

UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I  
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COLLEGE  
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UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I  
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**THE CONUNDRUM OF MODERN VERSUS  
TRADITIONAL MOTHERHOOD IN CHIKA  
UNIGWE'S *NIGHT DANCER***

*A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of a  
Postgraduate Teacher's Diploma (DIPES II) in English.*

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JUNE 2016

## ABSTRACT

This study, entitled “The Conundrum of Modern Versus Traditional Motherhood in Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer*”, investigates the challenges of motherhood. It equally evaluates the causes and manifestations of the dysfunction of the mother/daughter relationship. The research endeavour also looks at the different steps taken by Unigwe’s protagonist in the search for the self. In view of the above, this work operates on the premise that the existing challenges between mothers and daughters in the midst of cultural flux stems from misfortune, prejudices, and cultural restraints. Furthermore, it proves that a transcultural based approach to the teaching of English language in an ESL/EFL classroom establishes a better platform for learning. Written against the background of Postcolonial theory and Feminism, this work determines the extent to which an individual re-creates an identity by overcoming cultural barrier. In an attempt to re-invent the self, a psychoanalytic perspective of the female identity came into play. We found out that the female identity is primarily based on the mother/daughter bond and the mother/daughter tie is threatened by maternal obligations and rebellion from the daughter. This study, as such, concludes that the woman defines herself through the way she makes something out of what culture (the world) makes of her.

## RESUMÉ

Ce travail, intitulé “The Conundrum of Modern Versus Traditional Motherhood in Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer*”, sonde les défis liés à la maternité. Il évalue également les causes et manifestations du dysfonctionnement de la relation entre mère et fille. Cette étude se démène à voir les différentes étapes prises par l’héroïne d’Unigwe dans la quête de soi. Cette étude admet que les défis entre mères et filles qui existent parmi les flots culturels des infortunes, préjugés et sobriété culturelle. De plus, il démontre que l’utilisation d’une approche transculturelle pour l’enseignement de l’Anglais dans une classe d’ESL/EFL établit une meilleure tribune pour l’apprentissage. Écrit sur le fond des théories Postcoloniales et féministes, ce travail examine la formation d’une identité Postcoloniale. Cette-à-dire, il détermine l’ampleur à laquelle un individu refait une identité en franchissant les obstacles culturels. Dans la tentative de se reforger une identité, la perspective psychanalytique de l’identité féminine est venue dans la pièce. Cette notion postule que l’identité féminine est essentiellement fondée sur le lien de mère/fille. Ce lien est menacé par les obligations maternelles et la révolte de la fille. Ce travail, néanmoins, pose une synthèse qui démontre que la femme se définit à travers la manière dont elle se démarque de ce que la culture fait d’elle.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have come to this stage without the help of many to whom I owe much gratitude. I am particularly grateful to my supervisor, Dr Divine Che Neba who, despite his commitments, diligently and patiently supervised this work. My gratitude equally goes to Dr Eleanor Dasi who, together with my supervisor, guided and oriented me through out this work. Also, my sincere thanks go to my lecturers for the knowledge they have imparted on me through out my stay in the Higher Teacher Training College.

My profound appreciation goes to my family, especially my uncle, Simon Mokabe Mokwe, who has been the father that I never had. His unceasing toiling, love, and care gave me the strength to work relentlessly. I also appreciate the following: James Dingoke Bokanda, Bessy Diale Mokabe, Sylvie Bantio Ngemo, Collins Bokanda Ngemo, Edouarda Mekossa Ngemo, Marvin Ayuk Taku, and Blanche-Bingram Fembe Taku for their spiritual, moral, and material support.

I heartily thank Priso Lokende Okole for proofreading my work. His suggestions inspired me to keep up. Finally, I equally appreciate my friends and classmates for the comfort, team spirit, and criticisms which gave me the inspiration and zeal to move on.

## **DEDICATION**

To my mother and grandmother: Raheal Mande and Pauline Mekossa of blessed memory

## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this work, entitled “The Conundrum of Modern Versus Traditional Motherhood in Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer*”, submitted in partial fulfillment of the award of the postgraduate diploma (DIPES II) at the Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaoundé was carried out by Valerine Lokenye.

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## INTRODUCTION

The rivalry between western and traditional African cultures has created a dilemma in most African mothers. This contrast in both cultures has led to confusion, which has played out in the postcolonial history of the people. The Westerners' attempt at displacing traditional African institutions and social systems have found contemporary expression in the imposition of Eurocentric institutions, values, and traditions which are parceled out, and exalted as the path to modernity for Africa. This continuing encounter has raised serious concerns about the extent to which Africa is prepared to protect its identity. This clash has created deep-rooted confusion and ambivalence in the economic, cultural, political, religious, and ideological orientations from the perspective of motherhood in the Igbo community in Nigeria. The conflict is in no doubt an on-going discourse. This discourse seeks to construct what Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, labels "cultural hybridities." Such cultural hybridities emerge in moments of historical transformation. Hybridity, here, constitute the notion that the identities of the colonized and the colonizers are constantly in flux and mutually constituted. As a result, the notion of motherhood in Africa is constantly in flux.

African mothers strongly uphold the values of motherhood. They stay at home with their children and take care of the entire family. She does all the household chores and nurtures the children as well. These mothers teach their girl children to always take care of their husbands' and children's needs. They carry their children on their backs as they carry on the household chores and working in the farm. But with the advent of colonialism, new doctrines as well as new domestic technologies are introduced into the lives of these mothers. With the advent of this new technology, mothers have come to realize that their culture and society is relegating them to the background. Machines are there to help them with the household chores. Mothers now understand the injustices meted out on them by men and are trying to redefine themselves within this new framework.

This process of redefining one's self rather separates than unites the female folk as many still hold strong on the ancestral tradition. The idea of daughters trying to rebel against maternal oppression in a bid to search for the self is central in Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. This urges one to ask the following questions: why this constant rift between mother and daughter? Also, to what extent is the daughter's rebellion and resistance to maternal domination manifested? What



circumstances does the daughter undergo in her quest for identity? And, in what ways can English Language be taught using a Transcultural Based Approach? These questions find expression as the work unfolds.

This study attempts to resolve the riddle of modern versus traditional motherhood from the mother's perspective. It equally looks at the reasons for daughters' rebellion against mothers in the midst of cultural confrontation. This work further examines the extent to which the daughter creates an identity for herself, and the degree to which English Language can be studied within a cross-cultural context. On this note, the work focuses on Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. However, references are made to other works related to the topical ideas raised in this study.

The essence of this investigation is to show the implications of cultural diversity on human psyche and the society at large. This work is equally of great importance in that it brings into the limelight the challenges of being a mother. Finally, it exposes students to variant cultures, thereby projecting a better image of cultural identity to ESL/EFL learners.

This study is predicted on the tentative conjecture that existing challenges between mothers and daughters in the midst of cultural flux stems from misfortune, prejudices and cultural restraints. It equally proves that a cross-cultural based approach to the teaching of English Language in an ESL/EFL classroom establishes a better platform for learning.

For the sake of clarity, some key terms are defined. These terms include: "Conundrum", "Modern(ism)", "Traditional(ism)", and "Motherhood". Conundrum is a Pseudo-Latin word used in learned social circles in Oxford University as humour, slang for "wit" or "pun" jokes. The term was first used in 1596 by an English political writer, Thomas Nashe, as a term of abuse for a crank or pedant. The word currently denotes "riddle" or "puzzle."

*Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* views conundrum as a riddle whose answer is or involves a pun or an unexpected twist and as a logical postulation that evades resolution, an intricate problem. It adds that conundrum refers to a riddle in which a fanciful question is answered by a pun. These definitions prove that "conundrum" is anything that arouses curiosity or perplexity because it is unexplained, inexplicable, or something which remains a secret. That is, it is a question or problem having only a conjectural answer; an intricate and difficult problem or question that puzzles. As far as this work is concern, "conundrum" refers to confusion.

Modern is a new invention of something. To better understand the concept of modern, let us define modernism. Modernism includes the activities and creations of those who felt the

traditional forms of art, architecture, literature, religious faith, philosophy, social organisation, activities of daily life, and even the sciences, were becoming ill-fitted to their tasks and outdated in the new economic, social, and political environment of an emerging fully industrialised world. The poet, Ezra Pound's 1934 injunction to "make it new!" was the touchstone of the movement's approach towards what it saw as the now obsolete culture of the past. Nevertheless, the term "modernism" is widely used to identify new and distinctive features in the subjects, forms, concepts, and styles of literature and the other arts in the early decades of the present century, but especially after World War I. The specific features signified by "modernism" vary with the user but many critics agree that it involves a deliberate and radical break from some of the traditional bases, not only of western art, but of western culture, in general. Critics had questioned the certainties that had supported traditional modes of social organisation, religion and morality, and also, traditional ways of conceiving the human-self. Such thinkers stressed the correspondence between central Christian tenets and pagan, often barbaric, myths and rituals.

"Modernism" as a literary movement dates as far back as the 1890s but was also referred to, as "high modernism." M. H. Abrams, in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, notes that what most critics called high modernism was marked by the unexampled range and rapidity of change that came after World War I. The year 1922 alone was signalled by the simultaneous appearance of monumental modernist writing innovations such as James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* as well as many other experimental works of literature. The catastrophe of the war had shaken faith in the moral basis, coherence, and durability of western civilization and raised doubts about the adequacy of traditional literacy modes to represent the harsh and dissonant realities of the postwar world. These changes were also seen in the colonies occupied by the western countries in Africa. The unique culture of the Igbo people in Nigeria experienced a drastic change with regard to their maternal values. In this present venture, "modernism" refers to the rapid change in the traditional institution vis-à-vis western conceptions of it. The western culture is considered in this study as the "new culture" or practices typical of current life or thought free of traditional constraints.

The term "traditionalism" sometimes refers to a political philosophy and movement. As a political philosophy, it alludes to "traditional conservatism," which is a post World War II American philosophy. It emphasizes the need for the principles of natural law and transcendent moral order, tradition, hierarchy and organic unity, classicism and high culture, and the

interesting spheres of loyalty. More so, it developed in Europe around the Eighteenth century, and around the Twentieth century, it started to organise itself in earnest as a political and intellectual force. As a result, “traditionalism” was labelled the “New Conservatives” by the popular press among a group of American university professors who rejected the notions of individualism, liberalism, modernity, and social progress. They promoted cultural and educational renewal and revived interest in the church, the family, the state, and the local community.

However, as a political movement, it is called “Carlism,” a Nineteenth-twentieth century Spanish political movement. It was a legitimate movement seeking the establishment of a separate line of the Bourbon dynasty on the Spanish throne. This line descended from the Don Carlos, Count of Molina (1788-1855), and was founded due to dispute over the succession laws and widespread dissatisfaction with the Alfonsine line of the House of Bourbon. An exceptionally long-lived movement, Carlism was a significant force in Spanish politics from 1833 until the end of the François regime in 1975.

This term alludes to religion and spirituality. That is, it can be referred to Orthodox doctrines or opposition to a contemporary ideology; it is distinct from the doctrine that Sacred Tradition holds equal authority to Holy Scripture just as the development of doctrine is distinct from modernism. In Roman Catholicism, “traditionalism” is characterised by the retention of worship and practices of the church as they were before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

There are a group of people who stress a return to old cultural values. They are known to be radical traditionalists. Thus, radical traditionalism refers to a world view that stresses a return to traditional values of hard work, craftsmanship, local culture, tribal or clan orientation, and non-material values in response to a perceived excess of materialism, technology, and societal homogeneity. Most radical traditionalists choose this term for themselves to stress their reaction to ‘modern’ society, as well as, their disdain for more ‘recent’ forms of traditionalism. As far as this work is concerned, “Traditionalism” refers to the systematic emphasis on the values of ancient tradition, especially beliefs, moral codes, and traditional values. Though this term can be considered in a political, cultural and philosophical ways, this work focuses on the strict adherence to cultural values. Relatively, it describes activities that are ascribed as old-fashioned, yet still important to the development of humankind. Traditionalism in the work is equally

viewed as that which is non-western.

Motherhood is the state of being a mother. According to Eleanor Dasi in her thesis, “The Mother Mystery: A Study of Some Major Works of Toni Morrison and Jamaica Kincaid”, motherhood is a site of power that ensures the physical and psychological wellbeing of children and consequently, the community at large. This implies that the mother’s role in the upbringing and development of a child is very important, especially that of the girl child. To this, the mother’s authority in the process of growth and development is looked upon by the child as a symbol of oppression. Thus, their relationship is strained as daughters look for ways to resist this authority. In this work, motherhood is defined from the daughter’s point of view as the “oppressor/subjugator” and also, as an “idol.” This is because mothers are a living definition of who a woman is, and how they view the world.

Motherhood is also considered as the period of mothering. In Nancy Chodorow’s *The Reproduction of Mothering*, it is mostly explained from the biological perspective. She makes us understand that biological mothering deals with pregnancy, childbirth, the felt reproductive drive which is filtered and created through the prism of the intrapsychic and intersubjective reproduction of mothering. By intrapsychic, we mean some women’s wish and longing to become mothers and intersubjective deals with the natural phenomenon that women must bear children. Many women may experience what feels like a drive or a biological urge to become mothers. But this very biology is itself shaped through the unconscious fantasy and affect that cast what becoming pregnant or being a mother means in terms of a daughter’s internal relation to her own mother. Thus, this drive is caused by women’s desires to become mothers and the quality of their maternal effects and identifications. In this study, motherhood refers to the mother/child relationship, especially that of the daughter.

In order to have a better understanding of *Night Dancer*, it is important to know who Chika Nina Unigwe is. She is a Nigerian born author who writes in English and Dutch. She was born in 1974 in Enugu, Nigeria. She lived in Turnhout, Belgium, with her husband and four children but migrated to the US in 2013. Unigwe holds a BA in English Language and Literature from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; and a MA from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. Also, she holds a PhD from the University of Leiden, The Netherlands, having completed a thesis, entitled “In the shadow of Ala, Igbo women writing as an act of righting”, in 2004.

Unigwe has published short fiction in several anthologies, journals, and magazines, including Wasafiri (University of London), Moving Worlds (University of Leeds), Per Contra, Voices of the University of Wisconsin, and Okike of the University of Nigeria. Her debut novel, *De Feniks (The Phoenix)* was published in 2005 by Meulenhoff and Manteau (of Amsterdam and Antwerp). The novel was the first book of fiction written by a Flemish author of African origin. Her second novel, *On Black Sisters' Street* was published in Dutch (*Fata Morgana*) in 2009 and was subsequently released in English in 2009. She is also the author of *Dreams* (2004), *Thinking of Angels* (2005), *Night Dancer* (2009), *Black Messiah* (2014), and other short stories.

Chika Unigwe has a brilliant career as a creative writer and this has brought her many accomplishments. She won the 2003 BBC Short Story Competition and a Commonwealth Short Story Competition Award. In 2004, she was shortlisted for the Caine Prize for African Writing. In the same year, her short stories made the 'top 10' of the Million Writers Award for the best online fiction. More so, in 2005, she won third prize in the Equiano Fiction Contest. Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* won the 2012 Nigeria prize for literature. The novel is valued at \$100,000 and it is Africa's largest literary prize. More still, in 2012, she was rated by Zukiswa Wanner in *The Guardian* as one of the 'top 5' African writers.

The analysis of this work is guided by Postcolonial theory and Feminism. Postcolonialism had existed long before the term was coined after the demise of most European empires in the middle of the Twentieth century. Ashcroft et al, in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, say although postcolonial theory cannot be considered as a panacea; it has a strong hold on postcolonial discourse in the historical phenomenon of colonialism and offers many useful methods of global analysis. They also espouse that Postcolonial theory is a term used to signify the political, linguistic, and cultural experiences of societies that were former European colonies. It also involves discussions on experiences such as migration, hybridity, race, gender, center-margin binary, the self and the other, subalternity and culture imperialism. Main proponents and exponents of the theory include: Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Edward W. Said, Frantz Fanon, Bill Ashcroft, Griffith Gareth, Helen Tiffin, Aimé Césaire and Chinua Achebe.

This theory does not imply the period after colonisation because of the prefix "post-", rather, it is a continuing process of resistance or reconstruction. This happens as a result of the

controversies involved in situating what postcolonial theory is all about. Peter Childs and Patrick Williams in *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* says:

[They] use the term ‘post-colonial’, however, to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. (3)

That is, postcolonial literature resulted from the interaction between imperial culture and the complex indigenous cultural practices.

