

Postcolonial Feminism in Selected Contemporary Nigerian Novels

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This paper explores postcolonial feminism in selected contemporary Nigerian novels, emphasising the deconstruction of the traditional roles assigned to women. It evaluates the exploitation and marginalisation of women within patriarchal structures and highlights their agency, contributions, and transformations. The theoretical framework is grounded in postcolonial feminism as advocated by Ofelia Schutte (1998). The study employs content analysis methodology showcasing how education and self-awareness redefine the image of the postcolonial woman. Findings reveal that Adimora-Ezeigbo's works highlight the achievements and struggles of women within patriarchal cultures, raising awareness about gender-based injustices. She portrays women's conditions by creating consciousness of the psychological and physical injuries perpetrated by the patriarchal structures, and the need for reformation. She posits that the postcolonial females that could make their decisions not only because they could get married, give birth and nurture children, but because they have what it takes – education – to influence their world and cultures with satisfaction. She does this through the stories of real/fictional women/other activists by employing the daily language of her culture. She instigates a revolution in women's health care system, their love lives/ sexual desires, and above, education as the parameter for total liberation of the new Nigerian woman. The main characters - Nneoma and Ginika - transcend traditional gender norms and advocate for women's empowerment in areas such as education, and personal agency. The study concludes that postcolonial feminism serves as a platform for the social mobilisation and enlightenment of the marginalised women, positioning them as integral to national and cultural development.

Keywords: Postcolonial feminism, Feminism, Adimora-Ezeigbo, *Roses and Bullets*, Gender-based injustices, Nigeria

1. Introduction

While the incessant discourses on women's liberation have been prevalent in literary scholarship, only few of such academic output have actually given the theoretical depth and nuanced literary analysis to convince the reading public that academic scholarship is not a mere flash of issue; but juxtaposition of the reality of women's lives and writings. The current study advances the argument on postcolonial feminism by reflecting on the literary epoch of women's achievement and agree with Gloria Steinem's (2008, P. 94) position in an interview with the 40th anniversary edition of *New York Magazine* that: 'There is no post-feminism – that's like saying post-democracy.' The implication of this exhuming is that feminist poetic resourcefulness is an unrelenting belief

that proposes possibilities of the new image of woman in the global context.

Feminism, as posited by Andolsen, Gudorf, and Pellanuer (1985, Pp. xiii, xix), seeks to dismantle social hierarchies and promote egalitarian societies. However, feminist literature often bridges the gap which direct focus to humanity and its humanistic studies. Within the context of this discourse, humanistic approach can be made to apply to what Harris (1992, p. 88) portrays as "rich and varied spectrum of human experiences." Consequently, Goring, Hawthorn and Mitchell (2013, P. 372), enunciating their views from the perspective of humanism opine that it is "An intellectual/cultural development of the Renaissance, in which religious explanations of the world lost ground in the face of a more secular and human-centered outlook

associated with an optimism in the power of human beings to understand and better their situation.” Harris and Goring et al foreground their views of human beings and their experiences, and they relate them to certain historical time and space.

Funk Wagnalls New Encyclopedia (1876, P. 368) posits:

...women commonly were regarded as inferior beings. The children, property and earnings belonged by law solely to their husbands ... in most respects American women were legally on a par with criminals, insane and the slaves.

It is based on such deplorable labelling and pathetic ways of classifying women with people of low consequences, and inferior status that provides a structural theoretical framework which results in earlier scholars, clamouring for the abolition and temperance, in the first instance, the women suffragists. This study revalidates the fact that postcolonial feminism is a new dimension to assessing the once marginalised women as a continuum of human race. It further enforces that postcolonial feminism as a means of social mobilisation and enlightenment by examining ways in which a Nigerian novelist of renown standard - Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo - create traditions which situate the concept of postcolonial feminism in contemporary societies.

11. Method

A Literature Review

Feminism is not a recent phenomenon that began in the Seventeenth or Eighteenth centuries, it is a thought provoking issue in the literary field of human experience. In like manner, discrimination against women might

be characterised to as old as man and history. The fight against the subjugation of women has been of historical event. Culturally, women are relegated to domestic domain only, while men are always projected positively for public life. Women are not entitled to any right presumably, because they are wrongly categorised as people that possess no intellectual and physical abilities to assert themselves, as well as defend those rights, even if such were ever allocated to them. History records that in the 3rd century BCE, Roman women occupied the Capitoline Hill as they made impassable every entrance to the ‘Forum’ to prevent consul Marcus Porcius Cato, when he repelled efforts to rescind the laws restraining women’s use of expensive goods. Of course Cato’s reasoning had been that, if women should be granted the freedom then, he stated: “If they are victorious now, what will they not attempt?” Cato added: “As soon as they begin to be your equals, they will have become your superiors” (Encyclopedia Britannica Online Retrieve January 17, 2025, Written by Burkett, Elinor, Bunell, Laura). A close look at the position put forth by consul Marcus Cato portrays that, different cultures and patriarchal institutions had right from time immemorial resisted women’s emancipation so that the set can be continually under their oppression syndrome.

Consequently, it was ascertained that the Women’s Suffrage Movement, which started earlier in places such as: New Zealand (1893), Australia (1902), Finland (1906), and Norway (1913), had won women their rights to vote. But the events of World War 1, and its outcome accelerated the empowerment of

women in Europe and other places. However, in the 14th-15th centuries France, the first feminist philosopher, Christine de Pisan, challenged certain dominant approaches towards women with a clarion call for female education. Consequently, this position was later carried out in the 15th century by Laura Cereta, a Venetian feminist role archetypal who published *Epistolae Familiares* (1488; “Personal Letters”. Trans. Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist), a bulk of writings dealing with the exposition of women’s complaints, denial of education and marital subjugation of women (Mitchell, 1984, Pp 7-8). Conversely, the notions about women’s fundamentally blemished sinful nature, and inferiority based on the Creation narratives and the Fall of man in the Biblical account, have equally been prominent in almost all the phases of Christian church history, including the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment, the Renaissance periods, as well as the diverse sects and denominations of humanity in contemporary cultures (Fineman, 2008, Pp.4-5). Women struggled for their rights legally to be allowed to vote, and to also be voted for in the local and international elections. Women generally are known to have been consistently subjugated, and marginalised throughout history as they struggle against violence and other forms of injustices shown to them by institutions of patriarchy.

Accordingly, the issues that have been prevalent with the universal cultures of which patriarchal institutions are dominant, are the assumptions of women as sub-standard creatures. The pejorative assessment of women overtime has been irrational, because

there are remarkable evidence shown everywhere that, women worth far more than what their cultures have projected of them. Unfortunately, these wrong notions have survived several generations of human history. To be able to really achieve the position of salvaging women from age-long condemnations of inferiority, the feminist writers have reformed a woman- centre ideology like feminism as a stance against the dreaded male-domination. Susan Griffin (1982) declares that feminism for women:

Hold the premise that one may control reality with the mind, assert the ideal as the more real than reality, or place idea as an authority above nature; what we see what we hear, what we feel, taste, smell (Griffin 1982, p. 278).

