

*Buchi Emecheta's "The Bride Price"  
and "The Slave Girl":  
A Schizoanalytic Perspective*

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Oedipus is the figurehead of imperialism, typifying an interior colonization. Depression and Oedipus are agencies of the state, of paranoia, and of power.

MICHEL FOUCAULT, Introduction to  
*Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

The goal of these characters was to redefine the position of the African individual in a changing and developing society. Forced to struggle with social, political, philosophical or sentimental problems, the black female character often found herself cut off from her past, and trapped within the confines of a system of alienation.

KAREN WALLACE, "Women and Alienation"

**I**n *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and French psychoanalyst Felix Guattari propound a theory that can easily find interpretive relevance in every sociological orientation. And indeed Buchi Emecheta's writings particularly serve as rich models for the application of Deleuze and Guattari's anti-oedipal theory of *schizoanalysis*, precisely because the dominant symbols used in their culturally dissimilar works are one and the same. Emecheta, born in Nigeria but living in London since her early twenties, has written novels that examine the African female, or "slave girl," enslaved by oppressive and antiquated patriarchal/cultural mores that clearly fit into the French authors' definition of Oedipus as the "figurehead" of imperialism, as legitimizing those "agencies" or territorialities of "power and paranoia," such as the laws of the fathers, family, community, and culture. In Emecheta's cosmology, "Oedipus" serves as a metaphor for the baggage of cultural myths and superstitions which over the centuries have sent Afri-

can females on such guilt-trips that they usually become pliable conformists, while the rebellious non-conformists struggling with sentimental and socio-philosophical problems are trapped within a system of alienation and end up as neurotics.

Deleuze and Guattari's theories of "schizoanalysis," relevant to Emecheta's fictional universe, are used to study the experiences of the young Akunna in *The Bride Price* and of Ogbanje Ojebeta in *The Slave Girl*. My investigation of the female schizophrenic characters has two phases: first, an earlier schizoanalytic phase when Akunna and Ogbanje Ojebeta, both anchored on life, attempt to reject oppressive, reductive "territorialities" of power, and by sheer will power proceed beyond disconnection to discover new connections; and, second, a later neurotic phase when they are unable to recover sufficiently their identities to achieve complete healing as a subject-group. My study concludes with an evaluation of the capability of each character to succumb to or escape from oedipalizing, neurotic modes of living.

The core of Deleuze and Guattari's ideology rests on the definition of both "psychoanalysis" and "schizophrenia." Colby defines psychoanalysis as "a branch of science that proposes a system of theory and observations about human behavior" (vii). As far as Deleuze and Guattari are concerned, all Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis does is to "observe, diagnose and theorize" about schizophrenia. Deleuze and Guattari further insist that psychoanalysis is both oedipal and non-healing. Since madness is often viewed as "a radical break from power in the form of a disconnection" (Foucault, *Anti-Oedipus* xxiii), Freudian psychoanalysis attributes to it the Oedipus complex, which produces neurotics who become guilt-ridden and non-reactive to social forces bent on subjugating them. Consequently, psychoanalysis is an agency employed by Western capitalism to cloak "insanity in the mantle of a 'parental complex,' . . . to develop a moralized, familial discourse of mental pathology" (50). The design of psychoanalysis is to keep "European humanity harnessed to the yoke of 'daddy-mommy'" while "*making no effort to do away with this problem once and for all*" (Deleuze and Guattari 50; emphasis added). Similarly, Emecheta's slave narratives suggest that the cultural power of the fathers, of family and community,

exercises the same tyranny in Africa as the figure of Oedipus does in the West.