Lois Tyson, in *Critical Theory Today*, asserts that when postcolonialism is considered in the domain of literary studies, it is both a subject matter and a theoretical framework. As a subject matter, postcolonial criticism analyzes literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination from the first point of colonial contact to the present. Furthermore, it refers to any analysis of postcolonial literary work, regardless of the theoretical framework used. However, as a theoretical framework, it seeks to understand the operations - politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically - of colonialists and anti-colonialists ideologies. M. H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines postcolonial studies as the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers (236).

Edward Said, in *Orientalism* argues that in dealing with non-western peoples, European scholars applied the high-abstraction idealism inherent to the concept of “the Orient”, in order to disregard the existing native societies, and their social, intellectual, and cultural ways of life. He maintains that *Orientalism* supported the self-ascribed cultural superiority of the West, and so, allowed Europeans to rename, redefine, and describe non-European peoples, places and things. Also, he carried a postcolonial discourse to analyse what he called “cultural imperialism.” This is the concept that the cultural representations generated with the Us-and-Them binary relation are social constructs, which are mutually constitutive and cannot exist independent of each other because each exist on account of and for the other. He makes us understand that this mode of imperialism imposed its power not by force, but by the effective means of disseminating in subjugated colonies a Eurocentric discourse that assumed the normality and preeminence of everything “occidental,” correlatively with its representations of the “oriental” as an exotic and inferior other. To that end, postcolonialism critically destabilises the dominant ideologies of the

West.

The Subaltern has become a standard way to designate the colonial subject that has been constructed by European discourse; “Subaltern” is a British word for someone of inferior rank, and combines the Latin terms for “under” (sub) and “other” (alter). In *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, Gayatri Spivak’s “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” establishes intellectual spaces for the subaltern peoples to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and so produce cultural discourses, of philosophy, language, society, and economy. Spivak explains that everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern- a space of difference. Similarly, Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe* charted the subaltern history of the Indian struggle for independence, and counted Eurocentric Western scholarship about non-Western people and cultures, by proposing that Western Europe simply be considered as culturally equal to the other cultures of the world. That is, as “one region among many” in human geography.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha explains that so long as the way of viewing the human world as composed of separate and unequal cultures rather than as an integral human world perpetuates the belief in the existence of imaginary peoples and places such as the First, Second, and Third Worlds. So, to counter such linguistic and ideological reductionism, postcolonial praxis establishes the philosophic value of hybrid intellectual spaces. Wherein, ambiguity abrogates truth and authenticity, thereby; hybridity is the philosophic condition that most substantively challenges the ideological validity of colonialism. In this light, postcolonialism denotes aspects of the subject matter, which indicate that the decolonised world is an intellectual space of contradictions, of half-finished processes, of confusions, and of hybridity. Most importantly, he suggests that literature might be studied in terms of the different ways cultures have experienced historical trauma such as the loss of cultural identity. Ashcroft et al., in the *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, espouses that hybridity is one of the most widely employed and most disputed term in postcolonial theory. They explain that such writing focuses on the fact that the transaction of the postcolonial world is not a one-way process in which oppression obliterates the oppressed or the coloniser silences the colonised in absolute terms. In practice, it rather stresses the mutuality of the oppressed. Hybridity occurs in postcolonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control or when settlers\invaders disposes indigenous people and force them to ‘assimilate’ to new social patterns.

The postcolonial theory is important for this research because it deals with the literatures produced by the peoples who once were colonies of the European imperial powers (Britain). Nigeria was a British colony and the subject matter of her writers includes portraits of the colonised peoples and their lives. This theory examines and analyses the formation of a postcolonial identity and culture as seen in Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. It is useful in this work as it presents and analyses the internal challenges inherent to determining an ethnic identity in a decolonized nation like Nigeria. It will equally help in determining the relationship between individual identity and cultural beliefs as shown in *Night Dancer*.

The next theory used in this work is Feminism. This is the belief that men and women have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. That is, it is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to re-define, re-establish, and achieve equal political, economic, personal and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment. Feminist theory which emerged from feminist movements aims at understanding the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experiences. While providing a critique of the social and political relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interests. Themes explored in feminist theory includes: discrimination, objectification, oppression, and patriarchy. Main proponents and exponents of this theory are: Simone de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter, Adrienne Rich, Kate Millett, Joan Kelly, Virginia Woolf, Helene Cixous and Carolyn Heilbrun.

In order to respond to issues such as the social construction of gender, this movement has developed theories in a variety of disciplines like the liberal, radical, Marxist and social feminism. The liberal feminist seeks individualistic equality of men and women through political and legal reform without altering the structure of the society. Radical feminists consider the male-controlled capitalist hierarchy as the defining feature of women's oppression and total uprooting and reconstruction of the society as necessary. Furthermore, the Marxist feminist is conservative in relation to the society in which it resides. That is, it deals with the concept of social class. And the social feminist looks at women's work and social status which are highly marginalized by their dual role; as a child-bearer and as a worker. Consequently, employers use this dual role to pay women lower wages that leads to exploitation.

In the field of literary criticism, Simone de Beauvoir has provided a Marxist view on



many feminist questions with the publication of *The Second Sex*. The book expresses a feminist's sense of injustice and de Beauvoir denotes the fact that women are always perceived as the "Other" in the patriarchal society. She continues that a woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not man in reference to woman. Also, in her essay "Woman: Myth and Reality", she explains that the concept of a woman is a myth invented by men to confine women to their oppressed state. This is vividly examined in *The Second Sex* where she identifies five foci that patriarchy uses to distinguish women from men: biology, discourse, economic condition, the unconscious and experience. Biological holds that women cannot carry out certain activities because they are defined by the womb which makes them vulnerable. But this view point is deconstructed as many women in the 1940s till date partake in "masculine" activities like fighting in the wars as portrayed in Brian Mitchell's *Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster*. To this, Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* posits that sex is biological but gender is psychological. This simply means that the function given to women is not supposed to be natural and irrevocable.

More so, Discourse means that the truth is determined by men as women are not given the opportunity to speak. As regards the economic condition, women are traditionally expected to stay and take care of the home while the men are working. So the women could not compete because they are not economically strong. But nowadays, women are almost in all the economic sectors. Furthermore, the unconscious explains how children acquire language and learn to accept their gender identity at the oedipal stage of their development. And Experience argues that women see things differently from the way men do as they have different ideas and feelings about what is important and what is not. In sum, de Beauvoir's main aim in *The Second Sex* revolves around the idea that women have been held in a relationship of long-standing oppression to men through their relegation of being men's "Other". Thus, women are defined as the "other" by men who take on the role of the "Self". She deconstructs these views as she asserts that women are as capable of choices as men. And can take on responsibilities of themselves and the world where they choose their freedom. According to de Beauvoir, one is not born but rather becomes a woman and a woman defines herself through the way she lives her embodied situation in the world, or through the way she makes something of what the world makes of her.

Elaine Showalter in her essay, titled "Towards a Feminist Poetics" in *The New Feminist*

*Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*, describes the development of feminist theory as having three phases. She calls the first phase “Feminist critique” in which the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind a literary phenomenon. It is concerned with the ‘woman as reader.’ She argues that the female reading may change our idea of a given text. This first phase also looks into the fissures in male constructed literary history. More so, the ‘feminist critique’ is concerned with the exploitation and manipulation of the female audience. The second phase is “gynocriticism”, a criticism that constructs a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience rather than to adapt male models and theories. This phase is referred to as ‘woman as writer’ in which the woman is the producer of textual meaning. It further looks into and discusses themes, genres and structures of literatures by women. ‘Gynocritics’ involve constructing a female frame work for the analysis of female literature and develop new models based on the study of female experience. Showalter remarks that ‘gynocritics’ begins at a point when women free themselves from the linear absolutes of male literary theory. The last phase is the “gender theory” in which the ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system are explored. Women now realize the place of female experience in the process of art and literature. Also, women began to concentrate on the forms and techniques of art and literature in which their experiences are typical and individualistic.

Later, Showalter and Virginia Woolf began to review and evaluate the female image and sexism in the works of male writers. Showalter’s view was paralleled in the 1970s by Helene Cixous in what she called “Feminine Writing.” The term was coined in *The Laugh of the Medusa* to address women’s needs and narratives by claiming her identity. She posits that the existence of this writing has its source from the mother during the stage of the mother/child relation before the child acquires the male-centered verbal language. Her research lays the importance of language for the psychic understanding of the self. Also, the concept of feminine writing unpacks the relationship between the cultural and the psychological inscription of the female body and identity. This writing equally evades the idea of phallogocentric writing that is dominated by male attitudes, by establishing the multiple possibilities inherent in the structure and erotic functioning of the female sexual organs and experiences. Consequently, Cixous challenged women to write themselves out of the world men constructed for them. That is, women should put their thoughts into words.

Given that the feminist theory draws from other literary criticisms, it is used in this work from the psychoanalytic perspective. A psychological analysis of the female identity is based on Sigmund Freud's oedipal model. This model holds that every individual's psychological life is created in, and through personal relationships with others. It claims that the female identity is primarily based on the connection and closeness to the mother, and the placement of women in culture is defined by the bonding between mother and daughter. And de Beauvoir's point of view is suitable for re-creating and re-inventing the female identity as well as studying their psychology.

The Post-colonial theory and Feminism complement than contradict each other in this study. In using Hybridity and reclaiming agency as post-colonial tenets, it becomes evident that a new culture is created across cultures and the individuals concerned are claiming what is rightfully theirs (their identity). And given the fact that the postcolonial theory involves domination, it leads us to feminism as we see the protagonists protesting against it. First, the mother fights cultural and patriarchal domination and next, the daughter resists maternal dominance. In other for this to be successful, the feminist tenet of fighting cultural and patriarchal domination now comes in handy. It makes us understand the trauma women are going through all in the name of tradition. And in creating a new identity for themselves as proposed by the postcolonial theory, women have to fight against these socio-cultural injustices laid down on them. They have to be more than what the men and society has designed for them, thereby, re-defining them and re-writing history from a feminine point of view.

The works of Chika Unigwe have generated enormous debates and reflections from a wide range of readers. A review of Unigwe's *The Phoenix* by Uche Peter Umez in an article "Isn't it Time to Let Go?" in *Eclectica Magazine*, brings out the themes of loneliness, loss of identity and regeneration. Umez states that the novel is a story about regeneration. That is, the phoenix reference serves to enhance the dominant theme of the novel; that in every person, there is the conflict that lies beyond control, that threatens to reduce people to ashes and their innate ability be renewed, because they have a choice to be reborn. His review also examines the title of the novel to be a perfect one, considering what it is about-dealing with loss and loneliness, and accepting it in order to one day rise again. This is linked to the significance of a phoenix which burns and reduces to ashes, and rises as new. This discussion is shares some of the views raised

in this study as the character in *Night Dancer* faces some conflict that resulted into redefining oneself.

Fernanda Eberstadt, Sean Christie, Nicola Barr, and Bernadine Evaristo reviews *On Black Sisters' Street* differently in different book reviews. Their discussion is mainly based on the theme of prostitution. Eberstadt in "Tales From The Global Sex Trade" in the *New York Times* espouses that opponents of immigration often prefer to ignore the tragic forces that compel people to risk death in order to reach the lands of plenty, not to maintain the horrors that often await the 'lucky' few, once they do arrive. Eberstadt laments on the issues of human trafficking from the African continent to Europe under harsh and difficult situations. These girls pay a huge sum of money just to go overseas no matter the condition and engage themselves in debts that they may not be able to pay. Similarly, Sean Christie, in *The Guardian*, looks at the relationship amongst prostitutes in a foreign land in which their unsavoury realities of the present are subordinated to anticipate a better future. Likewise, Nicola Barr's review in *The Guardian* discusses the experiences undergone by the four African women which serve as a rich material for the work. He explains it as a situation of lost, lonely women with a severe case of culture shock seeking solace in each other. On a different note, Christie comments on the author's use of tragedy in Belgium as a way of unlocking the women's past lives in Africa, which is a structural trick, but one which rings a bell for those readers who see in the sequential arrangement of harrowing testimony, the likelihood of a long uphill climb. Christie explains that the testimonies given by the African women all indicate political failure and African patriarchy. Like his predecessors, Evaristo, in *The Guardian*, explores the complicated reasons why four African women end up as prostitutes in the red-light district of Antwerp. From all indications, we notice that Unigwe narrates the lives of women who only focus on searching for a bright future in a foreign land, and do not care how they will make it. She further explores Mma's wish to identify her roots so she can be accepted as a bride, without a father or a male guardian, women are nobody in this society.

Femi Morgan's review in the *Sankofa Magazine* and Bernadine Evaristo's review of *Night Dancer* in *The Guardian* discusses the challenges of single motherhood and cultural imbalances. Morgan first comments on Unigwe's style in the novel as it helps her foreign readers and further questions the imbalances of culture, but also accuses women of perpetuating some of these evils that have relegated them to the background. Evaristo looks at traditional Nigerian

Igbo culture which value men over women, family over individuality, and conformity over free will. She equally discusses the stigma of single motherhood in an Igbo community. In this review, Evaristo probes into the idea that Adamma wishes to identify her roots so that she can be accepted as a bride. Without a father or a male guardian, women are nobody in the Igbo community.

For a more challenging research, this study goes as far as reviewing other critical works based on related topics and not on the books written by Chika Unigwe. Dasi in her thesis, labeled “Mother Mystery: A Study of Some Major Works of Toni Morrison and Jamaica Kincaid”, examines the mother/daughter relationship in black female literature. She views how this bond is constructed in black family structures of the African American and West Indian settings. She further explains that this mother/daughter link is a determinant in the personality growth and development of the girl child. In a large scale, Dasi espouses the mother/daughter clash through colonial and patriarchal dominations. The protagonists in the different texts she used break away from maternal domination and rebuild a new life for themselves. But in her thesis, she compares the way the mother/daughter bond is manifested on the West Indian and the African American societies, two of the regions where racist and colonial values were felt the most. The female slave descendants only found meaning in a racist and sexist world after reconciling their African heritage with their new societies. More so, in her work, Dasi presents this mother mystery from the daughter’s point of view where the reason for her rebellion is explained as she reconciles with the forces threatening her selfhood. In an essay, entitled “Mothering the Motherless: Portrayals of Alternative Mothering” in the *Canadian Woman Studies*, Amanda Putnam, on a related note like Dasi, discusses the notion of motherhood within the context of Caribbean diasporic texts. In her work, she gives alternative solutions for mothering to the various protagonists within the texts under study. She explains:

Within several Caribbean diasporic texts, alternative styles of mothering compensate for maternal losses, guiding motherless daughters to ancestral strength ... texts navigate the maternal absence by portraying numerous examples of communal mothering for, and even self-mothering by young black girls and women. These alternative methods fill the void caused by the absence of a mother and reflect the importance of mothering for all children, but especially daughters. (118)

We understand from this excerpt that when the physical presence of a mother is absent, the community helps in catering for the daughter or the daughter learns to cater and provide for herself. In relation to Dasi's research, Putnam also uses Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of my Mother* as one of her primary texts to further investigate her hypotheses. She further explains that by offering possibilities of these types of mothering, the text shows black daughters coping without the important physical presence of a mother. According to Putnam, female substitutes provide a communal mothering influence for the motherless daughters. And alternatively, the daughters, finding few or no community resource available for their mothering, begin to create cultural ties to their past themselves. Even though the works of Dasi and Putnam centers on mothering or motherhood, Dasi views the challenges of motherhood while Putnam examines the alternative of mothering in Caribbean texts. Although the works of Dasi and Putnam are similar to this study thematically, their focus is on different primary texts and regions of the world. This makes the setting in their work different from that of *Night Dancer*, which is not fully influenced by race (colour) and slavery.

The work under study differs from the above in that; it questions the people's culture through their different relationships and cultural ideologies in the light of motherhood. The challenges of motherhood are explored both from the mother's and daughter's perspective as opposed to Dasi's research. On the one hand, the mother faces these challenges as she carries out her maternal functions. As she exerts much authority and discipline to her daughter, their relationship becomes shaky, thereby, breaking the mother/daughter tie. On the other hand, the daughter views these functions as dominating and rebels against the mother. Furthermore, this study presents the steps of re-defining the female identity in Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. It equally presents a Transcultural based approach to the teaching and learning of English Language. This approach involves the deconstruction of cultural barriers as individuals in the classroom. The classroom here is perceived as the representation of culture.