Feminism, therefore, reveals principles, beliefs, ideas, and concepts which lead the basic preoccupations of its advocates. Since Griffin (1982) has posited that “reality” should be subdued to the minds of women. Furthermore, she adds that feminist critics try to signify their various realities through their novels. As a result of this, diversifying views have emerged under the umbrella word ‘feminism,’ which bring about women plurality. Plurality in the sense that, the extremist radical feminists speak against the unity of purpose – marriage, and progeny. For instance, a radical feminist Shulamirith Firestone, argues for “The Abandonment of the Biological Family” in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970). Firestone’s view is a deviant to the true African feminism/postcolonial feminist viewpoints. That notion contradicts the general opinion of every woman in Africa because biological family and procreation are the core heart- beat of every African woman.

And to live below the acceptable norm(s) amounts to insanity and misdemeanor.

The transformational feminists on the other hand, argue for the elimination of every barrier that hinders all human from functioning on equal level. Though many definitions of feminism have evolved, most of them do not enjoy a general consensus in feminist circles, which is a disadvantage to the global feminist movement. Moreso, the various manifestations of those ideological stand-points that could arise reveal another concept – post colonial feminism – the need for the women’s place and image to be constantly felt in fictional literature.

Speaking to induce all the women to unite as an entity to fight against undue male aggressions, incessant shifting of family responsibilities, wife-battery, sexual harassment, unwarranted pressure from in-law, Encarta (2008, P. 14) asserts: “We must now begin to realize and retain ourselves to see that both intelligence and a reverence for life are HUMAN qualities”. As a response for this clarion- call, a vast number of women are beginning to wake up out of the long sleep known as cooperating in one’s own oppression and self-denigration, and they are bonding together, in nationwide chapters of the National Organization for women – in the myriad groups of Radical Women Springing up all over the world. (Encarta 2008, P. 14).

Many definitions of feminism have evolved, and most of them do not enjoy a general consensus in feminist literary circles, which is a disadvantage to the global feminist movement. Feminism, according to Emezue (2012, P. 37) presents a clarion call for a major

change in social thinking and politics, because only feminism, radically questions people’s understanding of ‘men’ and ‘women’ and the social structures which maintain their difference. Moreso, feminism as an intellectual ideology, advocates a movement of what Rivkin and Ryaan (2000, P. 529) claim: “towards a deeper identification with a female essence”. Nwapa (2007) on her own asserts feminism as the way which women have redefined themselves, to project themselves as they feel should be represented. She sees feminism as a recreation of the experiences of women in the traditional African society – their social and economic activities, and above all, their preoccupation with the problems of procreation, infertility and child-rearing (Nwapa, 2007, Pp. 527-528).

In Omolara Ogunipe-Lesile’s viewpoints:

...the woman as daughter or sister has greater status and more rights in her lineage. Married, she becomes a possession, voiceless, and often right-less in her husband’s family, except for what accrues to her through her children (Ogunipe-Lesile, 2007, P. 543)

What this implies is that, marriage places the woman on a disadvantage position in an oppressive heterosexual context. The married woman as the possession of her husband is often always regarded as a piece of furniture or other household gadgets, kept for the pleasure of the man. Since right from when the woman was growing up, she has been indoctrinated that she should always exalt the position of the man above everything else. A close examination of the image of the African woman and marriage is summed up in the words of Helen Chukwuma (1989), she states:

The true test of the woman continues to be the marriage institution. In this closed-in arena, every married woman is to fight out her survival as an individual. The marriage paradox lies in the fact that it is both sublimating and subsuming. Through it a woman attains a status acclaimed by society and fulfils her biological need of procreation and companionship. Through it too, the woman's place of second – rate is emphasized and too easily she is lost in anonymity to benefit and enhancement of the household... that women are not the cheerful, contented females they are made out to be. They appear to be so because they had no voice, no way out (Chukwuma (1989, Pp. 5-6))

To be able to really achieve those objectives the feminist creative writers have adopted a woman – viewpoint ideology like feminism as a stance of what Sargent (2009, P.159) asserts to “replace male dominance what they see as the system or patriarchy, that affects all social institutions.” The different natures of feminism have developed which vary by way of generic expressions. Thus, the use of such concepts as “Africana feminism” (Hudson – Weems 1993) “Womanism” (Walker, 1983) “Stiwanism (from the STIWA – Social Transformation including women in African (Ogundipe – Leslie, 2007) and “Motherism” (Acholonu, 1995). Other terms that have been used are ‘Black feminism’ and ‘Femalism’ (Emezue, 2012).

The term “Feminism” according to Elizabeth Wallace (2009, P. xxi), is “a constellation of political and social ideas, rooted in the recognition that gender inequality continues to be a pressing concern in

contemporary society, and that an activist agenda in response to the status quo is necessary.” This implies that, feminism is an intellectual or political ideology committed to achieving gender, class, racial equality as it borders on every area of culture – most especially in literature as disputed sites. Feminism rejects female subjugation and marginalisation by patriarchy. Feminism as claimed by bell hooks (1984, P. 90) is a struggle to eradicate the ideology that permeates the western culture on various levels; as well as a commitment to re-organizing the society so that the development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion and material issues.

What hooks is advocating is that, feminism seeks to challenge the authority and discriminative force of men over the female gender in all areas of the society. Furthermore, hook's notion of feminism is for the total emancipation of womenfolk in the area of political, economic, social, psychological, and even in the ideological perspectives designed to establish, and define equal opportunities and privileges for the womenfolk. But Melek Mert (2024, P. 585), posits that “Since feminist politics is a struggle to eliminate the sexist exploitation suffered by everyone in society, the cooperation of women and men is necessary for the movement to succeed

The main objective of feminism is to gain equality with men. Spivak Gayatri (1999, Pp. 11-12) claims that during the Renaissance age, the feminist voices had not merged into a coherent movement or approach, rather, it only happened with the Enlightenment, when the womenfolk began to demand for the “new

reformist rhetoric about liberty, normal rights, and equality be applied to both the male and female sexes.” The implication of Gayatri’s position is that feminism should advocate for women to be allowed to take or make their own decisions, as well as, have the rights to own property, work outside their homes and have control over their bodies. Right from the beginning of the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Betty Friedan (1963), and Mary Daly (1978), and so many others, the major problem of Feminism has always been a culmination of a wide range of contest and disassemble universal inequalities confronting women, as a means of promoting a society where women maintain equal rights as men do in all fields of life.

Feminism recognises the vulnerability of human experience and the essential connectedness of individuals and communities, particularly women’s connectedness to the larger world (Fineman and Thomadsen 1991, P.2; 2008, Pp. 8-9; Scales, 1993, pp. 44, 47). Feminism as a global manifestation arose to combat the Western practices that constrained the rights of women in all areas of life. Consequently, feminists advocate for unified human existence for women lives that are shattered between personal, or private, or public or professional in the different cultures where they find themselves. Toril Moi (1986, P.204), on the other hand, analyses “the useful difference existing between the three cognate terms which offer a perfect beginning: “feminism is a political position, femaleness a matter of biology, and femininity a set of

CULTURALLY defined characteristics.”

While probing into both theory and practice as the symbols of feminist legal theory, many feminists – Andolsen, et al. (1985); Taub and Schneider (1993); Scales (1993); Adichie (2017); and so on – reject a classification of women which is confined to their relegation or victimhood. Women strive harder to celebrate and to appreciate women and their lives, including the distinguishing gifts and experiences they bring, through what Andolsen, et al. (1985) refer to as “intersectionality and heteronormativity critiques.”