Schizoanalysis, in contrast, is liberatory, regarding schizophrenia as a process rather than as an illness. Deleuze and Guattari, quoting R. D. Laing, insist that even though our culture equates "madness" with "illness," "*to be mad is not necessarily to be ill*" (131) because essentially, schizophrenia means an escape or a disconnection from tyrannical power. The "schizo" is therefore one who opts to live intensely, who has simply ceased being afraid of becoming mad. In this context, schizophrenia can be seen as a process that lets in the sunshine through cracks in an all-too-closed mind. *Anti-Oedipus* therefore opposes psychoanalysis with schizoanalysis. Where psychoanalysis operates from an Oedipal framework, producing neurotics who are passive and non-reactive to forces that subjugate people into becoming docile, obedient subjects, *schizoanalysis* goes beyond the paranoiac breakdown to find a revolutionary breakthrough that aids in discovering flows of desire that can help the individual achieve a healing process (112). *Schizoanalysis* breaks through "the wall or the limit separating us from desiring-production, causing the flows of desire to circulate" (362). And thus, schizoanalysis as a theory offers creative lines of escape. To be anti-oedipal is to combat willfully all reductive, neuroticizing Oedipal myths and mores canonized by society—family, church, school, or nation—which produce in us the "herd instinct," the desire to have someone else direct our lives. These constitute the lines of argument that run through the entire study.

Seen from the *Anti-Oedipus* perspective, Ibuza society, consisting of the patriarchal father, family, and communal mores, is an agent of fascism. Just as Emecheta's novels indict colonization by Western powers, so also do these fascisizing agencies symbolize an interior colonization. In this context, fascism denotes the desire to accept, even to desire the very thing that tyrannizes us into subjugation. In an anti-oedipal effort, Emecheta uses Akunna's and Ojebeta's stories to expose and combat those socio-cultural traditions, taboos, myths, emotional and class deprivations employed by a patriarchal system that is inherently structured to perpetually produce "women in chains."

The narrative of *The Bride Price* concerns conflict with and alienation from the structure of traditional community from the moment that thirteen-year-old Akunna loses her father. While in Lagos, Akunna had a special bond with her father, Ezekiel Odia. Her name symbolizes “father’s wealth. . . . She was going to marry well, a rich man of whom her father would approve and who would be able to afford an expensive *bride price*” (10). The issue of the utilitarianism of a woman, her ownership by a father figure, thus becomes central to our investigation of a fascisizing Oedipal agency. As a child, Akunna does not mind belonging to the father to whom she feels bound by “a kind of closeness to which she could not give name” (10). Before going to the hospital to die, the father reminds the daughter to “[a]lways remember that you are mine” (11). And although “girl children were not normally particularly prized creatures, Okwuekwu had lost so many” that this daughter seems precious. For Akunna, it was a happy ownership, for “father” represents a privileged stronghold and refuge from which she would later be excluded by his death. Even though her mother is alive, Akunna is treated like an orphan.

Akunna’s musings succinctly capture the pathos of her situation:

Akunna sat there on the mat, watching them all as an outsider would—an outsider who wished to belong to the bustle and urgency and yet could not. . . . *It is not that we have no father any more, we have no parents any more. . . . So, not only have we lost a father, we have lost our life, our shelter.* (21-28)

In the absence of her biological father, her uncle, Okonkwo, now becomes her father, and to him therefore reverts the right of ownership. Akunna’s desire is never satisfied. Her alienation from the Ibuza community becomes total when her family moves down to rural Ibuza. Buchi Emecheta herself acknowledges this link with, and need for, a father figure. Her own father always called her “*nnem*,” “*Nne-nna*”—father’s mother (12). In her autobiography, *Head Above Water*, Emecheta reminisces:

As a child, I was brought up thinking that a happy home must be headed by a man. . . . A home without him, “*nnayin*, *our father*,” at the top is incomplete, and all those from such a home should go about with a chip on their shoulders. (242)

In Iboza/Ibo tradition, a fatherless family is a non-existing family. Therefore, the narrator of *The Slave Girl* states categorically: "All her life a woman always belonged to some male. At birth, you were owned by your people, and when you were sold, you belonged to a new master" (112). Lacanian psychoanalysis would interpret all of their feelings of inadequacy and dependency (Akunna's, Ojebeta's, and Emecheta's) in the same way, as a lack, a castration. Deleuze and Guattari attack Lacan's theory by arguing that lack never creates itself, but is the deliberate creation of "a dominant class" (28). In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Pearl discovers her identity only when Rev. Dimmesdale acknowledges himself as her father, whereas Akunna never fully recovers from this sense of castration. Emecheta herself, who all her life valiantly struggled to play the role of both father and mother to her children, was equally haunted by this fear that her efforts could still be inadequate:

This was going to be my lot. I was going to give all I had to my children, only for them to spit in my face and tell me that I was a bad mother and then leave and run to a father who had never in all his life bought them a pair of pants. (*Head Above Water* 238)

This and the other issues such as *osu*/freeborn, gender preference, the myth of the *Ogbanje*, choice of a marriage partner and the bride price system, encompass "territorialities" of power and paranoia in Emecheta's fictional universe. The Oedipal trinity of "daddy-mommy-me" (which in Emecheta's worldview means a family headed especially by a father) becomes therefore a doctrinal belief injected into her protagonists' unconscious so powerfully that its victims end up desiring their own repression by pining after the "lack" of a father. Therefore, for characters directly to confront and repel "Traditions, Taboos, Superstitions . . . of Iboza" (*The Bride Price* 73) would constitute an outright rebellion. Consequently, when Akunna chooses to follow her heart, she pitches herself in direct opposition to established societal order. She attacks the Oedipal guilt, law, and castration so forcefully that she is left with two options: either to sustain the will to oppose her family's wishes, make total the disconnection from tyrannical communal mores, seek self-healing and live out her marriage happily, or be so neuroticized by the Oedipal-guilt

structure of her traditional society that she will never recover from her schizophrenic split. This schizoanalytic task of destroying Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari call "a whole scouring of the unconscious, a complete curettage" since it helps one get rid of "guilt, the law, castration" (311). To be effective, the break must be a complete "breakthrough" or a total "breakdown." The choice is hers to make.

Akunna, at first, chooses total rebellion since she has not much to lose; her mother, now pregnant by her step-father and under his domination, warns her, "I will kill you if you bring shame and dishonor on us" (121). When Okoboshi, her hated suitor, kidnaps her with the intention of raping her, Akunna resolves "to fight for her honor. This was going to be the deciding moment of her existence" (136). So, she temporarily snaps. In a schizophrenic frenzy, she experiences freedom for the first time. In psychosis, the ego is ever under the sway of the *id*, ready to break with reality. Since schizophrenic psychosis is "a means of preserving being" (Shean 240), becoming the schizo proves to be the only way to escape all oedipal, familial references (Deleuze and Guattari 361-62), for a schizo schizophrenizes in order to break the tyrannical hold of power and launch the process of a revolutionary self-healing. Consequently, Akunna deploys all the desiring forces within her to fight established order, thus proceeding beyond the *ego* and the guilt-producing *super-ego*. Elaine Showalter posits that madness is associated with sexual passion, with the body and with fiery emotions. This aptly matches the narrator's description of her attitude during the rape attempt: "Then she laughed, like a mad woman. Maybe she was mad, because when later she remembered all that she said to Okoboshi on that bed, she knew that the dividing line between sanity and madness in her was very thin" (138). Akunna defends her chastity, taunting her would-be raper as "the son of dog-chief, if the best he can manage to steal for his son is a girl who had been taught what men taste like by the son of a slave. . . . Yes, he has slept with me many, many times" (138). To her society, vaunting fornication with an *osu* is the last straw, and the stain on her family and friends is indelible.

Akunna's statement, "How simple our lives would have been but for the interference of parents" (138), confirms the reader's

suspicion that the death of Akunna's father is intended symbolically as the death of all fathers, of tyranny. Emecheta concedes to her heroine partial control over her life by letting her decide whom to marry. Akunna's choice of a husband translates to a challenge to the Law of the Father, an attempt to defy those oedipal taboos that militate against personal happiness. Brooks obviously supports this assertion when he equates "the Name-of-the-Father" with "prohibition, law, morality . . . to be submitted to in full abnegation or else rejected in a total revolt" (56).

It takes courage to launch the schizophrenic process; it takes courage to escape. Deleuze and Guattari quote Maurice Blanchot approvingly: "Courage consists, however, in agreeing to flee rather than live tranquilly and hypocritically in false refuges" such as morals, homeland, and religion (341). Akunna could learn from her disconnection from power, could move beyond it to new connections, new growth. In her case, this militancy which calls for a group action is achieved through marriage with Chike. They escape to Ughelli, and there Chike gets a job with an oil company while Akunna becomes a teacher. When Akunna becomes pregnant, the promise of a new order seems assured.

