes occasions such as: marriage, birth, funeral, work, festivals etc. the vast subject areas which Igbo oral poetry covers and also the place of dense, rich poetic language as carriers of public social values and ideologies testifies to its importance in the society (Gunner 2008:68). Ebeogu (1984) highlights the very important role Igbo birth songs play in the community. Through birth songs, women thank God for the gift of children, for opportunity to become mothers and also for their husbands without whom pregnancy will not be possible. Ebeogu continuing says that the birth songs give the women the opportunity to express their understanding of the norms and values of the Igbo society and to comment on some of them. Lending credence to Ebeogu's view, Eyoh (2010:20) notes Kolawale as saying where oral art forms are practised, they are principally or solely practised by women in their various African societies for the organization and development of such societies.

### Texts Analysis

Our analysis will not only look at the themes raised by these female poets but also the overall socio-cultural effect of the performance on the communities that perform them.

#### Song 1

L1: Leziere m nwa m anya o o o o!	Take care of my child for me o o o o!
L2: Nwa bara uru nwanne	The child is useful my sister/brother
L3: Leziere m nwa m anya o o o o!	Take care of my child for me o o o o!
L4: Nwa bara uru na nka o o o o!	The child is useful at old age o o o o!
L5: Leziere m nwa m anya o o o o!	Take care of my child o o o o!
L6: Gĩ lezie nwa gĩ anya	If you take care of your child
L7: Mgbe ọ dị na ntakịrị	When s/he is still young
L8: Ọ ga-ele gĩ nka o o o o!	S/he will take care of you at old age o o o o!
L9: Leziere m nwa gĩ anya o o o o!	Take care of your child for me o o o o!
L10: Nwa na-edede obi nwanne e e e e!	The child softens the heart sister e e e e!

The poet implores parents and draws their attention to proper child upbringing for children are precious (lines 1-3). However, anything contrary entrenches regrets or woes and consequent rise in blood pressure or stroke as well as ultimately death even before old age not only to the individual but also to the society. Parents who heed to this clarion call enjoy their gratuity and pension in the sense that their children will take good care of them in their old age (lines 4 and 8). The Igbo world view provides that well brought up children are assurance to their parents' old age. This systemic traditional way of pension scheme compels the average Igbo parent(s) to strive hard to bring up their children in the proper way; hence the saying, "good children are assurance to old age."

In highlighting some of the negative effects of improper child upbringing, Mfonobong (2010) notes that Nigerian society is still plagued with incidences of child abuse and neglect, whose resultant effects include teenage pregnancies/ mothers, youth restiveness and violence, cultism, youth decadence, joblessness, armed bandits molestation, school dropouts and so on. These abuses and neglects take place at home and undertaken by persons known to and trusted by the children. They also take place in the schools where these children spend greater part of their early lives. The poet as it were, had earlier identified Mfonobong's fears and goes to call and caution that this training of the child must start early in life before it is too late (lines 7 and 10). The Igbo adage *anaghi amụ aka ekpe na nka*, "one does not learn the use of the left hand at old age" captures it all and lends credence to the spatio-temporal setting and its effects on proper (if the child conforms to societal norms and values) or improper (if the child becomes a deviant) child upbringing.

Improper child upbringing is responsible for the presence of many street children, miscreants etc, who cause mayhem and terrorism not only in the Nigerian society today but also the world over. For this reason, Amase and Kaan (2013: 1) point out that just as the Tiv celebrate genuine successes of their children, they are equally quick to indict, criticise and condemn those involved in vices. Judging from the Tiv, Yoruba, Igbo as well as other examples, it is a natural intercourse of women to see the realities of life from the same perspective, no matter where and when. The song uses praise to commend parents who have played their expected role well and uses satire to ridicule, indict and condemn those who spared the rod and spoilt the child. Its futuristic function is to remind those who are on the way to parenthood of their expected responsibilities in proper child

upbringing.

### Song 2

L1: Omumu lee e e e e!	Child bearing lee e e e e!
L2: O dighi ngozi kari ri nwa n' uwa	There is no greater blessing than the child
L3: Omumu lee e e e e!	Child bearing lee e e e e!
L4: O dighi ngozi kari ri nwa n' uwa	No greater blessing than the child
L5: M chowa igwe m aga ahia Afọ	If I want a bicycle I go to Afọ market
L6: Gaa zuru ya lowa!	Go and buy it and come back!
L7: M chọọ moto m aga ahia Nkwọ	If I want a car I go to Nkwọ market
L8: Gaa zuru ya lowa!	Go and buy it and come back!
L9: M chọọ omumu gazuo elu uwa	If I want a child and go round the world
L10: O dighi ebe a na-ere ya!	There is no where it is sold!
L11: Omumu lee e e e e!	Child bearing lee e e e e!
L12: O dighi ngozi kari ri nwa n' uwa o o o o!	No greater blessing in the world than the Child o o o o!
L13: O dighi ngozi kari ri nwa n' uwa o o o o!	No greater blessing in the world than the Child o o o o!