By ‘heteronormativity,’ it means the supposition that, heterosexual behaviour is the acceptable norm biologically and socially. It can as well be referred to as the conviction that an individual’s life partner of the opposite sex is an example of heteronormative as it may be classified to what Nancy McHugh (2007, P. 153), portrays as: “counts as sex is penile-vaginal penetration and that gay men and lesbians cannot have real sex.” Furthermore, she posits that, the global culture is heteronormative and might probably deny or do not acknowledge sexual desires that are outside the heteronormative main stream. But Uduopengeme Yakubu (2001, P. 154), argues that heterosexuality, which is the prevailing and most widely acceptable mode of sexual expression among human beings, has always served as a major agency for women’s oppression in society. He ascertains that the heterosexuality is an auxiliary to emotional, physical, and structural violence against women since its superstructure highlights patriarchal dominion over female sexuality

Yakubu further confirms that it is the realm of pornography and proliferation of female prostitution, both of which are used by the patriarchal society to perpetuate the existence of the woman as a sex-tools and sub-human. A close examination of the global cultures indicates that women in heterosexual relationships are consistently represented as agencies of men's pleasure and objects of sexual danger, and or violence, most especially, in male authored literary texts. Women activists embrace their lives and communities in friendship and with joy to allow them to achieve their goals. The issue at stake if further investigated accurately, actualises the total subjugation and domination of the woman by means of bearing and rearing children. Further assessment of the above premise explains that the issue of the woman's conception takes place inside her womb, and it is a continuous process since she has to deliver children repeatedly, most especially in the early years of her life in marriage. As if this is not enough, she also sits and nurtures those babies of hers until they have come to the ages of accountability and beyond. In fact, in the cases of her raising up male children, she nurtures them for life. Why? It is because male children – Nigerian male children - do not leave home in marriages. They marry and keep their homes in the auspices of their mothers, who at that time will increase their burdens double fold. The mothers come under the yoke of taking care of both their own husbands, male children, their wives and their children as well, since tradition demands that. This position explains clearly what Irene D'Almeida (1994, p.1) portrays:

... the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy, that form of social organization in which males assume power and create for females an inferior status.

The objectives of this study advances to deconstruct the feminist viewpoint of freedom, liberation from every patriarchal entanglement and subjugation – to position that a dynamic woman is a source of life and visionary to humanity. The life and vision that have distinguished her out as unique can only be fulfilled within the confines of marriage, bearing and rearing of children. The aspect of the man subjugating the woman and associating her with negative roles not commensurate with her nature, as D'Almeida's (1995, P. 1) puts it in the phrase: "create for females an inferior status" in real life and fiction, came up right from the beginning of human life, and in the colonial era, and in the late eighteenth century respectively.

Having established the issues concerning feminism, its practices, achievements in the universal cultures, it is pertinent to delve into the onward development which is postcolonial feminism. This study concentrates on postcolonial feminism, to enlighten the universal cultures on the concepts that women sterling qualities and contributions toward the development of the families and the humanity at large have not changed, but such have rather taken new dimensions toward establishing the new woman image as transition into other complex duties/roles.

B. Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Feminism

The postcolonial feminists have ascertained new definitions of themselves as far back as the Nineteenth Century, when eminent women activists and feminists such as Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Abby Kelley Foster (1810-87) and Ernestine Rose (1810-92) came up to defend the course of women. With that in mind, the women do not only seek new definitions, they find several, in what Keyssar (1996, p.1) asserts as “productions and scripts characterised by consciousness of women as women”. The women’s consciousness allows them to talk about themselves, write about their conditions, as oppressed, and to some extent posit solutions to end their age long assessment as inferior. In consonance with explaining women’s new way of presenting themselves, Dolan (1988, p.37) posits that the new way of rejecting those pejorative viewpoints could be as:

manipulation in which art is inseparable from the condition of women as women, performance (written or acted) that deconstructs sexual difference and thus undermines patriarchal power ... and the creation of women characters in the ‘subject position.’

Postcolonial feminists argue that the experience of women in cultures impacted by colonialism is often vastly different from that of women in western countries and should be acknowledged as such. Mills, Jackson and Jones (1988) describe postcolonial feminists as feminists who have reacted against both

universalizing tendencies in Western feminist thought and a lack of attention to gender.

Eagleton (1983) advocates that “Literature is definable not according to whether it is fictional or ‘imaginative’, but because its uses language in peculiar ways. On this theory:

Literature is a kind of writing which, in the words of the Russian critic, Roman Jakobson, represents an ‘organized violence committed on ordinary speech. Literature transforms intensifies ordinary language which deviates systematically from everyday speech (Eagleton, 1983, Pp.1-2).

Why is it important to align the study of literature to postcolonial feminism? It is because literature often broadens how the “self” that women seek metamorphoses into the “subject” (Lacan 1996, P. 123). Ewvwerhoma (2002, P. 116) opines that writers of literary pieces should pay attention to salient issues within and outside the social system. This is possible because a literary narrative has a motive of correcting and purging the citizenry of its impurities. For Field and Newick (1973, Pp.1-2), literature/art is “man’s defence against psychological rigidity”. This also confirms what Gordon (1972, P.6) ascertains that literature [art] is the only means open to man [woman] to break the “seal that locks him fast into his [her] inner world and has the primary means to cultural cohesion”. The implication of Gordon’s statement is that a literary work focuses on the aesthetics which Jauss (1996, p. 83) claims “awakens memories of the familiar, stirs particular emotions in the reader and with its ‘beginning’ arouses expectations for the ‘middle and end’, which can then be... changed, re-oriented or even ironically

fulfilled in the course of reading according to certain rules of the genre or type of the text”.

But the most striking development in the domain of gender and fiction in the early sixties, seventies, eighties, nineties, and in the Twenty-first century have been the offshoot of a rich and diverse array of writings in the postcolonial feminist criticism and theory, thereby confirming what Catherine Stimpson (1992, p. 267) states as being part of a movement has motivated ‘self’ descriptions: [Post] Feminism has a much stronger sense of being a collaborative enterprise and thus has more impetus to continue updating and rearticulating its collective identity and common ground.

The end point of such enterprise is a creativity which leans towards ideologies like postcolonial feminism and womanism. The concept womanism was later qualified by Ogunyemi with the word “Africana” in consideration of everyday lives and conditions of African women. According to Emezue’s (2012), observation, both Walker and Ogunyemi.

... define womanism with a black context as the coming age of a young woman which brings about the emergence of femaleness. Additionally, Ogunyemi believes that the “ultimate aim of womanism is the unity of blacks everywhere under the enlightened control of men and women”. She lays stress on womanism as a black global ideology which encompasses issues of racism, imperialism and sexism (Emezue, 2012, P. 27).

Alice Walker’s (1983) opinion of feminism is encoded in her idea of who a womanist is and what womanism stands for. A womanist in her view is:

A black feminist or feminist of colour... who loves other women, sexually and /or a sexually, appreciates and prefers women’s culture ... sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non-sexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female... womanism is to feminism as purple is to lavender (Walker, 1983, p. xii).

In furthering the course of the global ideology of Sisterhood, Ogunyemi (1988) depicts further:

Womanism is ... a black out growth from feminism. Womanism is black centered, it is accommodationist. It believes in the freedom and independence of women like feminism. Unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black women and black men and black children and will see to it that men begin to change their sexist stand. (Ogunyemi, 1988, P. 65).