This work comprises of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The Introduction locates the research problem, sets hypothesis and bring out the aims of this study. Chapter One, entitled "Mother/Daughter Rife", discusses the causes and manifestations of the mother/daughter conflict from the mother's viewpoint. Chapter Two, captioned "Rebellion and Resistance", probes into the different perceptions of the maternal and patriarchal oppression which the daughter hates. Chapter Three, labeled "Re-defining the Self", discusses the acknowledgement of

one's cultural origin and reconciliation with one's root (culture) to create a new self. Chapter Four, entitled "Transcultural Based Approach to the teaching of English Language", demonstrates a pedagogic approach and a practical lesson plan of using the transcultural method in an ESL/EFL classroom. The conclusion recaptures the pertinent points treated in the different chapters, brings out findings, recommendations and proposes avenues for further research.

## CHAPTER ONE

### MOTHER/DAUGHTER RIFE

Mothers play a very important role in the lives of their daughters. Yet, their relationship is complicated especially today, where interests overlap and boundaries are not clearly defined. As a result of these complications, the bond between the two drifts apart as time changes. As the people's culture undergoes some evolution, so too is the mother/daughter relationship. Thus, the beliefs of the Igbo people are influenced by the western culture, resulting to conflicting ideologies. This clash stems from the differences in beliefs, cosmologies, and civilizations. It is against the backdrop of this cultural clash that this chapter examines the causes and manifestations of the mother/daughter conflict from the mother's point of view. This chapter also looks at how mothers try to meet up with their maternal obligation amid all odds.

Vivien Nice, in *Mothers and Daughters: The Distortion of a Relationship*, states that mothers teach their daughters to be dependent. She explains that each mother has to transmit the rules of femininity to her daughter to help her survive in the world as she knows it. Likewise, Nancy Chodorow, in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, examines that this role training is very important in the mother/daughter bond. She attributes this to women's mothering as role training, and notes:

It suggests that women's mothering...is a product of feminine role training and role identification. Girls are taught to be mothers, trained for nurturance, and taught that they ought to mother. They are wrapped in oink blankets, given dolls and ... learn that being a girl is not as good as being a boy, not allowed to get dirty ... and therefore become mother. They are barraged from early childhood well into adult life with books, magazines, ads, school exercises and television programs which put forth pronatalist and promaternal sex-stereotypes. (31)

The daughter identifies with her mother as she grows up and this identification makes her to become mature in the future. Through this training, girls choose to do "girl-things" and eventually, "woman-things" like mothering. Chodorow assumes that women's mothering is a product of behavioural conformity and individual attention. That is, an investigation of what mothering consists in helps to explain how it is perpetuated. This insinuates that women's



mothering does not begin in isolation. Research has shown that behavioural conformity to the apparent specific physical requirements of children – keeping them fed and clean– is not enough to enable physiological or psychological development in a child. It is eminently a psychologically based role and consists in psychological and personal experience of self in relationship to children. In *Night Dancer*, Ezi offers her daughter a doll which she names Amaka (89). Even before Ezi's death, she writes a series of letters or "memoires" to keep her daughter busy and to make her discover her identity. This makes the daughter to always depend on her mother as far as everything is concerned. As a result, this dependency contributes to the conflict between mother and daughter as the child grows up.

The mother guides the child's separation from her as she grows up. Chodorow posits that the mother must guide her child's separation from her. She explains that

If the mother fails to serve as her infant's external ego, and refuses the infant to develop adaptive ego capacities before it is ready, and if she controls the environment and serve as an adaptive ego for mothering, the infant is prevented from developing capacities to deal with anxiety. Those relational capacities and that sense of being which form the core of the integrative "central ego" do not emerge. The mother must know when and how to begin to allow the child to differentiate from her .... Thus, she must guide her child's separation from her.

(83)

This reiterates the fact that mothers watch the development of their children at a close range, and are supposed to know when to carry out certain actions. Ezi in *Night Dancer* stops her daughter from sleeping with her in the same room when she has a male visitor in her room. This action fosters the dyad between them in the text.

Unigwe presents motherhood or mothering situation in which the mother is not informed by her relationship to her husband, her experience of financial dependence, her expectations of marital inequality, or expectations about gender roles. According to Chodorow, motherhood is viewed from the way the mother considers her relationship with her daughter. She says: "For the mother, the relationship has a quality of exclusivity and mutuality, in that it does not include other people and because it is different from relationships to adults" (86). From the mother's perspective, this relationship does not concern the other members in the family as well as the

community. In *Night Dancer*, Ezi does not care about her husband when she takes their daughter away or walks out of marriage. She equally does this because she knows she has a degree and a job that can make her to be financially independent. This action separates her daughter from her husband and eventually orchestrates the rift between mother and daughter.

In a research carried out by The Social Issues Research Centre, titled “The changing Face Of Motherhood”, the mother/daughter rift is caused by the mother’s relationship with her own mother. That is, the dyad between Ezi and her daughter is fueled by the conflict she has with her mother over the above enumerated issues. The researchers explain:

Mothers describe their relationships with their own mothers as being more like friendships ... the ways in which mothers raise their own children have always been influenced by their own childhood experiences and the approach of their own mothers .... (2)

In *Night Dancer*, Ezi’s relationship with her mother has been friendly at the beginning. This is evident when Ezi tells Mma in her memoire about her mother’s reaction towards Mike’s family. Ezi discusses about the treatment Mike’s mother gives her to her mother. But this good relationship transforms into conflict as Ezi decides to abandon her marriage against her mother’s advice. When Ezi leaves her husband’s house, she is rejected by her mother: “If you leave, if you walk out of your marriage, you’re not welcome at home” (215). Ezi decides to leave her marriage even after her mother’s warning. Later, after being advised by her mother to return to her husband’s house, she stubbornly refuses, and her mother neglects and abandons her forever. Ezi confirms this when she says: “When she [Ezi’s mother] died, my father sent word that I was not allowed to come to her funeral” (45). According to Ezi’s father, she is responsible for her mother’s death. This conflict contributes to the one she has with her daughter, Mma. This rift is greatly caused by the differences in marital values from the mother’s viewpoint. Marriage among the Igbos is deemed as an indispensable factor for the continuation of the family line of descent, with children occupying the central point. The first consideration in a marriage is the fertility of the couple, especially the woman. Parents long for this and the father of the family requests this every morning in his kolanut prayer. The mother begs for it while pouring libation at her cult to her chi during annual festival. It is important for the father to hand down whatever he has to his son; this is why male children are preferred over female children. In this way, the son will have something to start with as he makes his own family. Men are leaders in the family and women

play secondary roles. In most circumstances, polygamy is practiced. But it is a taboo for a woman to have more than one husband. To cater for her child's needs, Ezi in *Night Dancer* starts sleeping with different men; leading a life of prostitution, which is against the tradition. This lifestyle makes her daughter to hate her more, thereby, widening the gap between them.

Margaret Notar and Susan McDaniel in an article, titled "Feminist Attitudes and Mother-Daughter Relationships", describe the mother/daughter relationship as that which is often conflicting, particularly during the daughter's adolescence, and it manifests many of the ambiguities and confusions about the social meanings of womanhood and motherhood. To this, Ezi in *Night Dancer* has multiple functions to perform towards her daughter as the only parent. She is the role-model, idol, teacher, guardian, provider and care-giver of the child. However, because of the nature of Ezi's job, no one helps her in taking care of her daughter. She says to her daughter in her letters:

Women refused to babysit you, my beautiful baby-baby. You were the most beautiful child that neighbourhood had ever seen, yet when you cried, nobody offered to hold you and tried to console you like they did with each other's babies. Nobody said, 'Bring that crying baby here, nwa bu nwa ora. She belongs to all of us.' Nobody asked to carry you, or sang of how beautiful you were or let you suckle on their dried-out nipples in consolation. (82)

From the above excerpt, we can see the kind of life Ezi leaves as a result of the nature of her job and the implication it has on her bond with her daughter. As Chodorow explains, the mother is the early care-giver and primary source of identification for her children. Even though Ezi tries, she is unable to give her daughter the attention needed. Therefore, she "had to get a maid" to baby-sit her daughter (84). She ends up not spending enough time with her daughter, thereby breaking their bond.

In the traditional Igbo society, the love for children is manifested through the naming of the children, which exposes the Igbo man's sentiment and high-water mark of ambitions. Other things in life rank second to this desire. More importantly, men and women are mocked if they remained unmarried. A childless woman is, therefore, regarded as monstrosity, and this idea is still present in the Igbo society today. A childless marriage is considered as a taboo and a source of disappointment to most families in the Igbo tradition. The position of a wife in her husband's

family remains shaky and unpredictable until she begets a child. She becomes secure in marriage only after the birth of a male child. When she acquires this, she is welcomed in a special way as a responsible housewife in her husband's family. In fact, the birth of a male child gives her the title of a wife. In *Night Dancer*, Ezi is only able to give her husband a girl child and this could not secure her place in her husband's house. As a result, she ends up raising her child, Mma alone.

In the tradition, marriage is not an issue of love between two people but a continuation of the family bloodline and union between families. In *Night Dancer*, Mike - Ezi's husband cares not about this. From Ezi's point of view, Mike has been running away from his tradition. But now, he is embracing it. Consequently, he lets go love and respects his tradition. This shocks Ezi when she discovers that Mike has a child with their housemaid. She is disappointed because she depends on the love she and Mike shares. Meanwhile, love is not the determining factor for long lasting relationship in the Igbo culture. Madam Gold tells Mma: "Your father loved your mother, which is more than many women have" (9). This makes us understand that even though Mike loves Ezi, he still needs to continue his lineage. In turn, Ezi does not encourage nor comfort her daughter when she is heartbroken as a result of her husband's betrayal. From her experience, love does not count in marriage and so she ignores her daughter's tears. This further weakens the bond existing between them. To emphasize on this issue, Ezi mocks every family she encounters as fake. She tells Mma: "All those happy-happy families you see everywhere, scratch them, lift the lid and all you'll see are many sad-sad things, dirty-dirty things" (7). She does not want to make her daughter think that there exists a happy family somewhere. This is because of what has happened in her marriage. This only makes her daughter to see her as a bad mother and a pessimist. This further weakens their bond bit-by-bit because the mother does not believe in a happy family without a male child as well.

The fertility of the couple also fosters this mother/daughter clash. Unigwe makes us understand that the father of the family requests this every morning in his kolanut prayer and the mother begs for it while pouring libation to her chi during annual festival. But it is different when it comes to Ezi and Mike. Mike's mother pressurizes him to get a new wife who can bear him children, but her attempts are all in vain.

For years his mother tried to get him to do two things: the first was to move back to the south of the country. The second was to marry another wife. She had

failed in both attempts and for that she had often told Mike that he was a stubborn son, an obstinate son who deserved nothing good. (187)

After four years of marriage, Mike's mother is disappointed that her daughter-in-law has not given her a grandchild. Mike's father has died but his cousin, Silas, also wants him to marry a second wife who will give him a child. At first, Mike could not do it because he loves his wife very much. But he ends up impregnating the housemaid and consequently, Ezi has to leave. She is aware that her separation with the husband will eventually affect her daughter in future but she cares less. This is because without a father to give her daughter's hand in marriage, no man would want to marry her. This prepares another conflicting platform for the mother and daughter.

As earlier indicated, among the Igbos, a woman's position in her husband's house is only secured after the birth of a male child. In *Night Dancer*, when Ezi finally gets pregnant, she discovers that her housemaid too is pregnant. Unfortunately for her, she gives birth to a girl while Rapu gives birth to a boy. At the end of the day, Rapu secures a place in Mike's home as a wife. To this, Ezi's mother notes: "His son! His son! And that, my dear, makes all the difference. You do not want to anger him, ooo; do not anger him because at this moment you're standing only with one leg inside the house. This Rapu has landed on both feet" (211). More so, Ezi tells us in her "memoire" that the birth of her younger brother, Jerry, being the second son in the family, came to solidify her mother's place in her husband's house. "He came six years after Sugar Boy and solidified my mother's place in her husband's home. One son is good but two makes your position unassailable. No one can question it" (47). Ezi could no longer see her position in her husband's house and so, leaves her marriage, taking her daughter along. She breaks away from the traditional strings of marriage, and thus initiates the conflict between her and the daughter.

Nigeria being a patriarchal society equally prefers the male child over the female child and makes mothering more challenging. This is explained by Ezi from the time she gives birth to a girl. At this point, all Mike says is: "She is as beautiful as her mother" (212). Ezi had thought that the sex of the child does not matter to him but she is wrong. During the four years of the childless marriage, Mike is very patient with her yet, he cannot turn his back on his son. Madam Gold tells Mma: "Every man deserves a son.... Especially a man as patient as your father was. Your father was very patient. Yes. Not even a man carved out of stone would turn away a son when his wife had only been able to give him a daughter" (6). This equally shows how important

a son is in the tradition. And as Madam Gold intimates: “Every man deserves a son”, Ezi’s daughter is placed at the periphery while Rapu’s son is placed at the center. This aspect relegates women to the background as they find it difficult to raise their girl children. Ezi could not withstand this discrimination. She does not see the need of a son when she has given her loving husband a daughter. Ezi could not believe what was going on around her and comments that

This could not be happening. Not to her. Not to Mike and her. They were too solid for that. And since when did Mike believe that girls did not count? That only male children counted? That was not the Mike who had wooed her, who stood by her through the years of her childlessness. He would not do this now when their family was starting to expand. What did he need a son for when they had their own daughter? (212)

She therefore, places importance on her daughter. Thinking about her daughter’s place in the society, Ezi emphasizes that: “And all the while, I had to think of you” (48). What Ezi does not know is that taking her daughter away from her husband makes the child to hate her more. Consequently, this widens the gap between them.

When the mother succeeds in giving her husband’s family a son, she is given a special welcome into the family, and it equally gives her the title of an actual ‘wife.’ Drawing from the above discussion, it is evident that a woman’s place in her husband’s house is guaranteed by the birth of a male child. In *Night Dancer*, as Rapu gives birth to a male child, Ezi’s mother-in-law triumphantly brings her into Mike’s house as if she has won a lottery. Ezi could not believe this. The same mother-in-law, who had openly welcomed her into the family, now ignores her: “... a mother-in-law who adored me. What could go wrong?” (100). She is unable to secure her position as Mike’s wife and now, Rapu is given special treatment as she returns. Ezi corrects herself: “In fact, it would be wrong to say that Rapu returned. The more truthful thing to say would be that she was returned, triumphantly, by Ezi’s mother-in-law, cradling a baby in her arms” (209). Even Rapu is so pleased with her accomplishment to the extent that when she is brought back into Mike’s house, she starts humming to the dislike of Ezi (210). At this point, all Ezi thinks about is leaving her husband’s house for the maid. Thus, this prepares the ground for a rupture between mother and daughter.

Ezi blames the years of sterility in her marriage for the gap existing between her and the daughter. In the traditional Igbo community, when the wife is sterile, she is made the subject of conversation and ridiculed by other women especially the mother-in-law. No matter where Ezi and Mike are, the topic of conversation centers on children. Mike's family members have nothing else to talk about except looking for ways to end the childless relationship between Ezi and Mike. Ezi subsequently becomes an enemy to her in-laws because she at the earlier stage is unable to give her husband's family a child to protect their family heritage and identity. In order to change the situation, she starts visiting the hospitals for answers Ezi subjects herself to constant tests in the hospitals yet, her visits do not yield the fruits she expects at that moment:

There was no reason why she could not have a baby. All the doctors they had seen said so. They ran tests and collected samples and swaps so intimately she felt violated but they could not grant her the one thing which crept up in her dreams. (186-187)

When Ezi starts receiving the poor treatment from her in-laws because of her inability to give birth, she decides to find a solution to her problem. She moves from one hospital to another, running fertility tests in each of them and the results show that she can bear a child. But before Ezi's attempt, Mike thinks he is the problem. Few months after they had gotten married and could not have children, Mike thought the problem was coming from him. So, he sought the doctor's advice first, before taking Ezi along:

Mike had seen doctors, first alone and then with Ezi. They had both been prodded and poked and were forced to reveal the most intimate details of their lives. The verdict was indisputable but unhelpful – 'You are both very healthy, there's no reason why you shouldn't have a baby' – delivered with a smile which the couple suspected was supposed to calm their fears but which did the exact opposite. (183)

During their first visits to the doctor, the couple is assured that they are both healthy to have a child. This fills them with much hope which dies as time progresses. Since she takes so long to have a child, her housemaid - Rapu takes the opportunity to give Mike a child. Even though Ezi and the maid become pregnant almost at the same time, Ezi subsequently loses her place as she gives birth to a girl while Rapu gives birth to a boy.