Song 2 expresses maternity and its blessings (lines 1-4). The birth of a child in Igbo society calls for rejoicing not only by the parents or relations of the baby but also by all who hear about it. The song highlights the importance of the child in Igbo belief system and by extension why it is so valued *Nwa bara uru na nka*, as in song 1, lines 4 and 8. The child in the Igbo world view is an indispensable thought because lineage continuity and expansion can only be realized through its presence. It is the *raison d'etre* of every family. In fact a childless woman can only be consoled by the gift of a child and not material things. The poet reechoes this worldview clearly to the audience as she asserts that the child is a gift above all other gifts because it cannot be bought like the bicycle – *igwe* (line 5), or the car – *moto* (line 7), which can be easily collected from the market anywhere, any time. It is prized far and above all material possessions; hence the gift of the child cannot be equated with material things money can afford.

Through songs, women become instrumental to defining the ethics and aesthetics around, which their world operates. Women use oral poetry or songs to assert, castigate social vices and reject oppressive laws. Mugo in Adeola (1990) confirms that oral genres are strong weapons of self assertion and adds that 'within the world of orature, the woman has a lot of power. She creates the word and speaks the word.

### Song 3

L1: Zuga nne gi akwa e e e e!	Buy wrapper for your mother e e e e!
L2: O machiri ukwu e e!	So that she can cover her waist e e!
L3: Nwokorobia!	Young man!
L4: Zuga nne gi akwa e e e e!	Buy wrapper for your mother e e e e!
L5: O machiri ukwu ike e e!	That she can cover her waist e e e e!
L6: Zuga nne gi akwa e e e e!	Buy wrapper for your mother e e e e!
L7: Ego i ji eme iberibe e e e e!	The money you squander in debauchery
L8: Were zuga nne gi akwa!	Use it to buy wrapper for your mother!
L9: O machiri ukwu ike e e!	That she can cover her buttocks e e!
L10: I rara m ahụ mgbe	You gave me though time
L11: M muru gi!	During your delivery!
L12: I rara m ahụ le e e e!	You gave me though time le e e e!
L13: I rara m ahụ mgbe	During your delivery!
L14: M muru gi!	When I delivered you!
L15: I rara m o o o o!	You gave me though time o o o o!
L16: Nwokorobia!	Young man!
L17: I rara m ahụ mgbe	You gave me though time!
L18: M muru gi!	When I delivered you!
L19: Ego i ji eme iberibe e e e e!	The money you squander in debauchery
L20: Were zuga nne gi akwa	Use it to buy wrapper for your mother
L21: O machiri ukwu ike o o o o!	That she can cover her buttocks o o o o!

In song 3 above, the young men and women are reminded to take care of their mothers (lines 1-6) especially those who spend their life in debauchery instead of taking care of their mothers especially the aged ones. They are beckoned upon through lament to have a rethink of their negligence to their mothers (lines 7-9 and 19-21), hence the varied lament of e e e e! le e e e! and o o o o! in almost all lines of the song. The only way for them to do this is by buying wrappers for their mothers, which they will tie around their waist in order to

cover their nakedness, which was exposed to the outside world in pains during child birth (lines 10-15). The metaphors of *akwa* 'wrapper' (the cover) and *ukwu* 'waist' (the covered) is repeatedly used and dramatized in lines 1-2, 4-6, 8-9, and 20-21 by the poet to remind the children what part of their mothers' body they came out from and the need to cover it. Now that they have grown (in the sense that they can fend for themselves) and doing well, they need to cover their mothers' nakedness by buying wrappers for them.

#### Song 4

L1: Dere akwukwo degara	Write a letter to
L2: Ndi isi na-achi anyi achi!	The rulers who are ruling us!
L3: Unu dere akwukwo degara	You people write a letter to
L4: Ndi isi na-achi anyi achi!	The rulers who are ruling us!
L5: A gbanwere notu	The currency was changed
L6: N'ih i otanishi	Because of austerity
L7: Bjara igbu anyi!	That came to kill us!
L8: A si anyi ejele banki	We were told not to go to the bank
L9: Na o nweghi kashi no n'ime ya	That there is no cash in it
L10: Um u nwaanyi ebewe!	Women are wailing!
L11: Aguu egbuole anyi le e e o o o!	Hunger has killed us le e e o o o!
L12: Um u Najirija kpewe ekpere	Nigerians start praying,
L13: Rjowa Chineke, O nyere anyi aka o o o o!	Begging God to help us o o o o!