This study ascertain how postcolonial feminism is dominantly assertive and confrontational of the place of women in society, to empower the Nigerian motherhood to herald creatively that Nigerian women are potentially economically and politically dynamic /unique, in the sense that, they had never been previously occupied with and are not still bothered on sexual politics as it has been the vision of their Western counterparts. To borrow the words of Molaria Ogundipe Leslie (2007, P. 545) “Feminism is not a cry for any kind of sexual orientation ... Sexual practice in Africa tends to be private and considered private”

Postcolonial feminism thrives particularly in the Western and African worlds and finds its home primarily in fictional literary genre. It is exciting because it dares to venture to the physical world with such diverse and sometimes surprising representations and

explorations of women experiences, of their relationships to each other and to men; that it creates what Loren Kruger (1996, p. 50) describes as “recent feminist investigations into narrative fiction.” Keyssar (1996, p. 1) also accepts postcolonial feminism as “a new reading public for the genres of fiction / drama”. It is a mere assumption that the domain of postcolonial feminism in fiction is not a consecrated ground, when it is affirmed that women can talk a lot.

One significant role that has come of the concept of postcolonial feminism, in addition to whatever frame and fortune has accrued for the literary writers, is that, it has called into question the qualities crucial to the authentic feminists’ examinations of themselves. This is turn, has inspired a truly astonishing quality and quantity of fictional feminist criticism, as succinctly captured in the words of Catherine Stimpson (1992, p. 251): “Kate Millet *Sexual Politics* (1970) symbolized the beginning of feminist criticism, for it was the first major book of feminist criticism in the United States”.

Women writers, more so, understand the need for the total emancipation of women from the force of socio-economic and socio political marginalisation as shown in literature through their creative efforts. Through their arts, radical attempts at challenging the status quo, and possibly changing the conditions, which subjugate and limit women in text, and context are made in the word of Ekwierhoma (2002, p. 10) “in the milieux where these marginalized women are located.” She portrays further that; it is in some of these locations that female writers realise that

femaleness may have to a great degree limited the woman. She puts that female literary writers on their part make it a point of duty to bring about major transformation as well as resort to narrative technique as a vehicle for raising women’s consciousness. Speaking on the importance of women consciousness, Flora Nwapa (2007, p. 528) asserts:

The woman’s role in Africa is crucial for the survival and progress of the race. This is of course, true of all women across the globe, be they black or white. In my work, I try to project a more balanced image of African womanhood. Male authors understandably neglect to point out the positive side of womanhood, for very many reasons

The form of women creative writing is corrective in perspective, demanding to redress any anomaly done to women through the negative presentation of their characters (prostitutes, witches, talkative, etc.) in literature and in real life. It is based on this that Solberg (1983) advocates for the need for female creativity:

One of the ways of correcting one’s faulty image of the African woman would be through the African woman seen from the inside, from the “inside”, in other words, rendered by women (Solberg, 1983, P. 249).

Nwapa earlier mentioned gives reason(s) on why she believes on positive changes that have made it possible for women creative writing thus:

Recent changes in Nigeria – the 1967 – 1970 Civil War, economic changes, and an emphasis on the education of women – have affected men’s views about women. Women have started to redefine themselves, they have

started to project themselves, as they feel they should be presented (Nwapa, 2007, P. 527).

To ascertain this, Elaine Showalter (1997, P. 99) posits that this kind of analysis is called the “feminist critique”. That it is a historically grounded inquiry which probes the ideological assumptions of literary phenomena. The subject of this inquiry include the images and stereotypes of women in literature the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male – constructed literary history. Dorothy Driver (1982) admits that women creative writing, besides being corrective in nature, presents to its audience, authentic feminine consciousness as created by women. She opines that women writings use:

Literature as means of giving autonomous value to women’s experience by helping women perceive the political, economic and social oppression to which women were subjugated as well as attempt to bring about new standards against which women would be measured and of dispensing with the old standards (Driver, 1982, P. 203).

Driver’s view regards women creativity as a parameter for measuring their thought and experiences which differ from those of male hegemony, and in line with the ideologies women employ to present their views to their audience.

By the term “postcolonial feminism,” it means a once marginalised woman which description has been preceded by colonisation of patriarchy. It precedes the cultural contexts viewed by patriarchy with suspicion in that, it is assumed to deflect attention away from the material realities of exploitation of women at a time of growing transnational economy and

politics in recent times. Furthermore, the postcolonial feminism is the study advocating that, feminism should be deconstructed to a kind (of “feminism”) which extol the virtues of a once colonised woman whose self-worth and attributes are well defined within the structures of marriage, which allows for bearing and rearing of children which makes for human continuity. It is a kind which gives the woman the freedom to execute her daily living experiences loaded with positive contributions to the family circle in the society, and to the world at large.

Speaking to confirm the role of the deconstructed postcolonial feminist as a life giver/ source, Nwapa (2007, P. 531) postulates: “... women are what they are because they can give life, they can procreate.” It is true that western feminism is only associated with and concerned about sexual politics (Millet 1970, Daly 1978, Stimpson 1992, and so on). Besides, Mohanty (1992, P. 199) succinctly describes “Western feminist”: “as educated, modern, as having control over their own body sexualities, and the “freedom” to make their own decision.” This implies that the western feminists had long achieved their emancipation from such negative stereotypes representation of women in general, and as such, are no longer bothered about the Third World countries demands. What this study intends to analyse is specifically, the production of what postcolonial feminist African woman sees as a singular “monolithic subject” (Mohanty, 1992, P. 200), which accommodates all black women and men, who understand the import of womanhood as a life giver/ source (Nwapa 2007, P. 531).

In consonance with the above viewpoint, Nancy McHugh (2007, P. 153), asserts that “Postcolonial feminism represents feminism’s ‘coming of age’ its maturity into a confident body of theory and politics.” This implies that postcolonial feminism is an embodiment of moral, rational attributes, and self-worth characterised by honesty and integrity in contemporary (creative literary) writings and scholarship discourse. Postcolonial feminism strives to bring freedom to the African woman, that is, the Third World woman who “Leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine (read; sexually constrained) and being “Third world” (read: ignorant uneducated, tradition bound, religious domesticated, family – oriented, victim, etc.) (Mohanty (1992, P. 199).

Postcolonial feminism as postulated by Ofelia Schutte (1998, Pp. 65-66), thus:

those feminisms that take the experience of Western colonialism and its contemporary effects as a high priority in the process of setting up a speaking position from which to articulate a standpoint of cultural, national, regional, or social identity. With postcolonial feminism the process of critique is turned against domination and exploitation of culturally different others. Postcolonial feminisms differ from the classic critique of imperialism that they try to stay away from rigid self-other binaries. In addition, an intense criticism is directed at the gender stereotypes and symbolic constructions of the woman’s body used to reinforce outdated masculinist notion of identity.

This is opposed to self-other binaries prevailing in western academic. It strives to distinguish the differences and to build commonality among the Third World women, and to decolonise the colonised subject –

women – through, for instance, they supply critical analyses of sexuality, body image, whiteness, prostitution, job, out-scoring gender categories and cultural imperialism. Postcolonial feminism furthermore, encourages all women to envision the possibility of a society free from sexism, patriarchal discriminations based on sexual and political orientations, acceptance of the specific scope of giving life to all human beings through marriage, child bearing and rearing processes; and eliminate all devices on which human beings according to Sargent (2009, P. 171) are described as “... have subjugated other human beings.”