Men and women are mocked in traditional society if they are single. Ezi does not care about what her tradition says but does what pleases her. Because the society is ashamed of her, she could not keep friends apart for Madam Gold. In addition to this, Ezi is coldly mocked by her neighbours wherever she lives because of her newly unmarried status: “The women snubbed me and, when their husbands tried to catch my eye and I ignore them, they joined their wives to mutter, ‘Who does this woman think she is?’”(81). These women are insecure about their husbands. They are scared that Ezi would snatch their husbands away. They say: “‘She has roving eyes,’ the women said of me, and no man was safe, least of all theirs” (82). Even though the tradition mocks at single men and women, Ezi does not actually care about these traditional norms. She embraces the western culture where being single is not a taboo. As a single parent, she encounters challenges from the society as well as from her daughter. Raising a family alone requires that one performs the roles of both parents. One would need to be a provider, disciplinarian, comforter and guidance counselor. The major challenge of being a single mother is addressing the developmental needs of children. The society still, could not help Ezi find a job to take care of her child. This is evident in the story Madam Gold narrates about Ezi’s movement from one bank to another looking for money to start-up a business to cater for her child’s needs (18-21).

As a result of being a single parent, single mothers become ‘Dismissive mothers’ as Peg Streep puts it in “8 Types of Toxic Patterns in Mother-Daughter Relationship” in *Psychology Today*. These mothers tend to ignore their daughters’ feelings. Daughters raised by ‘Dismissive mothers’ doubt the validity of their own emotional needs. They feel unworthy of attention and experience deep, gut-wrenching self-doubt, all the while feeling intense longing for love and validation. In Peg Streep’s research on *Mean Mothers: Overcoming the Legacy of Hurt*, one daughter says that her mother literally does not listen to her or hear her. Also, her mother will ask what she wants to do over the weekend or summer, ignores her answer and then makes plans for her. Furthermore, her mother will ask questions about the clothes she wants but the same thing happens. But that is not the central part: her mother does not ask her about what she is feeling or what she is thinking. That is, the mother does not want to know more about the daughter’s feelings. In *Night Dancer*, we see that Ezi is an example of a dismissive mother. She waves off her daughter’s desire having a pet many times because she does not want to know



more about the daughter's feeling or thought. According to Ezi, she is doing what is good for her daughter. Hence, this strains their relationship.

Furthermore, Streep maintains that the book on mean mothers exposes the myths of motherhood that prevent people from talking about the women for whom mothering a daughter is fraught with ambivalence, tension, or even jealousy. This book casts a different light on the extraordinary influence mothers have over their daughters, as well as, the psychological complexity and emotional depth of the mother/daughter relationship. Through her scientific research and case studies of adult daughters, she discovers that some women are not capable of nurturing their children. Although this is one of the reasons of the mother/daughter conflict, this is not exactly the case of Ezi in *Night Dancer*. But Ezi's influence over the daughter's life causes the mother/daughter bond to drift apart farther. For example, when the mother tells the daughter to take a decision that convenience her but still keeps a close eye on her.

The parent, at the end of the day, turns the child against the other parent. This is very common with women. Some mothers turn their children (daughters) against their fathers without any justification. This situation is known as the Medea complex. The Medea complex is a myth written around 400.B.C. by Euripides. It is a story of intense love turned into such intense hate of a woman (Medea) who killed her own children to get back at her husband for betraying her. Fred Pine, in *Developmental Theory and Clinical Process*, refers to Medea as an example of a particular form of hatred found in women:

Medea's internal experience is a compound of a sense of injury-a sense that builds to imagined public humiliation and a sense of righteousness.... It is a frequent accompaniment of hate and hate-based rage. I think it stems from something self-preservative and some flaw in the super-ego, possibly based on identification with the child's experience of the rageful mothers giving her full permission-and without subsequent remorse-to express her rage towards the child. (109)

Pine explains here that the Medea situation occurs as a result of betrayal from an idolized husband. This betrayal is accompanied by hatred on the wife's part and she pours this hatred and anger to the child she has with her husband. In addition, the woman creates an image of the husband from what Pine says above. She sees her husband as a hero subject and trusts him

completely. Thus, when she is hurt by the husband, she finds it easier to transfer her rage to the daughter. In *Night Dancer*, Ezi tries to get back at her husband, Mike, for betraying her with another woman. And taking Mma away from him is a way of punishing him because he loves her. Madam Gold tells Mma:

Your father loved your mother, which is more than many wives have. He loved her. She knew that and I think she wanted to punish him by taking away what would hurt him the most. The problem was that she loved him too. She forgot that it never makes sense to cut off your own nose to spite your face. (9)

This shows that by punishing the husband for breaking that trust, Ezi equally hurts herself because she loves the husband. Mike confirms this by saying that, “And she punished me enough for it.... She should have stayed” (259). And when she left his world ended (259). By doing this, Ezi does not only punish Mike but herself. Most importantly, Ezi sows the seed of discord between her and the daughter as she fails to give the daughter the chance to know her father. To Ezi, taking Mma away from Mike is a way of punishing Mike for betraying her. Unfortunately, she is unaware that her action is inviting hatred and rebellion from the daughter.

In this light, John Jacob’s paper, entitled “Euripides’ Medea: A Psychodynamic Model of Severe Divorce Pathology”, views Medea mothers as “narcissistically scared, embittered dependent woman... attempts to sever father-child contact as a means of revenging the injury inflicted on her by the loss of a self object, her hero-husband” (36). Ezi never believes that Mike would disappoint her:

E would have forgiven him anything, anything at all to pay him back for all the many years of support in the face of his family’s displeasure – as if all that happened were her fault... - but nothing could persuade her to forgive him for Rapu. (101-102)

Even Madam Gold tells Adamma, “I could hardly believe that Mike would do such a thing” (10). Ezi knows that all marriages have their fair share of trials but does not expect her husband to cheat on her, especially with their housemaid. This is why taking her daughter away from her husband is seen as a means of revenging the injury inflicted on her by her husband. She carries out this task, forgetting that it will break what tie exist between her and the daughter in future.

The mother/daughter dyad is also caused by the fact that mothers want their daughters to do things they could not get to do. She gives her daughter the opportunity to choose what she wants to do in life. In *Night Dancer*, Ezi does not interfere in her daughter's choices. In school, Mma says: "She - unlike many of her classmates – had not even needed to fight her mother for her choice of study" (70). She allows her daughter to do what pleases her with no limitations. Mma asserts this when she thinks: "How much of a different life her mother had tried to give her. She had tried to raise her daughter with the sort of values she herself was never taught" (113). In giving such a life to her daughter, Ezi widens the gap between them.

In Set Meyers' article, entitled "Mother/Daughter Dysfunction" in *Psychology Today*, he posits that the mother/daughter relationship is defined by a mutual respect and acceptance. As a therapist, Meyers states he has found that there are several causes of the mother/daughter conflict. In his research, both mother and daughter see each other as competitors. They feel frustrated and misunderstood. And the mother sees the daughter as the culprit. To him, the mother sees the daughter as the guilty party. In *Night Dancer*, Ezi looks at Mma as the guilty culprit. No matter what she does, Mma always takes the opportunity to make her point. For example, when Mma takes upon herself to set up a cooking rota, her mother feels frustrated. To an extent, this competitive attitude widens the gap between mother and daughter.

The mother/daughter relationship further deteriorates when the mother is stuck in the past. Meyers continues that the grown daughter and mother maintain the same dynamic as during childhood. The mother continues to be over-protective. She does everything within her power to protect and cater for the daughter's needs. This often moves on to the daughter's romantic life. In *Night Dancer*, Ezi is over-protective of her daughter. She does not want her daughter to be hurt by men because of what has happened to her in the past with her husband. Consequently, the daughter's romantic life becomes controlled by the mother. Mma explains the level of her mother's control:

Ezi had not always been nice to Obi, peppering him with questions, asking if he intended to make an honest woman of her daughter, if he snored in his sleep, if he was stingy with money – and then laughing that rich laugh which bounced off the walls of the house as if it mocked everyone. The more awkward Obi appeared, the longer she stretched out the laughter like a rubber band – when

you thought it had reached breaking point and would snap, it recoiled and started all over again. (25)

It is evident in this excerpt that Ezi is very protective of her daughter with respect to men. When her daughter receives a male visitor, she scares them away with a series of questions and an awkward laughter. This attitude of Ezi strains the bond she has with her daughter.

Meyers further maintains that conflict exists between mother and daughter when there is lack of communication. To him, an invisible umbilical cord still connects mother and daughter which make them codependents. In *Night Dancer*, there is hardly any form of communication between mother and daughter. Even when Ezi proposes that both of them should help each other in the kitchen, Mma rejects the idea. This is because she does not want any form of communication with the mother. Mma takes this decision because it is the way things have been from childhood. Ezi always allows Mma to do whatever she pleases as a child, even at the expense of the mother's happiness. And so, the daughter chooses to stay out of communication. To this, the author notes: "Her mother began to complain that she lurked-lurked in corners like a stranger" (34). As a result, she allows her daughter to cease communication with her, thereby, breaking their bond.

Furthermore, Meyers expounds that the conflict between mother and daughter occurs when mother does not share any meaningful or intimate detail about her personal life. Mothers sometimes need to share their story with their daughters. But this is not the case with Ezi in *Night Dancer*. Ezi does not tell the daughter anything about her childhood days, her family, and the father of her daughter. Every time Mma tries to ask questions to the mother in trying to know the mother's story, the mother does not give her an answer nor tell her anything about her life. It is only after her death that the daughter reads patches of her mother's personal and family life. Thus, the gap in their relationship grows wider.

This chapter set out to discuss the dyad between mother and daughter from the mother's viewpoint. In the course of this analysis, it is discovered that mothers are responsible for their daughter's training, which later contributes to their feud. This conflict manifests as the daughter attains puberty. As the mother guards the daughter's separation from her, she unintentionally creates a gap between them. The chapter equally examined the mother's relationship with her own mother. Her relationship with her mother influences the one she has with her daughter as it leads to a clash between them. When the mother trains the daughter and guides her separation

from her, the daughter sees it as a form of rejection because she is left at the periphery. This act makes the daughter angry and rebellious. The daughter also finds the mother's role training act as a form of maternal domination. Consequently, the daughter tries to resist this authority. This issue of rebellion and resistance towards maternal authority and subjugation will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REBELLION AND RESISTANCE

The individual psyche of a child is developed mainly through the unconscious communications between mother and child. This internal world is shaped as the child unconsciously creates rudimentary pictures of herself in the world and copes with the anxiety and the other unpleasant affect. The mother is very important in the daughter's psyche such that her interpersonal experiences can be understood in terms of the internal mother/daughter lineage. This mother/daughter bond is a complicated one. As mothers try to meet up with their maternal obligations, they are considered more or less oppressive and violent by their daughters. Being the elder of both women, the mother exerts authority to the dislike of the daughter as she attains puberty. That is, the girl child idolizes and idealises the mother in the early years of childhood. And in order for the child to develop into a separate individual, she has to pass through a period of disagreements with the mother as she reaches puberty. This is where the bond between them begins to split. This split is manifested through conflicts as a result of disagreements due to their attitudes and viewpoints. The daughter considers the mother's authority as imposing and the only way she can show disapproval is by rebellion and resistance to attitudes unfavourable to her. It is from this premise that this chapter examines the reasons for the daughter's rebellion and resistance towards maternal obligation.

As mentioned in Chapter One, mothers guide their daughters' separation from them. And when the mother fails in this quest, the child sees this as a form of rejection which leads to rebellion. Nancy Chodorow, in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, posits that the mother must know when and how to begin to separate from her daughter. She adds: "In the process, she [the mother] often awakens her child's ambivalence towards her [the mother], and unintentionally brings on its rejection of her and of the care which she has provided" (83). The daughter perceives this as an act of domination. Children wish to remain together with their mother and hardly expect any conflicting interest in their relationship. Any opposing view more often than not leads to rebellion. As a child, Mma in *Night Dancer* runs to her mother at night whenever she has a nightmare and gets her mother's attention. But when her mother has a male visitor, she is restricted from entering her mother's room even when she has a bad dream (33): "She never

asked her mother to let her into her bed again, no matter the magnitude of her nightmares” (34). Never asking for her mother’s help is Mma’s way of defying her mother’s authority. Since the mother decides to separate the child from her, the daughter’s silence is a form of rebellion.

Chodorow makes us understand that during the period when the mother guides the child’s separation from her, she risks to be caught in the middle of her daughter’s transition. And this definitely causes the daughter to resist her authority. Chodorow further explains that

The ability to know when and how to relinquish control of the infant ... is just as important as the mother’s initial ability to provide total care. I have described Winnicott’s claim that a failure in this later task leads the infant to develop only reactively. But a mother may fulfill her initial responsibilities to her infant, and then not be able to give up this total control. Winnicott suggests that in such a case, an infant has two options. Either it must remain permanently regressed and merged with the mother, or it must totally reject its mother ... from the infant’s point of view. (84)

We denote here that the mother’s ability to know when to give-up control over the daughter is very salient in this chapter. Most mothers provide care to their daughters but find it difficult when it comes to releasing their control over them. It is difficult for the mother to do so and this leaves the daughter with two options: either to see an ally in the mother or totally rejects the mother’s support. This argument is viewed from the daughter’s point of view. This is typical of what happens in *Night Dancer* with Mma. As she goes through this separation phase, she sees her mother’s authority as a form of subjugation. With regard to the situation, she chooses to totally reject her mother and her mother’s ways of life. When Ezi was alive, Mma was always angry at her for the way she talked to and laughed about her friends. As a result, Mma tries to do things the opposite way. That is, she decides to become the exact opposite of her:

Where her mother’s laughter was unbridled and loud, Mma’s was timid, a chuckle at most. Where her mother’s voice was so loud it was not certain whether she was shouting or just plain talking, Mma’s voice was low and demure. Her mother sought to see the flaw in everyone, the blemishes, the scars. Mma sought perfection, she saw beauty in everyone. (67)

The above excerpt insinuates that whenever Ezi laughs as loudly as she always does, Mma either smiles or chortles at most. Also, when Ezi speaks in a high tone, Mma makes sure to speak in a sober tone. In addition, Ezi always sees mistakes in people while Mma sees perfection in her own way. Mma does not only try to be the opposite of her mother but rebels against her mother's lifestyle. She does not like the way her mother talks about the behaviours of her 'would-be friends' and their mothers after their visit:

She'd seize on an attribute of the just departed mother and child to ridicule it.

'What a face the mother has! She looks like an ekpo masquerade. What a voice that little girl has. "Twit twit twit." Like a chirruping bird's.... and that one walks so ungainly, as if she was being pushed from behind. (67)

The author makes us understand that Ezi always criticizes other women and their daughters. These mothers bring their daughters to be friends with Mma, but Ezi's behaviour and countenance in responding to these mothers' questions send them away. And as soon as they leave, she always stays behind and complains about their looks, manners, and characters. Mma does not love this attitude of the mother. Thus, it drives her farther from the mother as a means of resisting these 'bad' attitudes of her mother.

Chodorow further maintains that because mothers and daughters identify with each other, and because their individual boundaries are not always clear, daughters struggle all their lives to separate from their mothers. That is, mothers are role models to their daughters and desire their connection but they do not want to be like her. This difference is so evident in *Night Dancer*. Mma wants to be so different from her mother that when she thinks she is loud, she remains calm. In designs and furniture, she prefers cool and mild colours as opposed to her mother's shouting colours. She is always in competition with her mother as she tries not to act like her or be compared to her. She is forced to act like that because she is the spitting image of her mother and this frightens her:

... for there was no denying the fact that the two women were identical, so identical that people often commented on first meeting them that her mother must have simply spat her out. It was this physical similarity which also worried Mma. And so she avoided her mother .... (70)



As seen above, Mma is identical to her mother in a way that people confuse them at first sight. Scared of this resemblance, she stays away from the mother in order not to be linked to the mother's loud qualities. More to this, to prove that their individual boundaries are not always clear, Mma fights away the thought of being the spitting image of her mother. She remembers her mother telling her in her "memoir":

I know we have had our problems, you and me, but that is because we are really alike. I can imagine you shaking your head now. But it is true. We are more alike than you care to admit. Ose na mmanu. We go together. Think about it, baby-baby, dare to tell yourself the truth. The truth will set you free! (72)

Ezi confirms the fact that the daughter is the spitting image of her no matter what she thinks of her. Unigwe appropriates the use of language by inserted aspects of the Igbo language in her novel to suit her context and equally abrogates the English language by duplicating words like "baby-baby".