Yet, Akunna's rebellion fails at the precise moment when she is almost victorious because she lacks the ability to discover the non-human in her, to marshal the internal resources needed to sustain her courageous rebellion. Deleuze and Guattari, quoting Henry Miller, insist that "to move forward clinging to the past is like dragging a ball and chain" (334). This assertion is validated in Akunna's case because, ultimately, she lacks the courage needed to resist the tyrannical, mythic power and pull of traditional taboos. Okonkwo finally resolves to kill this girl who has shamed his household. He not only divorces her mother, but makes a fetish in Akunna's image, the purpose of which is to pull her back home. Akunna, now melancholic, is either unable or unwilling to escape the Oedipal guilt she feels for having disobeyed her family. Freud would interpret Akunna's melancholia as a disease of the super ego or conscience, a pathological counterpart of mourning. Deleuze and Guattari argue vehemently against such an imputation of guilt, because, in the

Oedipus story, the father, rather than the child, should be the one to feel the guilt since it is he, Laius, who first attempts to avenge himself. Viewed from a sociocultural rather than a sexual context, Okonkwo, Akunna's step-father, like Laius, should feel guilt, not Akunna or Oedipus since "*Oedipus is first the idea of an adult paranoid, before it is the childhood feeling of a neurotic*" (274).

Nevertheless, Akunna remains "arrested in the void" and is incapable of completing what she started. Rather than being part of a *subject-group* as a true schizo-revolutionary should, Akunna ends up as part of a *subjugated group*. She stagnates at the level of a preconscious revolutionary incapable of investing her gains in real, meaningful living since she is unable to "exorcise the effusion in it of a death instinct" (349). Deleuze and Guattari would label Akunna's mental pathology "a process of deterritorialization" for "it can no longer search for and create its new lands" (363). The desire to resist oedipalization and neuroticization, or to seek new social productions, has left her. The death instinct is strengthened as old taboos resurface only to hold even greater sway: "If the bride price is not paid, the bride will die at childbirth" (154).

Depression and paranoia then are agencies of power. As Akunna's melancholia persists, she reverses her position and acknowledges the authoritative discourse of the "Fathers" when she confesses to Chike's father: "I know my uncle does not want ever to accept the bride price. He calls me back in the wind, when I am alone. . . . I don't want to die, Father" (163). Desperately, she pleads with Chike: "Please, my husband, don't let him take me! Please don't, please!" Desperately, Akunna tries to satisfy her desire and overcome lack, but centuries of taboos and superstitious legends overwhelm her. The narrator observes, "everything about her seemed stretched to breaking point" (164). And Chike, although loving and compassionate, cannot help her since he himself, "doomed to social approbation and isolation because of his ancestry" (Fisburn 91), is the root-cause of her problems. Thus, Akunna dies leaving a daughter she calls "Joy," and so remains the psychological victim of anthropomorphic and anthropological myths. Her rebellious discourse, which is almost Western in its individualism, is unsuccessful in overthrow-



ing the Fathers' hegemony, represented by Ibuza traditional values. Even the narrator acknowledges that this myth "has a psychological hold over every young girl and would continue to hold in the face of every modernization until the present day [but] why it does, is anybody's guess" (168). The narrator's ambiguous comment that Akunna and Chike's story becomes in Ibuza a warning to any fledgling rebel who henceforth "must accept the husband chosen for her by her people, and the bride price must be paid" (168), seems to advocate conformity to traditional mores. Thus, the tragic end to Chike and Akunna's story supports the superstition that Akunna's personal rebellion sets out to obliterate. Could Emecheta's message be that every individual needs to fit into a social mold and cannot, with impunity, challenge everyday reality and get away with it? Is Emecheta arguing for the *status quo*? Her unequivocal answer in *Head Above Water* is that she believes that to belong to a community one needs the kind of courage that she, Emecheta, showed when she defied tradition and married a man of her choice; the kind of courage she sustained when she contravened tradition to divorce her irresponsible husband in London, a fact she herself admits in her autobiography:

And of course nothing would satisfy our tradition better than to stir up the mud of an ambiguous past. But I have had time to think and that, thanks be to God, has made me stronger emotionally and spiritually than that girl in *The Bride Price* whose immaturity allowed her to be destroyed by such heavy guilt. (4; emphasis added)

Yet Emecheta admits that the ambiguous ending of *The Bride Price* (which initially had a happy ending) is thus structured because of her own guilt for a failed marriage, for defying the Law of the Father, and for divorcing her husband. Emecheta transfers to her fictitious heroine the burden of these guilts. Ten years later, the more mature Emecheta regrets even more her literary radicalism:

I had grown wiser since that manuscript. I had realized that what makes all of us human is belonging to a group. And if one belongs to a group, one should try and abide by its laws. If one could not abide by the group's law, then one is an outsider, a radical, someone different who had found a way of living and being happy outside the group. Akunna was too young to do all that. She had to die. (166)

Thus, Emecheta intends to make the “immature” Akunna fail the freedom-giving, schizophrenic process because she lacks the courage to transgress group law. Because Akunna and Chike’s act threatens the very fabric of communal life, their rebellion, in order to succeed, must be absolute. Deleuze and Guattari’s *schizorevolution* cannot be accomplished “without overthrowing power, without reversing subordination” (367). Oedipus, with all its law and castrating guilt, must be completely destroyed. Emecheta is unwilling to let Akunna go that far, since she believes that an individual should be neither atomistic nor isolated but must belong to a social unit, be it family, village or tribe. Thus, at the end of the novel, a *reterritorialization*, a re-neuroticization occurs because the protagonist is unable to shake off that interior colonization represented by the cultural taboos and curses of her communal group.

In *The Slave Girl*, Ogbanje Ojebeta, unlike Akunna, is initially able to succeed with her individual rebellion because she has some support groups such as her fellow slave mates, and even Pa Palagada, who wishes to spite Victoria, his step-daughter. The story is simply a fictionalized biography of Emecheta’s mother, Ogbanje Emecheta, who was sold into slavery by her brother for the price of a silk headtie needed for his cultural coming-of-age dance.

Orphaned by the death of her parents, Ogbanje Ojebeta is sold by her brother Okolie to Ma Palagada, a distant relative and an influential businesswoman in Onitsha, with the same ease that Thomas Hardy’s Michael Henchard sells off his wife Susan and daughter, Elizabeth-Jane. Elaine Showalter’s feminist critique of Henchard’s heinous act appropriately applies to Okolie’s similar act. Showalter points out that in patriarchal societies, low premium is placed on women and female children, whereas to sell a son would constitute a drastic violation of patriarchal culture (146). To Henchard as to Okolie, the females remain an encumbrance to be got rid of with ease. Okolie worries out loud: “. . . but what else was there for a young bachelor like himself to do with a young *sister* of merely seven years of age?” (36) Okolie represents Tradition (Oedipus) which confers on men total power over all females, be they wives or daughters or sisters. By

the sale, Okolie, like Henchard, wishes “to be the new Adam, reborn, self-created, [journeying] unencumbered” (Showalter 146). Ogbanje, “small, helpless, terrified, a little girl festooned with bells and cowrie shells, just like a slave prepared for sacrifice” (59), races through the market looking for an escape route; significantly, it is to a fellow female, Ma Mee, that she runs for refuge, crying, “Save me, Mother, for now I am lost” (59); “mother” is emblematic of love and security. How ironic it is, then, that Ma Palagada colludes with Okolie to rob Ogbanje of her identity, and how similar to the classic collusion of Oedipus’ parents, Laius and Jocasta, to do their child in. This is what Deleuze and Guattari call the “daddy-mummy-me” triangle. Thus do parents (as well as other adults socialized into becoming partners in crime) structure the oedipalizing traditional mores which constitute an interior colonization process.