The objectives of this study advances to deconstruct the feminist viewpoint of freedom, liberation from every patriarchal entanglement and subjugation – to position that a dynamic woman is a source of life and visionary to humanity. The life and vision that have distinguished her out as unique can only be fulfilled within the confines of marriage, bearing and rearing of children. The aspect of the man subjugating the woman and associating her with negative roles not commensurate with her nature, as D’Almeida’s (1995, P. 1) puts it in the phrase: “create for females an inferior status” in real life and fiction, came up right from the beginning of human life, and in the colonial era, and in the late eighteenth century respectively.

It is from the definition of postcolonial feminism given by Schutte (1998, Pp. 65-66), as that which deploys the tools of the colonisers to transform domination and subjugation, that is, the perspective created from the typified

experiences of the people that have been colonised both physically and metaphysically; that this paper attempts to analyse selected works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo to determine how she structures emancipation for the once marginalised woman as life visionary, as contained in the belief that saving the girl child (i.e. a prospective woman) means saving the lives of the entire human race.

B. Introducing the Author and her Works

Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo is a distinguished Professor of English who once worked in the University of Lagos. She is a literary scholar of unrivalled energy and imagination, she has contributed immensely to global development of Universities and Humanities – University of London (1989 to 1990); University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa (1999 to 2000), and Royal Holloway, University of London (2006 to 2007). She is an outstanding celebrated Nigerian/African writer who, within a period of two and a half decades, has had an impressive collection of over thirty-four titles some of which are: *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996), *House of Symbols* (2000) and *Children of the Eagle* (2002) – which re-enact the evolution of modern Nigeria from the era of colonial incursion to the present, with priority on the role of women in the development of national history. She has other novels to her credit – *Trafficked* (2008), *Roses and Bullets* (2014). Professor Adimora-Ezeigbo has written four volumes of the genre of short stories – *Rhythm of Life* (1992), *Echoes in the Mind* (1994), *Rituals and*

Departures (1996) and *Fractures and Fragments* (2006).

Professor Adimora-Ezeigbo has also demonstrated greater prolificacy in her writing of Twenty Children fiction. Besides writing fiction, Professor Adimora-Ezeigbo also ventured into other genres of creative literature – the drama genre and has written – *Hands that Crush Stone* (2010), *Barmaid and the Witches of Izunga* (2010); her poetry collection include: *Singing in the Rain & Other Poems for Children* (2014), *The Eagle and Other Poems for Secondary Schools* (2014), *Dancing Masks* (2013), *Heart Songs* (2009) and *Waiting for Dawn* emerged in 2013.

In addition to her academic teaching career, Professor Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo is a prolific writer. Her writing career exposes her intimidating body of works that cut across criticism, fiery and creative writing. Her popular critical books her *Facts and Fictions in the Literature of the Nigerian Civil War* (1999), *Gender issues in Nigeria* (1996), *A Companion to the Novel* (1998) and *Snail Sense Feminism: Building on an Indigenous Model* (2012). *Snail Sense Feminism* incorporates her theoretical postulation on Feminism/Humanism from her Igbo Cultural Perspective and in an interview, she describes it as “my own theory”. This work serves as a pointer to her immense contribution to Gender Studies in Africa, an area she persistently portrays in her creative works. However, in 2012, at sixty-five (65) years, Professor Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo retired, having at the time, reached the required retirement age for Professors, even though she was and remains intellectually and mentally alert and not in any way physically tired.

Among her epoch of creative writings, her novels: *Trafficked* (2008), and *Roses and Bullets* (2014), are selected for the present study.

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo is one of the Nigerian prolific creative writers whose novels have provided insights to the concept of the new image ascribed to women in her culture/ society. She holds a fast pluralist position which allows her to accommodate values from African and western feminism. Adimora-Ezeigbo resents African patriarchy and western colonisation as cruel forces in the oppressions of African women. She uses her creative works as explicit confrontation with what she consigns to be a male oriented world. She projects the female character in her novels as a total human embodiment – emotional, rational, psychological, social, political, distinctive and assertive – fighting for, as well as claiming her long deprived rights.

Findings and Discussions

A. Analysis

Adimora-Ezeigbo deploys her creative works as vehicle of campaign on several issues such as patriarchal domination, female inheritance, genital mutilation or female circumcision, girl child education, wife battering, human trafficking and negative treatment meted out to women in contemporary cultures. As a feminist literary advocate, besides presenting the advantages of co-existence of men and women in her fiction, Adimora-Ezeigbo stresses that the complementarity of both sexes is indispensable in the mentoring approach, if only for the singular reason that, in many areas

men and women have the same interest. Nneoma's childhood is filled with innocence and happiness. She is the pride of her father. She is always bold to express her feelings about her family and the people around her. She would say: "I like my father, he is a good man" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 8). But the innocence and boldness were lost when she was deported after sex-trade in Italy. She hides her face from the search light of the media when the camera is pointed at her and others to avoid being recognised (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P.13). The once lively and happy girl is now transformed into a shy and sad person.

Another instance of deploying the ideology- complementarity - is when Ogukwe Eke recognises the fact he would not have made any progress/ contribution to his family if Adaeze, his wife was not in the scene. She becomes the breadwinner of her home, and her husband Ogukwe Eke always remains grateful to his wife's contribution. Thus: "...thank you, my wife, what can I do without you who have practical become the breadwinner in this house?" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P.109).

According to Shalini Nadaswaran's "Transcendence in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*" (2014), she discusses the plight of women who are forced into trans – border or trans – national networking of prostitution. She displays the horrors the young women trafficked face, where they are taken to abroad, as a result of the inability of certain families to provide the basic necessities of life to their girl-children. She equally presents the transcendence of such women into empowerment as they (Nneoma, Efe, Fola, and others) successfully escaped into their

liberation. Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo submits that African women possess enormous strength than they themselves realise. And they can free themselves from the shackles of men as they struggle to reassert their damaged identities, and to rehabilitate their psyche. The novel advocates for what it is believed in, situating women to have all the ability to choose whether they will be submissive in the society with hopes for individuality.

The novelist reflects the argument that, the adherent of postcolonial feminism in Nigeria are not only concerned with issues that are of interests to other women, but to men as well. She adds that when women most time absent themselves in the fight for democracy but rather engage themselves in the fight for total liberation of women, is an indication that, the Nigerian women have transcended sectional limitations. In demythologizing and deconstructing the structure in a male oriented society, the novelist instructs women to force up their way out of patriarchal domination through the practical actions of gender assertion.

The quest for change and self-realisation is evident in Nneoma, a victim of trafficking. She seeks for change even in her predicament by running away from Baron, her oppressor and seeking solace on the street of the United States where she meets Dr. Chindo before being deported. She has not resigned to fate, rather, she works towards getting a future for herself by enrolling in the university. Nneoma, the victim of human trafficking is deported to Nigeria to retrace her steps, face the consequences of her misfortune and heart-rending experiences, and make the decision to

start afresh. She is taken to Oasis Youth Centre for Skills Development (OYCSD) to learn a trade and starts life afresh. She questions the ignorant statement made by two women who fail to ask questions like "What condition drove the girls from their country to Europe? Did they know what it meant to be trafficked, before referring to them as "shameless girls". Adimora-Ezeigbo advocates for organisations that will take full responsibility of catering for the needs of the societal menace: "Nneoma's heart is always full of questions and also curios to know what goes wrong in the country" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 93). Nneoma narrates her experiences to Efe on what led to her being trafficked. She fled from her home after hearing from a friend that some people had secured a teaching appointment in United Kingdom for her. She was selected alongside with six young women between the ages of seventeen and twenty and taken to Italy. She was made took an oath with the other ladies and was informed that the consequences would be grievous if she disregarded the terms of agreement or planned to escape. She was sold to Madam Dollar who kept her as a prisoner in her flat and made them sex workers. Nneoma lamented to Efe: "I am completely devastated by the life I'm forced to live: hit the night street, waiting for customers, winter, spring, summer and autumn; come back at dawn, wash, eat and sleep till it all begins again nightfall" (Adimora- Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 129)