Frances Nadeau in an article, entitled "The Mother/Daughter Relationship in Young Adult Fiction" in *The ALAN Review*, posits that this relationship undergoes conflict from the daughter's point of view because the mother is the primary role model and teacher of cultural values. Adolescent daughters as shown above hold the most negative attitudes towards their mothers. These negative attitudes are seen through the daughter's anger and resentment towards her mother's actions/attitudes. In *Night Dancer*, it is discussed from the circumstances surrounding Ezi's death and burial. When Ezi is hospitalized, her daughter, Mma does not pay her a visit even when she is asked to see her. When Ezi dies, Mma buries her in a public cemetery, and plans to distribute her mother's jewelries to the poor and not to fulfill her mother's dying wish - building a house in New Haven with a swimming pool shaped like an egg:

There was no way Mma would be fulfilling her mother's dream, no way she would run the risk of making Ezi happy in death.... Well, her mother could roam the earth until her feet got sore and her toes gangrened and her heels calloused, Mma simply did not care. (92)

Mma hates the mother to the extent that she does not care about fulfilling her mother's dying wish. She thinks that the mother has ruined her life and she will not allow her to rest in peace or

be happy in death. She does not care about what happens to the mother wherever she is. This is how much she resents her.

The difficult childhood she has is as a result of the nature of her mother's job. Ezi does prostitution in order to take care of her daughter. The nature of this job causes Mma to have a harsh childhood. She is stigmatized and isolated in school and at home. She is taunted and called all sorts of names:

She did not want to remember children yelling 'Ada ashawo' - whore's daughter – to her as she walked to school, children not much older than her throwing words like missiles, and laughing as they struck her. Their cruelty was not gratuitous. It was calculated and consistent. It hit its mark and sent her to the privacy of the school toilets and to her bedroom to cry. (16)

Mma does not want to remember the difficult childhood she had because of the nature of the mother's job. Children yell at her and calling her names like 'daughter of a prostitute'. She isolates herself in order to stay away from trouble. The things that the other children say to her push her to hate her mother the more. This drifts her apart from the mother. Hence, the rebellion.

As the daughter struggles for control, it further widens the gap between them. When daughters are younger, their mothers are in complete control of almost everything they do: what they eat, what they wear, where they go and who they are with. But now as they grow older, daughters want to make decisions for themselves without their mothers interfering. When mothers start interfering in their decisions, daughters tend to rebel against that. In *Night Dancer*, Mma faces a completely different situation when it comes to the issue of control. Her mother is not practically the one interfering in her decisions but the community in which she lives in. Due to the nature of her mother's job, she cannot take the decision of making new friends because the choice is not hers. Similarly, they equally want to be free from maternal subjugation. Consequently, she withdraws herself away from her mother in a silent resistance to the quietness of her bedroom.

Daughters rebel because they want attention from their mothers. Often, daughters want others to notice them by calling for attention when people are present. As a mother, one needs to be available to your children. But a mother who is always out cannot meet up such obligations. Ezi is unable to give her daughter the attention needed. Even when her daughter has an outburst,

she ignores it. Thus, Mma develops hatred towards her mother. This results to Mma lurking in the corners of the house and keeping to herself for as long as she could.

The search for acceptance is one of the major reasons why daughters rebel against their mothers. With regard to the mother/daughter bond, daughters want to be part of the crowd and they want a sense of belonging. During the separation process of daughters from their mothers as mentioned in Chapter One, if it is not carried out carefully, the daughter feels rejected. This rejection causes a split in their relationship. This split is manifested through conflicts in their relationship. Mma has never accepted her mother's viewpoint when it is about having a happy family. Consequently, she sees her mother as a pessimist and resort to keeping her thoughts to herself.

Daughters, most importantly, rebel against their mothers in search for an identity. During the early stages of child development, children struggle to find out who they really are and why they are here. It is the mother's duty to make the daughter understand the values they have. That is, mothers should help their children understand the difference between reality and appearance. In *Night Dancer*, Ezi does not differentiate between what is real and what is not to her daughter. So, Mma tries to figure out who she is by acting the exact opposite of her mother. Hence, she always rebels against every activity her mother performs. In order to achieve this, she changes her attitudes not to be like her mothers.

Mma rebels against her mother because she does not give her a father. She thinks that if she has a father, she will not be going through all the insults in school; "She [Ezi] told me I had no father! I was the only child in school without a father, dead or alive. Have you any idea how that made me feel?" (16). There is a time Ezi tries to give Mma a father figure in her life but this does not last for long. At some point as Mma is growing up, the man disappears. Unigwe explains:

She [Mma] had missed him for a while, had asked her mother when he would be coming back to visit, but her mother never gave any response, letting the silence swell until Mma could no longer stand it and left the room .... She remembered walking around for days feeling as her heart had a hole that was sifting sand, waiting for the man she wished was her father to turn up at their doorstep. He never did. And no other man came to replace him.(88 – 89)

This excerpt denotes the daughter's need for a father. Her mother presents her with a 'father-like' figure and later, the man disappears in their lives. This Mma hates her mother for not giving her a traditional family and a traditional way of life. A traditional family is one that is headed by a father and mother, and there are many other members like the aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. These family members always try to be together during festive periods like Christmas. And during such moments, Mma has no place to go to or family members to visit. Sometimes, parents will visit their children and grandchildren in the cities but Mma has no one to pay her such a visit. She envies her friends whose grandmothers come and tell them lots of stories and bring them lots of gifts from their various villages. She says:

Ogochukwu – from – downstairs' mamannukwu [grandmother] was visiting, and had come like Father Christmas, bearing sacks of gifts: fruit; gold-coloured cocoa and dark violet pears; green guavas the size of a human fist and sour-sop with green bumpy skin like a baby dinosaur. Mma wanted her own grandmother to visit too. She wanted this, perhaps, more than she had ever wanted anything else at that age. (75)

Also, her mother does not give her the opportunity to know her brother. She gets so angry with her mother. Her mother no longer believes in a happy family because of Mike's betrayal. She thinks that the happy family concept is just a façade. But according to the way Mma thinks about the matter:

She could have had a 'happy-happy' family, the sort of normal family her mother had mocked in her usual way: 'All those happy-happy families you see everywhere, scratch them, lift the lid and all you'll see are many sad-sad things, dirty-dirty things.' (7)

From the way Mma sees it, it is because her mother does not believe in this happy family concept that she dissuades her daughter's desire of a happy family. And this is one of the reasons of Mma's resistance towards her mother's authority.

"Every child deserves a father" (7). This is one of the reasons of Mma's rebellion towards her mother. She has always wished to have a father, and she blames her mother for keeping her away from her father:

Whatever had happened she [Ezi], not he [Mike] must be blamed for the consequences. Her mother had no right to keep her away from him, or him away from her. It was not right. If only she had been allowed contact, her life would have turned out differently. She would have talked about him at school. She could have stood in front of the class, all proud, and said, 'My father is an architect.' Or, 'My father is a painter.' (8)

In relation to this, she hates her mother for not trying to create a story for her about her father. In school, she has been the only child who knows nothing about her father. Even those whose fathers had died had memories of their fathers told to them by their mothers. And these children talk about their fathers with such an affection that makes Mma envy them and longs for such a story. Again, still in the homes in which the father is dead, there is a picture of the said father but none is at Ezi's house. She does not tell her daughter if her father is dead or alive. In the quest of having something to tell her friends, Mma creates a story: "So Mma put her fantasies into words and spun elaborate stories for her curious classmates of a father with a long beard who could spin a football on his index finger, but who had died in a car crash when she was five years old" (90). The absence of a fatherly figure in Mma's lives fosters the resistance towards her mother. Without a father to protect her and the nature of her mother's job, boys stop her on her way to school and ask her how much she charges for her services. Consequently, Mma does not keep friends for long. Whenever the parents of the girls she befriends discover that her mother is a prostitute, they take their daughters away. Even as she becomes older and makes new friends, they still run away from her:

Mma collected friends outside her neighbourhood, too. Her beauty and her extravagance made her popular, but she hardly kept them. She gathered them and held them close but like the beads of a snapped bracelet, they slipped through her fingers, so that she couldn't retrieve them. It was never long before new friends started avoiding her.... When their mothers dropped them off they naturally wanted to meet Ezi... to draw her into conversation and work out the sort of home their daughters were visiting... they'd drag their daughters home to safety. (65 – 66)

This excerpt makes us understand that Mma's efforts in making friends. Many people know her because of her beauty and many girls want to be friends with her. But no matter how many friends she tries to make, they all run away from her because of her mother's job. These parents do not want their daughters to copy the art of prostitution from Mma. "And as everyone knew, prostitution, like crime, was often hereditary" (68). Mma is left reeling in despair. Without a father, friends running away from her, she has no one to talk to. Filled with distress, she has a loathing for a mother who does not even seem to notice her at all (67). Mma therefore becomes so rebellious towards her mother in her thoughts and actions to the extent that she would wish her dead. "I wish you were dead" (30). And later, she thinks that she is responsible for her mother's death:

She had thought several times of what it would be like to mix otapiapia in her mother's food. The day her mother complained of cramps worrying-worrying her for the first time, Mma was sure she was to blame. How else to explain the cramps that started after Ezi ate the fufu and soup that she had made? ...what if she had actually scooped a thumbful of the otapiapia and mixed it but had forgotten about it? (240)

We deduce from this passage that the daughter's anger, rebellion and resentment towards the mother can be so profound. That is, it so deep to the point that she prays for her mother's death.

The rebellion against her mother increases when she tries to replace the thought and vacuum of a father in her heart with a pet but her mother does not allow her. Ezi waves off every idea that Mma comes up with when she wants a pet:

Snakes are a dangerous creature, that's why you can't have one,' her mother had told her ... she could not have a dog. 'Dogs need a lot of work. They need looking after like children. You have to walk them and clean up after them. Wipe up pee, pick up the pooh. Huge responsibility.' 'A chicken then?' Mma imagined feeding it rice and letting it peck off her palm. 'Chicken you eat, you don't walk them. You fatten them and then you chop them up for soup. (17)

At last, Mma wants a cat but Ezi says that only witches keep cats. In this light, Mma resolves to rebel against her mother by keeping to herself. She makes us understand that for most of her adult life, she feels nothing for her mother. This means that there is no intimacy between them,

and no warm love. She never goes to her mother with her problems nor talk to her about the young men who love her. Unlike some of her friends, she never begs to wear her mother's shoes nor be her mother's tongue in finishing off her sentences. Since Mma does not want any intimacy with her mother, she develops a cooking plan so she will not be in the same place as her mother:

They took turns in cooking. It was Mma who had insisted on drawing up a rota. The kitchen was too small for two, she said, when her mother said they should cook together. And her mother had not argued.... The thought of being cooped with her mother, their elbows touching while one chopped onions and the other washed pepper, was something Mma could not bear. (236)

Mma and the mother takes turn in cooking because she does not want to be closer to the mother. This is because of the little disagreement she has with her mother. Mma could not bear to be in the same place as her so as not to be intimate with her.

This cold feelings result from the fact that the mother does not care about her daughter's feelings in the first place with her over-protective and over-authoritative functions. In support of this, Peg Streep describes this type of mothers as 'Dismissive mothers' as earlier mentioned. In Peg Streep's book, entitled *Mean Mothers: Overcoming the Legacy of Hurt*, one daughter says her mother literally does not listen to her or hear her. Her mother would ask if she is hungry and if she said she is not, her mother would put food in front of her as if she has said nothing. Her mother would ask what she wants to do over the weekend or summer, ignore her answer and then make plans for her. But that is not the central part for her mother never asked her about how she is feeling or what she is thinking. The cruel childhood Mma, in *Night Dancer*, has because of her mother's job makes her think that her mother never cared about her feelings. Thus, she resolves to stay out of her mother's way as a means of rebellion.

From Streep's research on mean mothers, it reveals the multigenerational thread that often run through these stories – many unloving mothers are the daughters of unloving women – and explores what happens to a daughter's relationship when the mother is emotionally absent. In an article, entitled "Daughters of Unloving Mothers" in *Psychology Today*, Streep points out some reasons for the daughter's rebellion against the mother. She explains that daughters who are denied closeness, loving gestures and positive reinforcement from their mothers can develop compulsive behaviour. Emotional connection and closeness is something that is learned during

infancy and childhood. When the daughter is raised in such a way that she becomes emotionally detached, her future relationships are apt to suffer beginning from that with her mother.

In accordance with Streep, unloved daughters are sensitive to neglects. She continues that whether these slights are real or imagined, they carry the weight of the daughter's childhood experience. That is, unloved daughters have trouble managing emotions. The random comment may carry the daughter's weight of her childhood experience without her even being aware of it. Given the nature of Ezi's job in *Night Dancer*, she neglects her daughter's emotions. She does not care to know that the things people say hurts her daughter's feelings. More so, the daughter suffers from this emotionally all through her childhood. An example is taken from the text where boys throw stones at her and call her names and how other girls are prohibited to be friends with her. As such, this sense of neglect causes the daughter to distance herself from her mother as a way of rebellion.

In addition, Streep alludes that most daughters of unloved mothers have difficulty setting boundaries as a result of their rebellion. Many daughters who are caught between their need for their mother's attention and its absence are unable to set other boundaries in relationships. In her research, a number of unloved daughters report problems with maintaining close female relationships which are complicated due to issues of trust. Similarly to this view, Streep explains that daughters face difficulty in setting boundaries because of lack of trust. These trust issues emanate from the sense that relationships are fundamentally unreliable. That is, the daughter who is closely attached to the mother needs constant validation that trust is warranted. In her opinion, these daughters have a desire for love reciprocation. In *Night Dancer*, Mma faces difficulty in setting boundaries in her relationship with her mother. This is because she does not trust her mother. As a child, Mma finds it difficult to believe what her mother tells her concerning her root. Consequently, her inability to trust her mother breaks down the bond between them.

This chapter set out to examine the reasons for the daughter's rebellion towards maternal obligation. In the course of the analysis, we found out that in order for the child to develop into a separate individual, she has to pass through a period of rejection from the mother. This usually happens when the child attains puberty. We equally discovered that daughters rebel because they want freedom; they do not want to be controlled; they need attention and do not want to be rejected; and finally, they are struggling to achieve their identity. With all these, the fact that



daughters are in the quest for an identity calls for more questions. The different stages which the daughter goes through in redefining the self will be discussed in our next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REDEFINING THE SELF

Whatever the particular mother/daughter relationship, both mother and daughter experience an intense relationship such that it contributes profoundly to the creation and experience of the self. Redefining the self means seeking an identity out of what is imposed on one by culture. That is, a person's beliefs, origin and socio-cultural environment can define a person's identity. This identification starts with a child's relationship with the mother. With the mother, a child develops what Chodorow, in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, calls 'personal identification'. She notes:

Personal identification ... consists in diffuse identification with someone else's general personality, behavioural traits, values, and attitudes. Personal identification consists, by contrast, in identification with specific aspects of another's role and does not necessarily lead to the internalization of the values or attitudes of the person identified with. ...children preferentially choose personal identification because this grows out of a positive affective relationship to a person who is there. (175)

We understand here that children can develop a personal identification with the person closer to them and that person is the mother. They identify themselves with the mother's personality, behaviour, values, and attitudes. This is so common with the girl child because she has a real relationship with her mother that grows out of their early primary tie. She learns what it is to be womanlike from her as she gets matured. And maturation comes with the search for individual identity. It is against the backdrop of Chodorow's claims that this chapter examines the protagonist's struggles to create anew space for herself.