In lines 5-7 of song 4, there is a presentation of the austere situation, not just experienced by the women alone but the entire country as the citizenry go through the financial and hardship occasioned by change of the Nigerian currency. In lines 10 and 11, the poet presents the womenfolk as wailing and gnashing their teeth because of Shehu Shagari's 'austerity measure' – *otanishi*, that brought scarcity of food, fuel, and cash squeeze; in fact everything for the well being of the people was very scarce and outside the reach of the poor masses. To worsen the already bad situation, Buhari's administration toppled that of Shagari and changed the currency. The people were asked not to bother going to the banks as there was no cash there (lines 5, 8 and 9). Situations like this place women in a double bind position because their husbands and children look unto them for food on the table in addition to themselves. So, the female poet addresses the complaint to their Town Union Meetings who appear to be the mouthpiece of various communities and mandating them, as it were, to write to the government acquainting them of their heightened plight (lines 1- 4). The periods 80s and 90s in Nigeria were characterized by excruciating experiences ranging from Shagari's austerity measure through Buhari's fiscal/monetary policy to Babangida's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). As everybody was dying of hunger and the various governments seemed not bothered, the women in lines 12 and 13 sue for divine intervention in the matter.

#### Song 5

L1: Unu achikwala liike!	Do not rule with force!
L2: Unu achikwala liike!	Do not rule with force!
L3: Ndi na-achi anyi	Those who are ruling us
L4: Achikwala liike!	Do not rule with force!
L5: Ka Najirija gaa liihu!	So that Nigeria moves forward!
L6: Ekwereazu chor o o!	Ekwereazu sues for peace o o!
L7: Obodo Mbaise chor o o o!	Mbaise community sues for peace o o!
L8: Ihe ndi Imo na-ekpe,	What Imo people are praying for,
L9: Wukwa udoo o!	Is also peace o o!
L10: Ka Najirija gaa liihu!	So that Nigeria moves forward!

Song 5 is advisory and hortative at the same time as it advises and appeals to the ruling class of the day at all the tiers of government to maintain peace at their various domains, hence reference to Ekwereazu, Mbaise, Imo state and Nigeria at large (lines 6, 7, 8 and 10). Ekwereazu is a community in one of the local government areas of Mbaise whose location is in Imo state of Nigeria. The theme of good governance cannot be over emphasized, no matter the spatio-temporal setting, hence its recurrence not only in oral but also in written forms. Its theme can vary in character and setting, depending on the issue at stake. For example in lines 1-4, the poets implore those in government not to govern with high-handedness, no matter what. Lines 6-10 stress the need for good governance as sine qua non to peace in various communities, states and in the country as a whole, especially these days when we are experiencing various forms of youths' expressions, christened variously as MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra), MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta), BOKO HARAM (with its variegated ideology: religious, political and criminal/economic Boko Harams ) etc and; the Pan-ethnic associations like ACF(Arewa Consultative Forum), OPC (Odua People's Congress), Afenifere, Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo, the list is endless. All these groups have the following objectives in common: the welfare and national integration of their respective groupings, which will in

turn usher in the much needed peace.

The poet as it were in the song sues for peaceful answers and steps that will create room for economic and infrastructural development, which will in turn create employment for the teeming population of the unemployed youth. It is not only the poet that questions the highhandedness of those in government (lines 1-4) but also those, who at one point in time or the other, directed the affairs of this country. For instance, Ezekwesili (2013) wonders why the citizens of this country, Nigeria, should wallow in poverty and want while people of less wealthy countries are living in comfort; why countries like Ghana, South Africa with less gross domestic product (GDP) than Nigeria in the seventies and eighties have a higher GDP than Nigeria thereafter.