She explains the nasty demands by those men for sex positions that are despicable and her refusal to have sex without condom. She accounts that Madam Dollar was telling

her with bitterness that "the less money you bring, the longer you will have to stay with me, you know" (Adimora- Ezeigbo, 2008, P.129). She worked for her for three years before she was sold to Baron who took her and two other ladies to London. He kept her in his flat and brought in other men who had sex with her. He raped and beat her at will and other male pimps demanded for anal and oral sex from her. She narrates further, how she was able to steal some money from Baron's purse and fled. She added that she was roaming the city of London for two days before she met Chindo Okechi, the university lecturer at Ofomata's school, and how she rebuked Dotun and Dimgba, the men who tried to lure her to bed in the United Kingdom (Adimora- Ezeigbo, 2008, P.157).

Nneoma depicts the traumatic condition of her suffering with these the poetic lines:

Time stood still, Memory stirred the soul, The
mind re-lived the agony, That would not pass,
That could not fade, Through time the pain had
dulled, Sufferer, be of good courage, Times
changes everything, Heals all wounds
(Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 134)

What is the implication of Nneoma putting out the state of her mind in words? It is an attempt of consoling herself thus: "How blessed are those who had suffered a loss of memory? Healing is a reward of forgetting" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 161). The novelist portrays that for Nneoma to fulfil destiny and totally forgets about the mishap of the past; she sums up courage and tells the matron of her ambition to further her education. Every postcolonial writer empowers her character to yearn for education, which will certainly emanate into a state of physical and psychological liberation for the complete womanhood.

Adimora-Ezeigbo inaugurates the Oasis women to be positive influences on the achievement of her mission statement. Mrs Ije Ejekam, the chairperson of the NGO, Mrs. Ebiere Hart, matron in charge of day-to-day running of the centre, Mrs Vicky Lar, a director and Mrs Nike Oderinde, the managing director of the centre, are all dedicated to the task of empowering the young deported women, who belong to the new generations with the task of building their lives to realise their dreams, and to correct the social injustices committed against them. Adimora-Ezeigbo empowers Mrs. Nike Oderinde to be a voice to bring about the much-desired positive change to the traumatized young women. She posits: "We do not bother to know what led to you being trafficked, what we care about is what you do with your life from now on" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 51). Nneoma is highly impressed about the conduct of all the Oasis women, as she quickly realises that, it is education that is the determinant factor in the boldness and achievement of all the women. She states: "Knowledge is power" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 52). Education and enlightenment are the keys to freedom. Nneoma's dream to be educated gets rekindled as she is "grateful to Oasis" but "what she truly wanted was to teach or better still, return to educating herself as a university student." (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 90).

The deported ladies are made to choose any trade of their choice between tailoring, hairdressing, catering and pottery. Nneoma chooses tailoring while Efe, her friend settles for hairdressing. Adimora-Ezeigbo uses the commissioner for women affairs to make a

mission statement about the poor conditions of the women and children in Nigeria. She declares

...war against slavery, child-abuse, international sex trade and HIV/AIDS... We want to stamp out prostitution from our society; we want international prostitution to stop, the trafficking of our girls is despicable and this evil trade must be eliminated...we have increased our efforts to ensure that our women have equal rights with men in the field of education... (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 55).

This statement is an act of creating social awareness for the postcolonial women to fight against oppression and subjugation. Nneoma is able to read what is posted on the bold letters on the wall, courtesy of ILO/IPEC Nigeria Chapter:

Human Trafficking is the Movement of People from place to place, within and across Borders and through force, coercion and deception and into situations involving their economic and sexual exploitation (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 56).

Nneoma assists Efe not to fall a victim of human trafficking again, when she becomes suspicious of her new boyfriend, Fyeface, who resembles Baron, the foremost leader of trafficked business. And this is confirmed when she and Fola visit the restaurant that Efe and Fyeface resort to. Nneoma establishes her initial suspicion of the fact that Efe's boyfriend is the same Baron that sexually exploited her in London (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 165,184). Of course, by creating female characters that confront patriarchy and their despicable activities is one major contribution of the postcolonial feminism.

Another instance of the deconstructed female confrontation with patriarchy is

recorded in *Roses and Bullets* (2014), where the protagonist, Ginika, determines to rebel against her father's (a representative of patriarchy) decision to move her away from Enugu to Mbano, against her wish. She announces aggressively: "... Papa, I don't want to return to Mbano. Please let me stay with Auntie Chitto and Uncle Ray. I am helping with making packed lunches for our soldiers. Please let me stay" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 8). When Ginika realises that her politeness to her father is disdained, she retorts to protest:

Ginika screams the more to draw much attention to her earnest request. I'm tired, tired, tired of it all... Why are you doing this to me? ... Take me back to Enugu ... I don't want to go to Mbano! Did you hear me? Take me back to Enugu (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 9).

The later accuses her father of forced kidnapping, as she protests the more: "...did you not kidnap me? Wasn't that what you did? (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 9). Adimora-Ezeigbo presents Ginika as the image of the new woman that is not docile, voiceless and ignorant. Why does the novelist depict this scene? Helen Chukwuma (1989, P. 5) answers this question as she states: "the thematic message of postcolonial feminism and African female writer, is that, even in the face of an oppressive deep accosted norms, and practices and belief in female subordination, the female must have to assert her individuality".

Formal education is an inherent theme in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* (2008). She believes that education is a tool necessary for women emancipation. In *Trafficked*, Nneoma's formal education has proven that women with education have a better chance of

surviving in the male-dominated society. She realises that by passing JAMB (Joint Admission Matriculation Board) with a high score, "her dream was at the threshold of fulfilment" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 234). The significant element of this formal education is seen when Chief Amadi confronts Kevin, his son on why he should kiss Nneoma in the office? And this culminates into a brief dismissal of Nneoma because the reporter that attempted to interview Nneoma on the day she first arrives in Nigeria on a plane that carried the deported young women, chooses to enlighten Chief Amadi, on the kind of a person Neoma is. The Chief interrogates her: "Why didn't you tell me you were a deported prostitute when I interviewed you for this job?" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 272). He summarily disengages her because he does not want his son to get intimate with "a deported prostitute." He states: "Miss Eke, I don't want to see you with my son again and if he wants to see you after this, you must try not to encourage him. I mean everything I say " (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 271). Nneoma is happy and dignified leaving Chief Amadi's "place with her head held high instead of crying and begging," in contrast to what would have been expected of her, if she were not educated.

Nneoma goes home after her admission into the University is confirmed, as a dignified woman. She is accepted by everybody and these lines portray the words of love spoken by her mother: "Words of love dripping with mercy, unsullied by recrimination, freed from fear and worry, charged with the fuel of joy, welcoming the

lost and found" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 249). Nneoma is now able make decisions for herself, since she starts a new journey that leads to an accomplishment of her dream. The novelist empowers Nneoma and her mother to exhibit the characteristics of the postcolonial female that could make their decisions not only because they could get married, give birth and nurture children, but because they have what it takes –education – to influence their world and cultures with satisfaction. Nneoma might have been hurt, abused or disappointed, she only endures such burdens for a while, but she makes progress with her life and forgets about all the pains of the past.