In "Personal Identity", Eric Olson deals with psychological questions that arise about people by virtue of being a person. In this article, Olson discusses the myth of the self by asking pertinent questions about the self: Who am I? What am I? And when did I begin? In answering the question "Who am I?" Olson makes us understand that "Personal Identity" usually refers to certain properties to which a person feels a special sense of attachment or ownership. In this sense, someone's personal identity consists of those features she takes to define herself. This

insinuates that different properties are considered in defining oneself, which can change over time. But this contrasts with the cultural, ethnic or national definition of one's identity. To say that someone could no longer be the same person after some changes in attitudes is to say that she would still exist, but would have changed in some important way. This has to do with one's individual identity. Thus, Olson's work is about what sorts of changes would count as concerns the properties that define the self. This aspect is exemplified as this chapter unfolds.

Heather Sofield's "Postcolonial Identity in Vera's *Without A Name*" examines characters who have navigated through crossroads but succumbed to a crisis of identity. Sofield explains that Yvonne Vera achieves her goal in this novel by giving the readers pieces of foreshadowing and hints at the conflict of past warring with future in one person – Masvita. According to Sofield, Vera creates a conflict between past, present and the future experiences of her characters. More importantly, Sofield mentions that there comes a point when the characters must confront these conflicts in order to recognize an identity. He quotes Achebe's notion of a postcolonial identity and views the conflicts of identity facing a postcolonial character as that which contains the potential for disaster, but continues that when this disaster is properly handled, the character can draw strength and vision to benefit the nation as a whole. Thus, Sofield holds that confronting conflicts in a postcolonial world is a step towards redefining the self. In *Night Dancer*, Mma confronts the conflict between modernism and traditionalism in the quest for her identity.

"Postcolonial Identity in Wole Soyinka" reveals Mpalive-Hangson Msiska's analysis of Soyinka's representation of postcolonial African identity in the light of his major plays, novels, and poetry. In re-examining Soyinka's literary works, Msiska shows how this writer's idiom of cultural authenticity both embraces hybridity and defines itself as specific. He notes that for Soyinka, such authenticity involves recovering tradition and inserting it in postcolonial modernity to facilitate transformative moral and political justice. In a distinctive approach grounded in cultural studies, this article locates the artist's intellectual and political concerns within the broader field of postcolonial cultural theory. This theory argues that although seemingly distant from the mainstream theory, Soyinka focuses on fundamental questions concerning international culture and political identity formations such as the relationship between myth and history/tradition and modernity. Nevertheless, Soyinka equally examines the relationship between individual selfhood and collective identities. His works conceptualizes

identities in ways that promote and modify national conceptions of “Africanness”, thereby, rescuing them from the colonial logic of cultural defamation. Hence, this work presents the capacity Soyinka’s works have to assume personal and collective agency and the particular choices made by particular characters in re-creating a new space (self). In *Night Dancer*, Mma wants to reclaim her agency. She wants to know where she comes from and her roots.

Daughters fashion an identity for themselves out of the influence of the mother. The fact that daughters tend to resist maternal oppression gives them a chance to create a space for themselves. Given the situation of Mma in *Night Dancer*, her mother’s dismissive attitude helps in reconstructing her life. As earlier mentioned in Chapter One, dismissive mothers do not care about the feelings and thoughts of their daughters. They are only interested in giving orders and trying to do what they think is right for their daughters. This helps them to control their daughters’ world. Since Mma’s mother does not always care about her feelings and anxieties, Mma finds peace in living in isolation. It is during these periods that she reads and this satisfies her. She is fulfilled because she finds herself in a world that neither her mother’s voice nor actions can control her activities. However, in this small space of hers, she recreates an identity for herself out of her mother’s influence. Because of the letters her mother leaves for her, she understands better the reasons for her mother’s behaviour and eventually, gets to discover who she is.

To assert one’s individuality, one must first belong to a community. It is true that in order to be identified to a culture, one must be part of a community. That is, one must be part of a people’s way of life. Being a pariah, Ezi, in *Night Dancer*, lives far away from her community. She therefore, raises Mma away from her culture. Now that Mma is mature, she feels the urge of being identified as a member of a community. But without knowing who she is, she has to start by situating her roots. With the help of Madam Gold, she discovers her mother’s family and father. The knowledge of having a family gives Mma a sense of belonging. She is no longer a child without a family to visit during Christmas seasons. This is because she now has a family, a community and definitely, an identity.

It is important for one to reconcile with one’s root or culture in searching for the self. Knowing that you belong to a community is just a step towards asserting one’s identity. Our protagonist in *Night Dancer* discovers she has a culture. But she needs to reconcile with this culture in order to be part of that community. In order to achieve this, Mma’s reconciliation is

two fold. Firstly, she has to apologize to her mother's family on her mother's behalf. She is so happy to learn she has a family and wants to meet them. But Madam Gold cautions her:

You do not just get up and go ... If you want me to, I'll set the ball rolling. All you have to do is turn up at the dates agreed. You'd look out of place. Like one without an older person to advise her. There is no need to ruin things now .... It is only the fly without guidance that follows the corpse into the ground. (109)

Mma does not only need to see her mother's family after staying away from them all her life. Things need to be done the proper Igbo way (109). Mma's grand reception by her grandparents is an indication that Madam Gold's guidance is indeed worth the name. Her grandfather is so happy that he speaks to her wife's photograph: "Ezi's spirit has sent Mma to us. We accept her apology.... Our daughter's spirit can now rest in peace. We've forgiven her!" (113). Secondly, Mma has to apologise to her father on behalf of her mother. After Mma has apologised to her grandparents, her grandfather tells her to do same to her father: "You must meet your father, too, and apologise to him. For your mother. It's the way of our people, my daughter. I shall send word to him. Then you must go and see him" (111). As seen above, the culture demands her to apologise for her mother's mistakes since she is no more. This is an attempt to reconcile with her culture. Madam Gold cautions her on what she has to do when she visits her father for the first time as culture demands:

Do not be stubborn. It's the way things are done here. You do not have to say Sorry, ndo. Your actions say it for you, so let them. Do not dispute in words what your gestures tell your family. It makes no sense. In Igboland, we say a lot more by what we do than by what we voice out. So give your father the bottles of gin. He'll understand. And your mother, I am sure, will understand that you had to do this. She was stubborn but she would have wanted you to be happy. (234 – 235)

It is so evident from this passage that Mma has to reconcile with her father according to the dictates of their culture. Even though the ways of this tradition are strange to her, she accepts and situates herself within it. She overcomes the limitations in the modern culture and accepts to apologise for her mother's mistakes. She thinks: "Imagine if her mother had ever told her, 'Mma, apologise to me for everything bad I've ever done to you.' How she would have told her off"

(113). This culture is different from what she knows but she deconstructs the idea and accepts counseling in order to leap forward.

In order to reconstruct one's identity, one has to blend what they are and what their culture wants from them. Thus, Mma needs to redefine herself by accepting her mother's and culture's definition of her. Mma's mother knows what her culture demands from her daughter. This is why she keeps a bunch of letters behind to direct her daughter towards this reconciliation. In this culture, a parent never apologises even if he/she is wrong:

A parent never apologises, even if he regrets his actions. It is the child who should apologise. Ezi knew that. And we waited. She knew what she had to do ... It is ... her duty to apologise for getting the parent upset in the first place. Such is the nature of our world. Your mother knew it. And everyday we waited and hoped. That she would go back to your father or that she would give us the chance to forgive her. (108)

This vividly shows what the culture has designed for the child in general.

In the process of rebuilding the self, the protagonist reveals her belief in superstition. Her recognition of her attachment to this cultural paradigm helps her in knowing more about herself. In *Night Dancer*, Mma does not believe in superstition at the beginning of the novel. She does not believe that a person could die and his spirit roams the earth among the living. On the fourth week after Ezi's death, Mma finds herself walking into her mother's room. "While her mother was alive, Mma had avoided entering her room" (31). She does not even want to tell Madam Gold about the circumstances that lead her into Ezi's room to discover the letters. And also, she does not want to tell Madam Gold of how she comes to read the letters. But somehow, it comes out during one of their discussions: "She told Madam Gold about how, intending to go to bed, she had found herself instead walking to her mother's room..." (13). Mma continues by saying that "I wasn't ever going to read the letters... That night, I was just going to go to my room and sleep. Even when I got to my mother's room, I was going to turn and leave. But I did not leave. I went back to the shoebox" (15). These letters are kept in a shoebox in Ezi's room. Madam Gold makes Mma understand that her action is not inexplicable. It is because her mother's spirit wants her to read her story: "Man proposes, God disposes. It isn't inexplicable. Your mother's spirit dragged you in. she wanted you to read her story" (13). Later, she discovers how much of a

different life her mother tried to give her. And all the sacrifices her mother did were for her wellbeing. She then believes that her mother's spirit is roaming restlessly for what she is going through now. During the first night she spends in her father's house, she dreams about her mother and even feels her presence beside her:

That first night, her mother appeared to her in a dream .... Her eyes glistened like diamonds and tears streaked down her cheeks in sparkly trails. Mma knew that her mother was crying for her .... She felt a closeness to her mother in that instant, as if they had been melded together, and she felt her mother's breath at the nape of her neck and her hands squeezing hers ... and a soft song humming in her ears lulling her back to sleep again. (239 – 240)

Mma now believes that her dead mother's spirit is watching over her. She feels her mother's breath and touch. She feels attached to this ideology as it helps her to know who she is. Thus, revealing one's belief in superstition is a move towards identifying one's individuality.

The quest for identity can only be achieved through the individual's acknowledgement of and reunion with their cultural roots. Our protagonist in *Night Dancer* discovers that her culture is patriarchal. It is a culture where male children are preferred over female children. The girl children are pushed to the periphery. During one of her discussions with her father, the narrator makes us understand the degree of the boy child concept among the Igbos. Filled with anger that her mother never wanted her to have a father, Mma asks questions to her father, trying to reclaim what is rightfully hers. In the midst of this confusion, her father's indirect confession reveals this cultural imbalance:

She came back. She came back once with you. She said it was to give us another chance. I thought she had changed her mind. For her to have come all the way. I thought... I was very happy. I loved her. I loved her so much. She begged me to send Rapu away. But it was impossible. I had married her by then. Ezi wanted her daughter to have a father. I begged her, too. I wanted to be a father to my son. Either I kept the two of you, or I kept my son. What sort of a choice was that? (258 – 259)

From this excerpt, we can point out that Mma's father had to choose between his son and his love (his daughter) but he finally takes side with their culture, that is, choosing the son over the

daughter. The moment she was born, her fate was already known. She occupies the second place in her community, and in her father's life. She accepts this fact, as well as accepts her culture's definition of her, yet question amid all clarification. In addition, she can now get married because she now has someone to give out her hand. And that person is her father. The protagonist's reunion with her roots is a strong aspect in the quest for identity. Mma's reunion with her mother's family and her father becomes a turning point in her life. She accepts that she has step-sisters and a step-brother. She now reconciles with the fact that her father is married to another woman. Besides her father, she finds a space for herself: a home and family to return to whenever she wants to.

All along, Mma has been trying to define herself against her mother and all she symbolizes. But by the time the novel ends, she realizes that all is an illusion. As discussed in Chapter Two, Mma rebels because she wants a space of her own, freedom, she needs acceptance and attention. After reconciling with the aspect that a parent never apologises, it strikes her of the kind of life her mother gave her:

How much of a different life her mother had tried to give her. She had tried to raise her daughter with the sort of values she herself was never taught. And it hit her, like a pebble thrown on her head, why her mother could never live with her husband, not after what he did. It was not just anger at being betrayed .... It was her way of challenging tradition. It was one woman taken on her world. (113 – 114)

This is the protagonist's discovery of who her mother is. One woman against the customs of a culture is a way of fighting back. Unigwe uses Ezi's character to debunk patriarchal domination towards women and at the same time, gives them a voice in the community. This is because in Mike's house, Ezi would not have been able to speak. As Mma says: "Her mother would never have been able to dance here. It would have been impossible. She could feel it. This house would not have accepted her mother's twirling in her red dancing shoes, laughing her loud laugh" (231). This quotation explains the fact that not only does our protagonist embodies her mother; she herself has been defined by her mother. Mma's discovery of a lost family is thanks to her mother. The "memoire" of her mother helps her in this discovery. When she finally visits her father, she encounters a rival in her step-mother, Rapu. The latter is scared to lose all what she



has worked for to another woman's child. So, with the tension in her father's house, she understands why her mother could not have stayed. She is a threat to Rapu's family because she is the representative of her mother. With all these, she understands the injustice in her culture. She, therefore, starts developing respect for her mother: "Why should she be apologizing for a woman who ... she now realized, had done nothing wrong? She was developing a respect for her mother" (234). In her thoughts, she sees no reason to apologise on her mother's behalf.

In the quest for identity, the protagonist reconciles with the Self. This is examined through Mma's realization of her injustices meted out on her mother and the re-invention of her history. She has always hated her mother for not having a father. But later, she learns about how much her mother had sacrificed for her from Madam Gold. This discovery makes her come closer to her mother. She is able to reconcile the negative thoughts she has had against her mother in the silence of her room:

Silence in which to think. In which to re-imagine her life, to revise her history  
 .... And the silence covering this house was the kind in which her guilt shouted  
 in her ears. She lay in bed crying, begging for her mother's forgiveness for what  
 she had done. She was changing in ways she could never have imagined .... She  
 got out of bed, whispered thanks to her mother and for the first time in many  
 years began to hum a song. Then she began to sing .... She sang that song to  
 celebrate her mother, celebrating all mothers, all good mothers who daily,  
 silently, perform acts of sacrifice, immolate themselves in little daily rituals to  
 save their children. (239 – 241)

This quote is an indication that Mma is gaining more awareness in recreating her own space. This awareness comes in as she discovers the pain and sacrifices that her mother has undergone because of her. Through this character, Unigwe celebrates motherhood. She equally celebrates all mothers who, in one way or the other, carry out sacrifices for the sake of their children. She portrays a mother who abandons her culture and tradition. The character, Ezi, does this in order to protect her daughter from the inequalities of the culture. With regard to this, Mma finds herself transforming in ways beyond imagination. She can now see her mother in a different light. And with all these overwhelming emotions purging out, she begins to mourn for her mother:

She cried for the mother, for she could see now the woman who was betrayed, who could not stay. She cried for all the times she had wished her mother dead. She cried that her mother had left before she got a chance to know her, to appreciate the sacrifice she went through to raise her. She cried until there were no more tears to be found in her. (259)

Now that she lives in her father's house, she understands that "she had wasted years hating her mother for no reason" (245). She could now feel her mother's pain of being betrayed by a loved one. She also regrets the number of times she used to wish her mother should die and recognizes the mother's sacrifice for her. As she undergoes this transformation, a new person is born, as she reclaims her identity. She accepts and blends what she is and what her culture wants from her. This transformation marks the final step of redefining Mma's identity. She then makes up her mind to start repaying her mother: "She would match her, sacrifice for sacrifice. Blood for blood .... She would go back to Enugu and start on her mother's house. Her spirit would rest in peace. Her ghost could dance-dance in her red shoes" (261 - 262). She would do all these in order to let her mother's spirit rest in peace. Considering the bond she has with her mother, she understands that she is not so different from her. Finally, she wants to be identified through her mother: "I am my mother's daughter .... They have to know whose daughter I am .... They have to know about my mother too" (261). Mma finally wants to be recognised as her mother's daughter and wants the world to know about her mother. This is allegorical in that she wants the world to know where she comes from, her origin and accepts her the way her culture presents her.

This chapter set out to identify the steps taken by Unigwe's protagonist to re-invent the self. We equally examined how the protagonist struggles to create a space for herself amid all odds. In the course of this chapter, we found out that the protagonist fashions an identity for herself out of the influence of the mother. We further found out that, in order to assert one's individuality, one must belong to a community. Also, we realised that one needs to reconcile with one's roots, as well as, blend the past, present and future. Her recognition of her attachment to this cultural paradigm helps her in knowing her real self. Mma goes through different steps to finally understand her mother and discover her Self; hence, her identity. This portrays the complex nature of a mother/daughter relationship orchestrated by the different cultural ideologies. That is, their movement from one culture to another propels us to the next chapter.

Chapter Four will therefore examine a Transcultural based approach to the teaching of English Language.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TRANSCULTURAL BASED APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English language is taught using techniques or approaches like the Competence Based Approach. The objective of using a technique depends on the skills to be obtained. In a language classroom, the teacher's aim is to get the students through the presentation practice and the production stage of oral work, to listening, reading and writing. The teacher needs more than these four skills in a language classroom. This calls for the need to use literary texts when teaching English language. Gillian Lazar, in *Literature and Language Teaching: A guide for Teachers and Trainers*, states the significance of using literature in the language classroom.