### SSong 6

L1: Onye m kporo enyi oma m o o o!	The one I call my good friend o o o!
L2: Ya buru uzọ chọwa m okwu o o o!	First looks for my trouble o o o!
L3: Ewo o!	Ewo o!
L4: Enyi alala a a a a!	Friendship is gone a a a a!
L5: Ewo o!	Ewo o!
L6: Enyi alala a a a a!	Friendship is gone a a a a!
L7: Ewo o!	Ewo o!
L8: Enyi alaa!	Friendship is gone!
L9: Ezi enyi oma!	Real good friend!
L10: Gị mee elu mee ala	No matter how hard you try
L11: Iro ka nsi e e e!	Hatred is worse than poisoning e e e!
L12: Chukwu kere uwa	God who created the world
L13: O hụrụnụ uwa n'anya!	He so loves the world!
L14: O hụrụnụ uwa n'anya!	He so loves the world!
L15: Elee ihe umu uwa	Take a look at why people of the world
L16: Ji akpo ibe ha asi, e e e!	Hate their fellows, e e e!
L17: Eleedi ihe umu uwa	What exactly makes people of the world
L18: Jiri kpoonu ibe ha ugwo, e e e!	Hate their fellows, e e e!
L19: Onu na-agu egwu, Ojiugo nwaanyi oma!	The mouth that sings, Ojiugo, good woman!
L20: Ojiugo, o kwa agala m ekwu o o o o!	Ojiugo, it is I am beginning to talk o o o o!
L21: Ojiugo, sikwa onye ewela iwe n'obi e e e e!	Ojiugo, say let nobody vex in the mind e e e!
L22: Anyaukwu akarijala n'uwa a e e!	Jealousy is so much in this world e e!
L23: Ogbuu akarijala n'uwa a e e!	Intrigue is so much in this world e e!
L24: Ekworo akarijala n'uwa a e e!	Acrimony is so much in this world e e!
L25: Onye obula hunu ibe ya n'anya e e!	Let everybody show love to each other e e!
L26: Onye obula hunu nwanne ya n'anya e e!	Let everybody show love to their sibling e e!
L27: Anaghi azuta nwanne n'ahia e e e!	Sibling cannot be bought in the market e e e!
L28: Anaghi azuta nwanne n'ahia le e e e!	Sibling cannot be bought in the market le e e e!
L29: Ute juo oyi o, o kwanu!	If the mat grows cold, however!
L30: Onye nwe eburunu e e e!	Its owner eventually, carries it e e e!
L31: Ute juo oyi o!	If the mat becomes cold o o!
L32: Enyi ka nwanne	The friend that is greater than the sibling
L33: Alanu o o o o!	Goes away o o o o!
L34: O ji ihe nyenu nwanne ya	He who has should give to their sibling
L35: Ka o rie o o o!	To eat o o o!
L36: O kwa unu ma shi o dighi ihe	You all know that, there is nothing
L37: Ga-akari nwanne n'uwa e e e!	Greater than the sibling in this world e e e!

Song 6 deals with inter-personal relationship in the society, hence social song. It deals with friendship between people (lines 1-4). The song bemoans the attitude of some individuals who can never be pleased and consequently are always out for trouble with others (lines 8-11). She enumerates the ills in the community such as jealousy, envy, ritual killing, and rivalry (lines 11, 16, 18, 22 and 23). She advocates a peaceful co-existence with every one where love reigns because God loves the world. The importance of siblings or relations is also stressed because they cannot be bought from any market (lines 25-32). In fact the song is addressed to siblings who do not live in peace to come together and make peace because when death strikes- *ute juo oyi*; the friend that is 'more affectionate' than the sibling will go. Kolawole (2007) observes that women's voices remain audible as seen in their satirical songs and poetry, which is women's domain. For example there are Egungun satirical songs among the Yoruba, Hausa women's court poetry, Nzema Maiden songs in Ghana, Impongo solo among the Ila and Tonga of Zambia, Akan dirges and Nnwonkoro in Ghana, Galla lampoons, Kamba grinding (work) songs, are specific female oral genres. The Agbachaa-Ekuru-Nwa of Mbaise Igbo is not left out, for in

song 6, the poets satirises and laments over the preference of friends to siblings or relations by some individuals and cautioning them that should death strike such friends will run away leaving the corpses in the hands of their relatives to bury (lines 29-33). The poet also in lines 34-37 advises individuals to always share whatever they have with their siblings or relations because siblings or relations cannot be bought in the market (lines 25-28). Corroborating the view about women's voices, some scholars of oral poetry have observed that women make significant contributions in their various communities through songs or poetries, which help to shape and remould their domains (Kolawole, 2008). Through songs, they condemn social ills, negative values and the shift to materialism while forcing positive values. The following song is an outcry of women on what people do to get rich over night. They even go to the extent of killing their fellow human beings for ritual sacrifice in order to become rich over night. The song below illustrates:

### Song 7

L1: Etu ụmụ mmadụ si akpawa ego	The way people make money
L2: Di m iwe le e e e!	Is obnoxious to me le e e e!
L3: Mụ asị gị, ọ dị anyị iwe le e e e!	I tell you, it is obnoxious to us le e e e!
L4: Egwu <i>Omuru Nwa</i> anyị!	Our <i>Omuru Nwa Dance Group</i> !
L5: Ọ dị m iwe n'obi!	It is obnoxious to my mind!
L6: A dimkpa elele mmadụ ibe ya	A man deems a fellow man fit
L7: Gbuo ya!	And slaughters him!
L8: Were gworo ọgwụ ego le e e e!	Uses him for money ritual le e e e!
L9: Were gworo ọgwụ ego le e e e!	Uses him for money ritual le e e e!
L10: Gbawa oke moto!	Drive a big car!
L11: Olee dị ihe nwa anyị	What is it that makes us
L12: Ji egbu onwe anyị?	Kill ourselves?
L13: Maka ego le e e e!	Because of money le e e e!
L14: Nwa ka ego le e e e yi o o o!	A child is greater than money le e e e yi o o o!
L15: A mmadụ ka akụ le e e e!	A human being worth more than wealth le e e e!
L16: Olee nụ ihe nwa anyị	What is it that thing that will make us
L17: Ji egbu onye anyị?	Kill ourselves?
L19: Maka ego le e e e!	Because of money le e e e!
L20: Onye na-anwụ anwụ anaghi,	A dying person does not,
L21: Akpota aha ego le e e e!	Mention the amount of money le e e e!
L22: Ọ fokwa oke moto.	Let alone big car.

In this song, the poet satirises the alarming rate at which people get rich within a twinkle of an eye (lines 1-2). The poet identifies such means as the use of fellow humans and goes to express its unacceptability not only by her and her Agbata Ekuru Nwa group but also by all and sundry that are given to the condemnation of such an ill (lines 2-4). It is however, common news in our society today, to hear that some people are missing or kidnapped and their bodies not seen at all or are seen in parts. Such dastardly acts are mostly carried out by young people that fall within the age bracket of 20 and 55 years of age. All these ritual killings are done for the sole aim of meeting up with societal demands of what is commonly referred to as "naira power" because ostentatious living is a common sight in our today society (lines 10, 13 and 19). The poet copiously use vowel lengthening to lament over the spilling of innocent blood, which is sacred and, which cannot be equated with material things in lines 6-9, 11-15 and 16-17. In lines 20-22, the society's attention is draw to the fact that one fateful day, we shall leave all these material things (multiple big cars, choicest houses etc) without taking or remembering any of them and take a bow in life.

### Findings and Conclusion

From the study, we identify that the female poetries or songs in societies where they occur serve as commentaries and documentaries of their socio-political and economic life. It is also observed that they use satire, lament and admonition as thematic devices to drive home their points. We observe too, that the issues of great concern like child upbringing diffuse from the domestic domain into the public domain. We conclude that why women express concern about the society more is because of the wifhood (as wives of the land) and motherhood (mothers of all and sundry in the land) roles they play not only in the homes but also in the wider society.

When we take a look at the findings of this study, we state that the Igbo and indeed Africa have been erroneously seen as having no literary tradition in the domain of world literatures. The reason is that early scholars of the Igbo language and literature did not find time to investigate the "primitive Nsibidi writing system" wherein early Igbo literature were documented, and so the Eurocentric scholars hastily concluded, there was no literary tradition in the society. They further could not comprehend that since the people were non-literate; they recorded their literature in their memory and passed it on to generations by word of mouth. The Igbo have a long



standing literary tradition which dated from very early times. For example, the oral artists composed verses for different kinds of occasions and celebrations such as birth, funeral, marriage, social installations etc. In doing this, the target audience becomes everybody in society: the men, women, the youth, politicians, religious people, and indeed all classes of people both high and low. The aim is to use songs as a medium to perform moral function of social criticism and thus control the excesses in behaviour, extol exemplary members of society and also uphold the culture and tradition. These songs are manifestations of collective women's voices, dynamic group consciousness and a tool for eliciting positive influence on the society and on deviant individuals.

The argument about whether Africans had literature should now be laid to rest for it is a well established fact that the literary traditions of the advanced cultures started from oral tradition (Amase & Kaan, 2013). Igbo oral poetry therefore, is a tool by which female poets perform and fulfill several social functions. The female poet is at one time a diviner (predicts the future), seer (sees what others in the society do not see and comments on it), a teacher (teaches good morals and satirises deviant behaviours while applauding good ones). The continued existence of oral poetry in contemporary Igbo society is a proof of its relevance and effectiveness as tool for social change in Igbo society. If these songs were mere pastimes, there would be no sustained interest. But we observe that new songs, which address modern and everyday problems in society, continue to be composed.

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