Adimora-Ezeigbo further presents Nneoma's mother, Adaeze, as a new image of the Nigerian woman. She rebukes and condemns her husband, Ogukwe Eke, for engaging in drinking as an escape from his misery. This is an indication that Nigerian women are no longer the traditional enslaved, passive and silent wives, which the African patriarchy had always accused, despised, and condemned as nonentity. But with the advent of postcolonial feminism, the attainment in education highlights that the new female is out too prone her society of all forms of vices (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 91). She accepts Hannah, Nneoma's elder sister, a victim of deceit, back with conditions attached. She was once deceived by her ignorance to leave her parents' house, to meet a stupid, foolish, illusory, so-called Prophet Elias Nduru of Ihite- Agu Evangelical Mission, with the falsehood of an infatuated of love (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 38-44). Hannah engaged in religious fanaticism with Prophet Elias and his

followers and felt highly devastated, abused, and ashamed to abandon him when she realised that the later had exploited her, due to the prevailing circumstance that surrounded her departure from home (Hannah rebelled against her parents' will not to marry Elias). In spite of the clumsy experiences that surround Adaeze's life and children (Nneoma is missing, Hannah being unable to get a job after her secretarial studies at a college, deplorable state of her home, and her husband's financial incapacitation), her zeal of genuine motherhood gets celebrated in the lines of this poem: "Mother and daughter talking, Confronting differences Bridging gaps, Closing ranks Mending broken fences, Mother finds her lost child, Child rediscovers the taste of mother's milk, Maternal love is a universal language" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 182.)

Adimora-Ezeigbo reveals the significance of motherhood about the Nigerian woman, as a person whose aspiration is with a natured spirit, tender, and forgiving. Lauretta Ngcobo (2007, P. 533), rightly confirms:

motherhood is beautiful and joyous... they respect motherhood... Africa...preserve a special place of honour for motherhood and that they love their mothers... marriage amongst Africans is mainly an institution for control of procreation. Every woman is encouraged to marry and get children in order to express womanhood to the full.

The female figures in Oguoku's house-Adaeze, Hannah and Mma- manifest their emancipated new image, when they with determination and resilient prompt Oguoku Eke-husband/father to finally sums up courage to live in the main house he built with his late brother, of which Lebechi, his wicked

late brother's wife had denied him access over the years (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 254). Adimora-Ezeigbo portrays the male characters as weaklings and indecisive. Oguoku Eke does not have the boldness to claim his right as a shareholder in the building, which he spent his hard-earned income in when he was working at Enugu, until he is motivated and compelled to do so by the women of his household.

Another character Adimora-Ezeigbo ascribes with a postcolonial feminist's new image is Efe, a victim of human trafficking, the friend of Nneoma and her room-mate at Oasis. She is a courageous lady who helps Nneoma out of depression by sharing her bitter narrative with Nneoma, of her experience at sex-industry in Italy, where she was trafficked to. She says to her: "Nneoma, we're all broken inside. Look, why don't we just tell each other what happened to us? Perhaps finding our voices will help us heal." (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 96). Put succinctly, this aspect of 'telling each another' of the wounds and depression which patriarchy has put the woman through, seems to be the mission statement of Adimora-Ezeigbo's postcolonial feminism. Efe narrates the situation that leads to her being trafficked. She left home at the age of nineteen, without telling her cousin, when she saw an advertisement on a newspaper in Lagos, that a certain agency was recruiting young men and women who wished to work abroad. They took an oath to work for the agency until they could pay them back their debts after being chosen. She adds that was how she and other trafficked victims ended up in Palermo in Italy. She was sold to Madam

Gold, a vicious Nigerian woman who used her shamelessly and auctioned her to a pimp after four years. She ran away after having worked two years with the pimps, and fled to Verona to work as a prostitute for one year, to gather money to be able to return home before being deported (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 98-100). She believes narrating their experiences would heal them and make them feel cleansed (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 136).

Efe is a sharp and goal-oriented woman. It is assumed that "the experience of the war had not diminished her go-for-it attitude to life" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 124). She travels home to Benin after managing to escape an attempted kidnap by Baron's men, and settles down to start a new life. She gets a job and decides to marry Nosa, her new boyfriend. In consonance with the choice of a female being always desiring for marriage above all other issues of life, Laretta Ngcobo (2007, P. 534) claims: "...A little girl is born to fulfil this role. She is made aware of the destiny awaiting her development and she is prepared from the earliest age possible for the role of motherhood that she will play elsewhere, away from her family home." Efe is a new image Nigerian girl who does not want to waste her youthfulness outside what is accepted and ideal.

Adimora-Ezeigbo projects Dr. Chindo Okehi as a portrait of the active and enlighten woman in the society who works hard to ensure that people in the society do not get cheated, and become victim of social injustices. The novelist sets her as a model for other women to follow. She is applauded for hard-work and humanitarian services by the

Vice -Chancellor and members of Senate of the Lagos University of Science and Technology, following her return from United Kingdom, on a Commonwealth Fellowship at the University of London. The Vice-Chancellor values her support and often puts her in important senate committees (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 142). She contributes meaningful on the issue bordering on increased rate of students' sexual harassment by lecturers. She equally campaigns against the financial exploitation of students from affluent homes by greedy lecturers. To compensate for her outstanding contribution to welfare of students in her university, the management appoints Dr. Chindo Okehi as a committee member in charge of investigating the accused lecturer (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 144)

When Dr. Chindo Okehi learns about the closure of the university as proposed by Professor Obi Okalla for a reason unknown, as a member of the investigating committee, she resists that such proposal might not hinder her assignment, and she is made to stand in as the chairman throughout the period of investigation (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P.179). As a postcolonial feminist figure, she enlightens Nneoma and her society that the average British people are utterly selfish:

All they care about is acquiring wealth and property, you must have noticed the way they shop- they want to buy up everything and yet most of these things will end up being thrown ways. Britain is sick with what they call "affluenza". Its people are drawn to seek security in material without looking out for each other. She becomes a source of help to Nneoma after she narrates her experience before being deported to Nigeria (the

characteristics of a postcolonial woman). She gives her an apartment to stay in her house (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 306-307).

Consequently, the selfless effort Dr. Chindo Okehi puts into the investigation results into the dismissal of Dr. Komolafe, and above all, he is sentenced to nine-month imprisonment with an option of a fine. Moreso, Dr. Edmond's appointment is equally recommended for termination by the committee (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 253). This is the kind of judgement postcolonial feminism is advocating for where the acts of unwholesome, corrupt practices, and unjust personalities are brought to book.

Sexual expressionism is another feature Adimora-Ezeigbo portrays in *Trafficked*. The female gender is made to express herself sexuality and openly. Nneoma allows Ofomata to make sexual advances-kissing- to her before her sister (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 74). Efe clearly depicts an act of romance with Nosa. She explains to Nneoma her emancipated feelings a conversation thus: "Have you ever been undressed by a man, his hands trembling, his eyes on your face at all times, telling you that you are special, telling you much more than words ever could?" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 236). She narrates in detail to Nneoma of her intimacy as she declares without reservation: "Nosa has proposed and I accepted. We are engaged! Look, Nneoma, I'M IN LOVE. Seriously" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 237).