Literature should be used ... because: it is very motivating, it is authentic material, it has general educational value, it is found in many syllabuses, it helps students to understand another culture, it is a stimulus for language acquisition, it develops students' interpretive abilities, students enjoy it and it is fun, it is highly valued and has a high status, it expands students' language awareness, and it encourages students to talk about their opinions and feelings. (14 – 15)

This excerpt shows how important literature is to the language learner. There are a few approaches of using literature with the language learner. We have the language-based approach which consists of studying the language of the literary text. This helps learners make meaningful interpretations and increase their general awareness and understanding of English. Based on this concept of literary approaches in language classrooms, this chapter seeks to demonstrate a pedagogic approach to the teaching of English language to Cameroonian secondary schools using a transcultural based approach. This approach is concerned with the deconstruction of ancient traditional culture and the overcoming of cultural barriers. The chapter equally illustrates a practical lesson of using the transcultural based approach in teaching English language. The representational material used in this context is drawn from Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*.

In *Principles and Methods of Teaching*, Leke Tambo defines pedagogy as:

... the science and art of teaching. It is the field of study that is concerned with teaching teachers how to teach pupils effectively. Pedagogy in a broad sense is

concerned not only with methods of teaching in general and specific situations but also with the study of environmental influences on teachers and pupils behaviour, analysis of subject matter, the teaching and learning processes and the production and use of support systems to the teacher such as texts and reference books, teaching machines of all variety, audio-visual materials and community resources. (18)

We can deduce from this excerpt that pedagogy involves several factors that are valuable for the teaching and learning process to be successful. In order for this to be successful, the teacher must have an objective at the start of each lesson. It is this objective that enables the teacher to know which approach to use in a language classroom.

Before delving into the definition of transcultural, it is important for us to find out the meaning of “trans” in transcultural. “Trans” simply means “across”. This denotes that transcultural means across cultures. However, this definition provides very limited information with regard to transcultural education. According to Jerry Aldridge et al. in *Turning Culture Upside Down: The Role of Transcultural Education*, there are at least five possibilities related to the meaning of “trans” in transcultural. There are: transferential, transactional, transformational, transmutational, and transcendent culturing. Culturing here refers to actions within and between individuals and a group of people. Transferential culturing deals with operating, interacting or using the dominant culture’s expectations. That is, it helps teachers to interact with the learners the way their parents do in their respective cultures. Here, the teacher customizes the style of interaction depending on the audience being addressed. Here, the teacher does what is expected of each culture. But this is not what we mean here by transcultural. Let us go to the next inferred meaning of “trans” in transcultural.

With transactional culturing, knowledge is seen as constructed and reconstructed by those participating in the teaching and learning act. Transactional culturing is therefore defined as a construction of knowledge within and among diverse individuals and groups participating in the teaching and learning process. This is not different from the meaning of intercultural which deals with deep interaction and engagement with multiple cultures. On the contrary, transcultural insinuates something else as discussed below. Hence, “trans” in transcultural in this chapter does not refer to transactional.

Transformational culturing on its part refers to a process of teaching the learners to transform their own cultures by working to correct the injustices. At the same time, the learners work to change the world at large. Still, this does not mean transcultural unless teachers and learners are assisted in determining who or what is being transformed. Similar to this is the transmutational culturing. This definition denotes that culture is constantly changing to a higher form. It is true that culture is constantly changing but to what form do we mean here? In addition, transcendent culturing deals with interacting with others through transcending or overcoming cultural barriers that limit human interaction. This is what we mean here by transcultural. It includes deconstruction of traditional cultural labels and a movement toward building communities based uniquely on individual identities that contribute and benefit from the ever-changing group structures. That is, it deals with the deep interaction and engagement of individuals with culture. This gives them the opportunity to confront and challenge injustices placed on them by their various cultures. Their cultural heritage places limitations on them but they survive it due to their individual participation. These learners overcome the challenges and limitations by adapting their identities across cultures. With regard to this, the meaning of “trans” in transcultural refers to transferential culturing as stated by Aldridge et al.

Transculturalism refers to the reciprocal influences of modes of representation and cultural practices of various ethnic groups. It describes how marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by the dominant culture. Transculturalism is equally based on breaking down cultural boundaries as indicated above on transcendent culturing. It is equally seen as a form of cultural hybridity which emerges when different cultural elements interact and eventually integrate with each other. This proves that no culture can remain the same because individuals have to overcome the barriers that limit their interaction in their respective cultures. Given the fact that we have mentioned why literary texts are useful in the language classroom, let us examine the reasons leading to the relevance of adopting a transcultural based approach to the teaching of English language. Given a text to learners, they read and gain awareness of the way of life of a group of people in a particular place and time. The learners become conscious of the content and message of the literary text. They gain this text awareness due to related events and themes in their everyday experiences. In reading this literary text, the learners get in contact with the writer’s language. The way the writer structures his/her words has an effect on the

themes to be transmitted to the world. Hence, it expands learners' language awareness and gives them a sense of identity.

In line with the above, with the information that learners obtain from literary texts, their imaginative and critical ability is improved. As learners read texts containing traces of cultures different from theirs, they create mental pictures on their minds in order to try to see what is going on in that culture through the different characters. This process exposes the learners to deep thinking as they try to visualize the situation under different characters. It is also salient to note that these learners are out to deconstruct the traditional ways of life of their cultural heritage. That is, a transcultural based approach enables these learners to deconstruct traditional cultural barriers. Deconstructing these obstacles helps the learners to build strong individual identities due to the deep interaction they have with their cultural heritage and other cultures.

Furthermore, it is important to note that literature serves as a spring-board to improving language skills in a cross-cultural context. The skills that are concerned here include competence and performance. Gillian Lazar, in *Literature and Language Teaching: A guide for Teachers and Trainers*, identifies Chomsky's notion of grammatical competence:

This is the idea that all speakers of any language possess an internalized grammar which allows them to produce and understand utterances which they may not have heard before, provided that these utterances conform to the grammatical rules of the language they are speaking. (12)

With regard to literary texts, this extract denotes that in the course of reading, learners come in contact with utterances that are familiar to them. In this way, the learners have an implicit understanding of, and familiarity with certain conventions which allow them to take the words in the text and convert them into literary meanings. By this, the learners gain literary competence. Engaging the students on different activities and using reading tasks will empower the learners to deliberately perform well. These skills are acquired through the learners' exposure to literary texts.

When using a transcultural based approach, it is significant for the language teacher to consider the following aspects before beginning the lessons. First of all, the language teacher has to consider the immediate environment of learners, their experiences, and their educational needs. The learners' environment has to do with the location of the school and the inhabitants of the area. The language teacher has to know whether the school is located in an urban or remote

area. He/she has to find out about the infrastructure of the school, the cultural heritage of the principal and those governing the school. More so, the language teacher needs to find out about the learners' behaviour to other teachers, friends and classmates. It is important to know how they interact with each other in this locality. The language teacher equally has to know what the learners need with regard to what is in their syllabus. This will help the teacher to come up with a good scheme of work aiming towards successful language lessons.

In addition, the language teacher has to take into consideration the hybrid nature of cultures. This has to do with a cultural context within and between families as two or more cultures are blended. We should remember that transcultural has to do with the individual and the culture. It occurs mostly in African contexts because of its cultural diversity. When a man from one culture gets married to a woman from another culture, their children will acquire aspects of both cultures. That is, they will have a hybrid culture. This analysis continues when someone from a hybrid culture bears children with another from a different hybrid culture. Their children will have a complex cultural heritage. This aspect is very pertinent to the language teacher to know the cultural backgrounds of his/her learners.

The next relevant aspect to consider is the intracultural variability of each learner. This deals with the unique culture within each individual and between the learners. That is, a learner who comes from a hybrid culture has a unique way of life different from the others. In a classroom, there are many other learners with different cultural backgrounds. It is the language teacher's role to guide the learners' internal cultures to other cultures external to them. In this context, the teacher needs to be aware of this aspect so as to help the learners to identify themselves across cultures. This is done by overcoming the limitations of the hybrid cultures within them and those of the other learners' cultures. Therefore, the language teacher must acknowledge the culture within each child as well as between each learner and others.

More so, the language teacher has to find out about the questionable aspects of family and culture. This has to do with practices in the culture that are questionable. These are practices such as the female genital mutilation, courtship, marriage, and professions. In one of the examples given by Aldridge et al, a man was sick and requires medical attention. But with the man's cultural standpoint, only a male medical doctor can examine him. Also, in most African culture, children show respect to elders by looking on the ground when they are being addressed. Looking into an elder's eyes is still considered as a sign of disrespect to some parents depending



on their cultural view. So, it is best when the language teacher finds out about the family's conception of their cultural values.

Furthermore, it is very prominent to reflect on the position of gender in the various cultures. This simply involves the marginalization of the female gender. In another example given by Aldridge et al., two children of the same parents are sick and require medical attention. But with the father's cultural standpoint, attention should be given to the male child first even though the female child needs urgent care. In like manner, most of the Hausas in Cameroon do not want to send their children to school because they believe their place is at a man's side. In Unigwe's *Night Dancer*, Echewa does not want to send her daughter to school because her brothers were already in school. This marginalization further consists of the restrictions placed on women by culture. In African countries, women are only given out in marriage by a father or a male guardian. In *Night Dancer*, suitors could not come for Mma's hand in marriage because she had no male guardian to give out her hand. Also, a woman's place is guaranteed in her husband's house only when she gives him a male child. Thus, the language teacher has to investigate the place of gender in the culture.

After considering the above aspects, let us suggest possible strategies of using the transcultural based approach in the EFL/ESL classroom. It is important to note that this approach empowers the learner as far as the issue of identity is concerned. This is because culture is central to the academic performers of learners. When learners read literary texts with related materials or themes, they feel more secured. They quickly identify issues raised in the text and quickly gain acquaintance with the language of the text. As we earlier said at the beginning of this chapter, this serves as a stimulus for language acquisition and increases the learner's language awareness. Generally, culture make meaning when one feels that he/she is part of it. And also, when learners read literary texts that have bits of a familiar culture, they feel they are part of it. In looking at the possible strategies of using this approach, let us not forget the cultural differences in style. This aspect of style calls for both the language teacher and learner to know what attributes members of a community ascribe to features of style. Equally, learners should be taught on how to appreciate a text intelligently. Below is an explanatory note to a sample lesson plan on the approach.

At the level of the lead-in task, the language teacher asks the learners to bring out the artifacts gotten from their families. Here, the learners bring out objects such as tools, weapon or

ornament of cultural interest related to history. The teacher finds out from the learners about the value of the objects they have to their families. This is done to capture the learners' attention to the lesson. The teacher continues by asking the learners about the occasion or ceremony that the pictures from their families were taken. This evokes a cultural awareness in the learners and further stimulates their minds towards the lesson. These are sample questions and expected answers. It is done for 5 minutes.

### **Sample Lead-in questions.**

1. Bring out the artifacts and pictures gotten from your families.

Ans: Students bring out objects such as tools, weapon or ornament of cultural interest related to history.

2. What cultural value do these objects have in your family?

Ans: Free Responses.

3. During which ceremony were these pictures taken?

Ans: Wedding and burial ceremonies, cultural festivals.

Moving on to the presentation of the lesson which is carried out for 20 minutes, the teacher divides it into pre-reading and while reading tasks. This is done in order to involve the learners in the lesson. During the pre-reading task, the teacher gives the learners a small dialogue to read. At the end of the dialogue, there are some guide questions. It helps the learners to identify some cultural ills in their diverse cultures. The dialogue for pre-reading and some sample questions are seen below.

**Dialogue: (Obtained from Albert Samah's *Engwari: The Heroine of Kugwe and Numben and Other Short Stories*).**

Akwo: Hmm. Do you know that in this village for a young girl to attain womanhood she has to pass through three rituals?

Stranger: Really! How is that possible in this modern world?

Akwo: It is. This is our tradition. The first ritual is called Ikom where the young girls' faces are massaged to prevent them from being attractive to men.

Stranger: Oh my God! Tell me more!

Akwo: Ok. The second is called Adon where the girls dance naked in darkness and their breasts are pressed with hot iron.

Stranger: And the last?

Akwo: It is called Ngeh. This is the stage where most young girls die because they have their clitoris cut off.

Stranger: Is it obligatory for every young girl to undergo these rituals?

Akwo: Yes. If not, they consider you as an outcast. But today, the Prince has explained to the villagers that some of these practices are not good.

Stranger: I hope everything is fine now.

Akwo: Yes, it is.

➤ **Answer the following questions related to the passage.**

1. Do you think there ever existed peace before the Prince talked to the villagers? Explain.

Ans: No. This is because those that are circumcised will not want to associate with the outcasts.

2. Name some of the problems women in your village face today.

Ans: Free Responses.

3. Are there traditional beliefs in your village you think should be wiped out? Which are they?

Ans: Free Responses.

As this objective is obtained, the teacher guides the learners in the reading of the passage for comprehension. The passage is gotten from Part Two: Chapter One of Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. At this stage of the lesson, the teacher allows the learners to read and explore the text for specific answers. There are sample questions for the comprehension below.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What suitable title can you give to this passage?

**Ans:** Rapu's destiny

The prophesy of Rapu's destiny.

2. What is the message that runs across this passage?

**Ans:** Rapu is born and it is prophesied that she will be the one to lead her family away from poverty.

3. What are the cultural aspects in this passage that are similar to your culture?

**Ans:** The belief in divination.

The belief in reincarnation.

The warding off of evil spirits.

4. From your understanding of the plot, does this prophesy manifest? How?

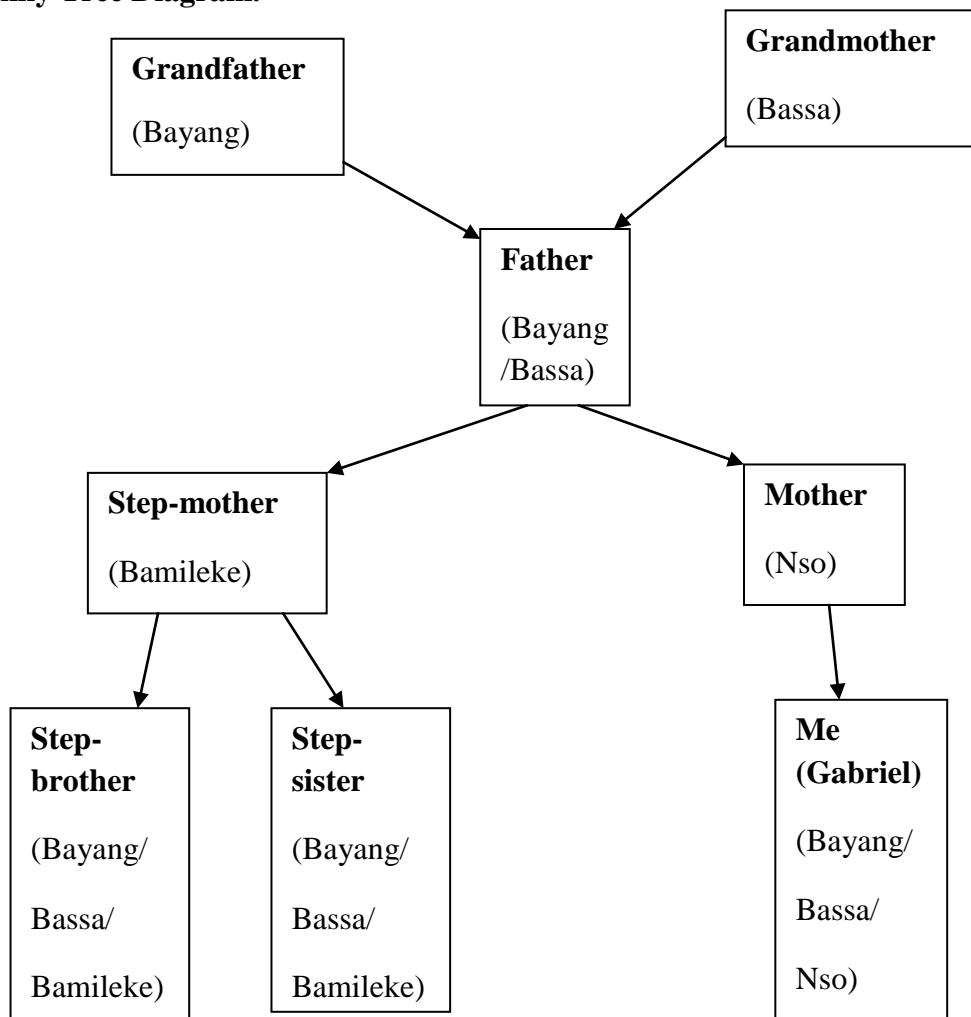
**Ans:** Yes. Rapu goes to Kaduna to be Ezi's housemaid. She seduces Mike and bears him a son. This son gives her the right to be Mike's wife. Being married to Mike, she caters for her family's needs.