Yet, while Ma Palagada remains alive, enslavement, for Ogbanje, is relatively easy. It has its high moments: the slaves are introduced to religion and education, taught various skills and generally treated fairly by Ma Palagada. Ogbanje’s captivity, at this point, is more psychological than physical. In Emecheta’s view, there are different categories of enslavement: “the body can be enslaved,” she explains in *Head Above Water*, “but the greatest type of slavery is . . . the enslavement of ideas” (204). Emecheta graphically describes the dehumanization and sexual exploitation that are concomitant with slavery. Pa Palagada and his son Clifford routinely sexually abuse the young girls in the household, who “have nobody to plead” (131) for them. The daughters, who “never considered that slaves and servants were human like themselves” (113), overburden them with errands, caning and abuses, “You good-for-nothing slave! You bush slave” (114), such that “even Ma Palagada’s characteristic benevolence does not counteract the effects of the severe treatment meted out by her husband and her daughters” (137). Ogbange’s constant plaint becomes, “Please, dear God, no, please, must I be a slave for ever?” (126).

When Ma Palagada dies, her property, including the slaves, is divided up. And when the worst of the tyrants, Victoria, urges Ogbanje to accompany her to her home, Ogbange, for the first

time sniffing freedom, throws caution to the wind and shouts back at her tormentor:

I am not going back to Bonny with you. I am going back to my people. I am going home. . . . No, Miss Victoria, I will not come with you. I shall pay back every penny my brother borrowed . . . why should I go with you? (145)

Ogbanje's attitude is now one of hostile belligerence that is symptomatic of psychosis, which Laing describes as "the sudden removal of the veil of the false self's outer conformity, so that the inner self begins to pour out accusations of persecution by the very persons with whom the false self has been complying" (*Theories of Schizophrenia* 239). Enslavement is a process that oedipalizes and neuroticizes. It creates a schizophrenic split, so that an outer, false, docile self seems to comply with tyranny, while an inner self seethes with rebellion. For Ogbange, the moment for launching the *schizorevolutionary* process arrives with the death of Ma Palagada. Encouraged by her fellow sufferers, Chiago, Amanna, and Nwanyinuzo, she plans a successful escape, thus showing courage and an ability to make use of the "flows of desire" for a more productive, life-affirming existence. Since the schizo-revolutionary process operates best when in a collective, the band of abused, suffering slaves give to one another emotional support and courage. Eventually, their individual success illustrates Emecheta's (and Deleuze and Guattari's) conviction of the efficacy of group action. As Clifford will later explain to Ogbanje: "Jienuaka was now a successful businessman and had married Nwanyinuzo; her friend Amanna [had] gone into business and had a big shop and a car [while] Chiago was living happily with Pa Palagada and their four growing sons" (177).

Yet, for Ogbanje, ideological enslavement remains a problem. At the height of her schizorevolutionary victory, at the very moment she frees herself from the yoke of slavery, she, like Akunna, relaunches herself back into a more confirmed cultural enslavement. But unlike Akunna, Ogbanje's choices and actions are so deliberate, so desired that the surprised reader wonders if the earlier process of oedipalization has perhaps been too thorough, too successful. Like Hawthorne's Pearl and her literary compatriot Akunna, Ogbanje suffers from a Lacanian

lack and needs a father-image, if not her own father (who is dead), then the collective Fathers of the community, including a brother who sold her and another who abandoned her. Ogbanje has been socialized into relishing being owned: "A girl is owned in particular by her father or someone in place of her father or her older brother, and then in general, by her group or homestead" (157). In Emecheta's worldview, all men—husbands, fathers, and brothers—are slave masters and tyrannical oppressors; the only option open to women is to choose the lesser of all these evils. Emecheta's comments on her mother's story are revealing; she describes her mother as "that slave girl who had the courage to free herself and return to her people in Ibuza," yet she "still stooped and allowed the culture of her people to re-enslave her, and then permitted Christianity to tighten the knot of enslavement" (*Head Above Water* 3). To Emecheta, European colonization is as much an enslaving process as the Ibuza patriarchal taboos.