5. Are women discriminated in this passage?

**Ans:** Free Responses.

Next is the practice stage which involves the post reading activity. This comes as soon as soon as the learners have explored the passage for specific information. At the post reading stage, it is very important for the learners to role play the actions and events in the passage. This will enable learners to situate and adapt themselves within a cultural setting. The learners have 10 minutes to take on the roles of different characters and dramatise the events in the passage. During the evaluation stage, the language teacher asks the learners to draw a tree diagram of their families, indicating each person's tribe beside their names. This exercise is done for 10 minutes. For example;

### Family Tree Diagram.



This exercise is done in order to enable learners to locate themselves within their culture and build a strong individual identity. After the learners have drawn the tree diagram, the following can be asked which require free responses.

### QUESTIONS

1. Who are those whose mother and father come from the same tribe?

Ans: Free Responses.

2. How many of you belong to more than one tribe?

Ans: Free Responses.

3. What aspects of each culture would you change?

Ans: Free Responses.

As the learners walk through this stage, it makes the language more accommodating. This is because the learners are allowed to overcome the limitations placed on them by culture and try to define their individual identities. It is always important to give an assignment at the end of each lesson. Hence, the take home assignment is, “In not more than 350 words, locate the origin of your culture.” This is carried out for the last 5 minutes left.

The above are some important aspects to consider when using a transcultural based approach to the teaching of English language. A well sampled lesson has been provided for language teachers when applying such an approach in the language classroom. For a transcultural based approach to be successful in a language classroom, it is worthy of note to consider the following. There must be an opportunity for the learners to watch a sketch, listen to a passage, or read a short dialogue. Also, the learners must be given the opportunity to read and explore the text for information. And finally, the learners must role-play the events in the passage. Thus, involving the learners in this oral production guarantees a successful use of the transcultural based approach in the language classroom. Nevertheless, the language teacher must be a transculturalist, who will make a lesson plan culturally to the teaching context. He/she has to look at the class as a reflection of the culture rather than the society. Below is a sample lesson.

## LESSON PLAN

TEACHER: VALERINE LOKENYE.

LESSON: READING COMPREHENSION.

SCHOOL: GBPHS YAOUNDE

TOPIC: Reading Passage from Part Two: Chapter 1 of *Night Dancer*.

CLASS: FORM 4 C.

SKILLS: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

NUMBER ON ROLL: 58.

TIME: 10:30-11:20.

SEX: MIXED.

DURATION: 50 Minutes.

AVERAGE AGE: 16.

DATE: Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2016.

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

TEACHING AIDS: Chart with exercise, realia and hand-outs.

REFERENCES:

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CONTRIBUTING PREVIOUS COMPETENCE(S): Students can define the meaning of some vocabulary items related to culture and can narrate the plot of *Night Dancer*.

EXPECTED OUTCOME(S): By the end of this lesson, students are expected to:

- Identify some cultural ills in their various cultures.
- Read and explore the text for gist.

- Role-play, situate and adapt themselves within a cultural setting.
- Locate themselves within their culture and build a strong individual identity.

STAGE	INTER-ACTION	SUBJECT MATTER	PROCEDURE		RATIONALE	TIME
			Teacher's Activities	Students' Activities		
INTRO- DUCTION	T – S  S – T	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>LEAD-IN-TASK</u></b></p> <p>- Checking Assignment.</p> <p>1. Bring out the artifacts and pictures gotten from your families.</p> <p>Ans: Students bring out objects such as tools, weapon or ornament of cultural interest related to history.</p> <p>2. What cultural value do these objects have in your family?</p> <p>Ans: Free Responses.</p> <p>3. During which ceremony were these pictures taken?</p> <p>Ans: Wedding and burial ceremonies, cultural</p>	<p>- Asks students to bring out the objects and pictures gotten from their homes.</p> <p>- Asks questions to students relating to the objects and pictures gotten from their homes.</p>	<p>- Bring out objects and pictures from their bags.</p> <p>- Answer teacher's questions relating to the objects and pictures.</p>	<p>- To capture the students' attention.</p> <p>- To stimulate the students' minds towards the lesson.</p>	5 mins



		festivals.				
PRESEN- TATION	T-S            S-T	<p><b>READING PASSAGE FROM PART TWO: CHAPTER 1: pg 133-136 of <i>NIGHT DANCER.</i></b></p> <p><b>- Pre-Reading Activity.</b></p> <p>Read the conversation below between an inhabitant of Tabenkeng village and a stranger.</p> <p>Akwo: Hmm. Do you know that in this village for a young girl to attain womanhood she has to pass through three rituals?</p> <p>Stranger: Really! How is that possible in this modern world?</p> <p>Akwo: It is. This is our tradition. The first ritual is called Ikom where the young girls' faces are massaged to prevent them from being attractive to men.</p> <p>Stranger: Oh my God! Tell me more!</p> <p>Akwo: Ok. The second is called Adon where the girls dance naked in darkness and their breasts are pressed with hot iron.</p> <p>Stranger: And the last?</p>	- Gives hand-outs to students containing the dialogue for the pre-reading task.	- Collects the hand-outs from the teacher, read and carryout the task.	- To involve the students in the lesson and help them understand.	20 mins

	T-S	<p>Akwo: It is called Ngeh. This is the stage where most young girls die because they have their clitoris cut off.</p> <p>Stranger: Is it obligatory for every young girl to undergo these rituals?</p> <p>Akwo: Yes. If not, they consider you as an outcast. But today, the Prince has explained to the villagers that some of these practices are not good.</p> <p>Stranger: I hope everything is fine now.</p> <p>Akwo: Yes, it is.</p> <p>- Answer the following questions related to the passage.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you think there ever existed peace before the Prince talked to the villagers? Explain.</li> </ol> <p>Ans: No. This is because those that are circumcised will not want to associate with the outcasts.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Name some of the problems women in your village face today.</li> </ol>				
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	S-T	<p>Ans: Free Responses.</p> <p>3. Are there traditional beliefs in your village you think should be wiped out? Which are they?</p> <p>Ans: Free Responses.</p> <p><b>- While Reading Activity.</b></p> <p>Read the passage taken from Part Two: Chapter One of <i>Night Dancer</i> and answer the following questions.</p> <p><b>QUESTIONS:</b></p> <p>1. What suitable title can you give to this passage?</p> <p><b>Ans:</b> Rapu's destiny</p> <p>The prophesy of Rapu's destiny.</p>				
	T-S	<p>2. What is the message that runs across this passage?</p> <p><b>Ans:</b> Rapu is born and it is prophesied that she will be the one to lead her family away from poverty.</p>	<p>- Asks the students to read a passage taken from Part Two: Chapter One of <i>Night Dancer</i> and answer the</p>	<p>- Follow the teacher's instruction and answer questions relating to the passage.</p>	<p>- For scheming and exploration of the passage for answers.</p>	

	S-T	<p>3. What are the cultural aspects in this passage that are similar to your culture?</p> <p><b>Ans:</b> The belief in divination. The belief in reincarnation. The warding off of evil spirits.</p> <p>4. From your understanding of the plot, does this prophesy manifest? How?</p> <p><b>Ans:</b> Yes. Rapu goes to Kaduna to be Ezi's housemaid. She seduces Mike and bears him a son. This son gives her the right to be Mike's wife. Being married to Mike, she caters for her family's needs.</p> <p>5. Are women discriminated in this passage?</p> <p><b>Ans:</b> Free Responses.</p>	questions that follow.			

<b>PRACTICE</b>	T-S         S-T	<p><b>- Post-Reading Activity: Role-play.</b></p> <p>- The following should come to the front of the class. (Selects some students to come forward)</p> <p>- Imagine yourselves in this scene. Take on different roles and dramatise the scene.</p>	<p>- Assigns different roles to students and asks them to dramatise the scene.</p>	<p>- Take on roles and dramatisethe scene.</p>	<p>- For role-play and to enable students to situate and adapt themselves within a cultural setting</p>	10 mins
<b>EVALUA- TION</b>	T-S         S-T	<p><b>EXERCISE</b></p> <p>- Draw a tree diagram of your family, indicating each person's tribe beside their names.</p>	<p>- Asks the students to draw family tree diagrams to show the cultural history of their family.</p>	<p>- Students draw family tree diagrams to show the cultural history of their families.</p>	<p>- To enable students to locate themselves within their culture and build a strong individual</p>	

	T-S  S-T	<p><b>Family Tree Diagram</b></p> <pre> graph TD     GF["Grandfather (Bayang)"] --&gt; F["Father (Bayang/Bassa)"]     GM["Grandmother (Bassa)"] --&gt; F     F --&gt; SM["Step-mother (Bamileke)"]     F --&gt; M["Mother (Nso)"]     SM --&gt; SB["Step-brother (Bayang/ Bassa/ Bamileke)"]     SM --&gt; SS["Step-sister (Bayang/ Bassa/ Bamileke)"]     M --&gt; ME["Me (Gabriel) (Bayang/ Bassa/ Nso)"] </pre>			identity.	10 mins
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**QUESTIONS**

1. Who are those whose mother and father come from the same tribe?

Ans: Free Responses.

2. How many of you belong to more than one tribe?

Ans: Free Responses.

3. What aspects of each culture would you change?

Ans: Free Responses.

<p><b>HOME- WORK</b></p>	<p>T-S  S-T</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>HOMEWORK</u></b></p> <p>In not more than 350 words, locate the origin of your culture.</p>	<p>- Copies homework on the board and asks the students to copy in their exercise books.</p>	<p>- Copy homework in their exercise books.</p>	<p>- For further building of individual identities.</p>	<p>5 mins</p>
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## CONCLUSION

This study set out to discuss the extent to which the mother/daughter rife is presented both from the mother's and daughter's perspectives in *Night Dancer*. From a postcolonial and feminist perspective, it was evident that the conflict emanates from cultural perspective and maternal authority of the mother which the daughter rebels against. We found out that, out of maternal subjugation comes resistance. This resistance leads to the creation of a new self and a new world. Hence, this brings into limelight the notion of hybridity. After analyzing the work from a postcolonial and feminist perspective, we found out that mothers train their daughters to be dependent, which is, always looking for ways to lean on someone. This dependency to a greater extent, introduces strain in their bond. The study, therefore, proved that the existing challenges between mothers and daughters in the midst of cultural flux stems from misfortune, prejudices, and cultural restraints. It equally proved that a transcultural based approach to the teaching of English language in an ESL/EFL classroom establishes a better plan for learning.

It equally became evident that the mother of our protagonist challenges cultural paradigms and creates a space of herself. She has a job and single-handedly raises her daughter. But after such resistance, she guides her daughter to create a new space that is neither nor. Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering* makes us understand that when the mother fails to guide her daughter's separation from her, it creates a rift in their relationship. Therefore, the mother has to watch her daughter's development closely and is supposed to know when to carry out certain actions like separation. We also discovered that the mother/daughter conflict further manifests as a result of the place given to women within this individual cultures. Not being able to give her husband a son, Ezi, in *Night Dancer*, loses her place at home to co-spouse. The fact that she is educated gives her the courage to challenge their culture for an independent destination. This action develops hatred and distances her daughter from her.

The work equally examined the reasons for the daughter's rebellion and resistance towards the mother. We realised that the mother is very important in the daughter's psychological development. The daughter starts to rebel as she attains puberty. When mothers carry out their maternal functions, daughters consider them more or less oppressive and violent. From all indications, mothers exert authority on their daughters not to their liking. As observed in this analysis, mothers prevent their daughters from physically separating from them.

Consequently, this orchestrates resistance and rebellion. Mma's rebellion against her mother's lifestyle makes her to grow up without a friend. More so, the refusal to give her mother the attention and care she needs creates another avenue for rebellion.

This study equally looked at the circumstances surrounding the daughter's quest for identity. We discovered that the daughter's rebellion is also caused by her quest for identity. As the daughter tries to figure out who she is, she differentiates herself from her mother physically and psychologically. Thus, she comes to terms with many aspects of her culture. Contrary to her mother, she blends what she is and what her culture expects from her. As a result, she accepts to a greater extent, the culture's definition of what she is supposed to be. It is worthy to note that the quest for identity can only be achieved through the individual's acknowledgement of and reunion with their cultural origin as Unigwe holds. This shows the important role one's past plays in shaping one's conception of cultural and personal identity.

More so, this work has demonstrated a pedagogic approach to the teaching of English language through a transcultural based approach. This approach helps the learners to be able to interact and overcome cultural barriers that create boundaries in the EFL/ESL classroom. The classroom is perceived as a reflection of the culture rather than the society. So, the approach focuses more on the realities of the individual and the culture at hand. The learners acquire their individual identities by deconstructing existing cultural barriers. Thus, the teacher is obliged to involve the learners in the learning process. This approach defines the learner within the language of instruction.

By way of contribution to literature, this work has continued the essential debate on the complex relationship between the mother and daughter with more emphasis on Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. Many readers and critics will be reawakened by the importance of the rebellion against the mother, which leads to the recreation of a new self. This work equally bring to the limelight the challenges faced by mothers in carrying out their maternal obligation. Any literary piece of art helps to educate the society on different issues like helping the people to identity and situate themselves within a cultural milieu. Thus, this work is important in that the readers will be able to deconstruct and overcome some cultural barriers in their respective societies.

Looking at the fact that no research endeavour answers all possible questions, one cannot deny that this work has undertaken an exhaustive analysis of Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. The mother/daughter conflict is studied both from the mother's viewpoint, as well as, from the

daughter's perspective. The puzzle of motherhood is therefore examined only from the mother/daughter relationship. For future research, researchers can discuss the extent to which the mother/child conflict can be resolved in Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*.

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## APPENDIX

### READING COMPREHENSION PASSAGE

(Obtained from Part Two: Chapter One of Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*).

When Rapu was born, Mmeri, the expert midwife and certified soothsayer from down the road, took the umbilical cord between her stubby fingers, rolled it beside her ear, sunk her teeth into it, spat on it and gave it to the baby's father to bury with the words, 'She shall lead you away from hunger. Ugani has left your household. Famine shall never visit you again. It is gone.' ... In a fit of ecstasy, he [Echewa] insisted on cooking the yam porridge his wife must eat to warm his stomach. She [his mother-in-law] grumbled .... 'What man cooks for his wife? This is a woman's job. That's why I've come!' .... People said what a blessing it was. They [Echewa's family] had suffered enough. The baby had come into a family notorious for their bad luck and it was only right that their fortunes should change.

Visitors streamed in and out to take a look at the miracle child .... Those old enough to remember said how very much like her great-grandmother she looked .... Maybe she had come back. Tired of watching her grandson suffer to feed his family, she had nagged the gods until they decided the time was right for her reincarnation. The villagers held her little hands, looked into her eyes and said how wise they looked, no doubt about it. The newborn was definitely Echewa's grandmother. They named her Big Mother and whispered messages for her to take to their ancestors. Some said they had always known a day like this would come, the change of Echewa's fortune snaking into their dreams while they slept at night. People laughed out loud and hit Echewa's back in joviality and pinched the baby's cheeks. But Echewa and his wife, wise in their ways of the people, knew that not everybody who laughed with you rejoiced with you. So Echewa and his wife carried ugolo in their cheeks to ward off evil and hid a sachet of the bitter kola under the baby's pillow. Its efficacy in keeping evil at bay was not to be doubted.

Seven days after the birth the baby was presented to the village and named with a drop of local gin on her forehead. The villagers said it was a sensible name, Rapu. It was a name that asked the ill luck to go away and never return. Rapu. Go away. A name that banished the ill luck to a hole deep enough to swallow it and keep it down. For as everyone knew, names had as much

influence on one's future as the gods did. It was like meeting the gods halfway, which was why an entire week was needed to think of a name both apt and beautiful. And for a family like theirs, Rapu was really the most appropriate name. They could not have chosen a better one. The gods – even the Christian God the family had newly discovered – were bound to be happy with the choice.