When Ibuza joyfully welcomes her back into its bosom, Ogbanje finds herself even more deeply mired into its oedipalizing essence than she was before. Thus, when Chiago tells her as she departs the Palagada homestead, "Go to your people. Even if they can only afford to give you mushroom, you'll know that it is mushroom of freedom" (146), the irony is palpable, because Ogbanje only sniffs the scent, but does not taste the "mushroom" of freedom. As she happily goes to the stream and market, and fetches and carries for her aunt, the uncles again start bickering over whose right it is to collect her brideprice. Consequently, she is reterritorialized by her communal Fathers to such an extent that when she meets Jacob Okonji, "an elite among his people because he could read and write," Uncle Eze, who disapproves of Jacob, plots to marry her off to his own cousin by resorting to the ancient practice of betrothal through the cutting of a lock of a girl's hair. Ogbanje escapes with Jacob to Lagos with the full realization that "if this time she must marry and belong to a man according to the custom of her people, then she must do so with her eyes open. . . . it would be better to be a slave to a master of your choice. . . . Jacob would be a better choice" (168).

Evidently, only in moments of extremity can Ogbanje's desire propel her into action. Fishburn calls these occasions, "a few

successful moments of minor rebellion" (93), for Ogbanje, unlike Akunna, never poses a real threat to the traditions of her people, since she has an internalized need for the authoritative discourse of the Fathers. Since hers is a chosen enslavement, she can never be a good schizo-revolutionary. Making a Christian marriage to ensure a monogamous union, she is "happy in her husband, happy to be submissive, even to accept an occasional beating" (174).

But the myth of the curse of the slave who is never really free until what was paid is refunded to the owner remains a potent fascisizing agency. When after two children Ogbanje starts having miscarriages, the *dibia* they consult insists that her freedom must be re-purchased. A few years later, readers see her through the eyes of Clifford, Ma Palagada's son, a one-time admirer, now in financial straits, coming to claim his debt. He is astonished to find Ogbanje, once a lively, intelligent girl, now a "nervous woman, with lustreless air . . . unsure of herself and her unbecoming outfit" (176-78). This, in effect, demonstrates how thoroughly oedipalized she has become. Ogbanje willingly accepts the reality of her culture's fascisizing myths, and thus becomes completely re-oedipalized. If Oedipus is belief in power injected into the unconscious, it successfully robs Ogbanje of all ability to free herself; it effectively teaches her to desire her own repression. Even the elements of Western mores (Christian marriage) which she accepts "seem more to strengthen the hegemony of her African culture than to challenge it" (Fishburn 93). To be a mother becomes her badge of identity, an encompassing desire. Her husband and brothers happily pay Clifford off. Thus Ogbanje, now a member of a subjugated group, happily accepts belonging to Jacob, body and soul. Because Jacob is a master of her own choosing, she kneels before him, saying, "Thank you, my new owner. Now I am free in your house. I could not wish for a better master" (179). Lloyd Brown aptly notes that "women like Ojebeta are their own worst enemies" (60). Emecheta's final trenchant irony caps Ojebeta's complete re-territorialization: "Was the glory of a woman not a man, as the Ibuza people said?" (179).

Thus for Akunna as well as Ogbanje, redefining themselves in a changing and developing society remains a herculean task.

Unable to overthrow the Law of the Father, they find themselves alienated. Akunna, failing in her effort to reach the schizo-revolutionary pole, perishes because she is a radical threat to traditional societal structure, but Ogbanje survives by allowing herself to become reterritorialized. Perhaps, the future of Emecheta's later heroines is not quite as bleak as the fates of Akunna and Ogbanje seem to suggest. The more mature Buchi Emecheta, who evidently continues to grow creatively, allows her later heroines to conquer oedipal forces of domination. This she does in *Kehinde*, another novel set in postcolonial Nigeria, and more forcefully in *Gwendolen*, a novel set in the Caribbean and in London. The latter marks her own contribution to the ongoing literary exercise of racial re-unification by female writers of African descent, such as Alice Walker in *The Color Purple*, Paule Marshall in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* and *Praisesong for the Widow*, and Maryse Conde in *Segu*. Emecheta takes her heroine, the eponymous Gwendolen, through the stages from repression to schizophrenia and finally to schizo-revolutionary freedom and self-actualization. Gwendolen successfully deterritorializes the stifling yoke of Oedipus. Her new infant, Iyamide (synonymous with warmth, security, and self-fulfillment), and Joy, Akunna's young daughter, represent the promise of a new world that can successfully overcome the psychological domination of Oedipus to fulfill dreams that promote female transcendence.

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