Adimora-Ezeigbo does not only picture the new image and characteristics of a new Nigerian woman, but as a postcolonial feminist, she comments on the ills of the

society. Ofomata is a character deployed by the novelist to expose the corrupt practices in the educational sector. When Ofomata takes the decision to obtain a university education, even though he is advanced in age, he becomes a victim of corrupt lecturers who extort money from him and other students. Lecturers like Dr. Komolafe and Mr. Ogamba impose upon the students that they must purchase their lecture notes at all cost. And since that does not occur well with the entire students' population, Ofomata bare his mind to Mr. Ugama that "being a matured student isn't easy but I know why I came here". "Ofomata gazed at the ceiling, wondering why he had to go through all this just to obtain a degree." (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 63). At this juncture, Ofomata compares the former with the female lecturer, Dr. Chindo Okhi, a woman with very good reputation, who is in the Department of Science Education. He settles on his mind that female lecturers have good reputation, by all standards than their male counterparts. He reflects: "...Each time he had gone away with the conviction that female lecturers were more honest and supportive than their male counterparts " (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 34). This means that Adimora-Ezeigbo, uses this occasion to correct the erroneous societal notions about women are being inferior, dishonest, and unreliable, as negate the cultural belief that men are perfect and superior than women. She allows Dr. Chindo, a worthy female character who possesses the attributes of postcolonial feminism to categorise women as trustworthy and dependable.

The novelist makes a profound statement on the tragic condition of the country. The narrator pictures the heavy traffic at Mainland Bridge constructed by one of the military governments that ruled in 1966-1999, saying that the coups were because the soldiers craved for power: "but the soldiers had overthrown him and taken over again as if to rule was their birthright". Military rule was consistent except for four intervening years between 1979 and 1983 when President Shehu Shagari became the first democratically elected president ((Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 35). Adimora-Ezeigbo ascertains that the bad governance in Nigeria is literary responsible for the victimization and molestation of the girl-child. The situation of the country exposes the girl-child to series of injustice like sexual assault, and enforced slavery for monetary purpose. For instance, Nneoma and other girls were trafficked to Italy in search for greener pastures. The novelist uses her creative prowess to address the need of protecting the girl-child from the shackles of societal menace like child trafficking. The same is seen in the character of Hannah, Nneoma's sister (a victim of deception), who returns home shamefully after being sexually abused and maltreated by the self-acclaimed- Prophet Elias.

Furthermore, the condition of pensioners in Nigeria exposes some family to poverty and adverse vices in societies. For example, Ogukwu Eke is incapable of catering for the needs of his family because his pension money is not paid to him. Hannah and Nneoma would not have been exploited and assaulted if their father had been financially buoyant. He gets depressed because: "his pension was still

not being paid, he had given up hope of ever receiving his gratuity. The last time he had gone to Enugu, which was more than a year ago, two retirees like him had collapsed while in the queue and died..." (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 87). Ogukwu goes back again to Enugu when he learns from the rumours that the outstanding gratuities are being paid to retirees, but unfortunately, he returns home disappointed because "they sent police to scatter them as usual" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 109)

As a postcolonial feminist that believes in collaboration with the male gender to work towards producing a better society, Adimora-Ezeigbo comments on the effect of poverty on her citizens as caused by the gullible and greedy leaders in government, and she solicits for people to rise up to cleanse the country from corruption, nepotism, and many other vices common among the leaders. She recounts the incident of fire explosion disaster as a result of vandalising the petroleum pipeline, at Ejigbo that roasted two hundred people. This happened because some people were siphoning the petroleum products for survival, due to poverty. James captures the incident in a comment thus: "...Yes, it is a result of poverty of the masses and the corruption of our leaders... the explosion will never end as long as there is mass poverty..." (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 101-102). Moreso, there is also an incident of plane crash the same week, which claimed the lives of hundred souls. The report of the National Association of Bankers embarking on an indefinite industrial action, the Oil workers called a strike leading to fuel scarcity, as well

as the nation's ailing economy are becoming comatose (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 104).

Consequently, Adimora-Ezeigbo recounts the impacts of such devastating effect upon depriving the female gender of her rights and privileges. For instance, Mma, Nneoma's younger sister stays at home for nine months, and could not go to school due to the striking teachers (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 109). The happenings in contemporary societies are disasters that might eventually result to the total destruction of Nigeria as a country. She claims: "Corruption was still ripe, injustice stamped about like a monster and poverty ravaged the population" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 35). The effect of corruption extends to the students in the tertiary institutions as they are denied access to basic amenities for the convenience of learning. Adimora-Ezeigbo supports the Student Union Government when they wage war against the university authorities for planning to denationalize the university hostels. The SUG's president, in a statement claims: "our country is richer by far than many African countries. Yet their educational institutions are better funded than the ones here. What is responsible for this? Corruption, pure and simple" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P.160). To silence the protesting students from pressing forward their demands, the Mobile Police (MOPOL) disrupted the protest by firing rubber bullets and guns in the air thereby killing one of the students, and that leads to the closure of the school (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 175). The existence of a government that deprives her youth/ citizen their rights and expects them to be silent in the

face of oppression should be vehemently rejected.

The political and economic corruptions of Nigerian leaders culminate into general poverty which deprive women in less privileged homes some basic amenities for their empowerment. Adimora-Ezeigbo postulates that, if Nigerian government were to have raised very good leaders like late Jaja of Opobo, and a certain Benin king, who when they resisted the British colonial rule in the Nineteenth century, they were sacked, and later deported to West Indies (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 60-61); that the oppressions and exploitations of the people in contemporary society, would have been devoid of calamity of all standards, and the sufferings of her people would have been ameliorated. It is indicated here that, the Nigerian government is formidable neo-colonialists that fail to heed to the cry of the masses, "how could government be so insensitive to the problems of the people it ruled?" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 152). The novelist insists on raising a new generation of women who should unite themselves to seek a system of government that is free from corruption and other form of vices for the betterment of their country.

Adimora-Ezeigbo depicts that the Nigerian woman as self-contented, because African women did not learn about self-defence / voice throwing from their western feminist counterparts, but had always have their own self-fortified defence since time immemorial. To buttress this fact, Molara Ogunide-Leslie (2007, P. 543) succinctly puts: "...these movements are not only the result of

Western influences, as hegemonic Euro-Americans like to think. They have been going on since the beginning of time.” African women have been opened to several self-defence since the dawn of history. Kolawole (1997) equally supports this assertion of self-defence when she explains:

Yet, African women did not learn about self-assertion from the West. My maternal grandmother was a very strong personality, firm, strict and feared by both men and women. She took no nonsense from anybody, male or female... She was the first symbol of firm self-assertion that I grew up to know ... (Kolawole (1997, P. 10).

Kolawole’s position is confirmed by Grace Ibanga (2017, Pp. 236-238), in the powerful “Iban Isong,” a women cult among the Annang tribe of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, which could go against all odds, to protect women-folk from the harsh hostility and injustice of the institution of patriarchy.

Adimora-Ezeigbo upholds that in postcolonial feminism viewpoint, there is no justification for tolerating immoral acts/behaviour among women. She uses the character of Alice to lampoon and correct some women who turn the unfavourable situations in Nigeria as excuses for living a dreaded promiscuous life. The fact that the country is in a precarious state of transition should not offer women a mean and irresponsible living pattern towards achieving their independence. Alice, a victim of human trafficking acts indifferently, going against the law of the Oasis Home by bringing in male visitors to the room (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 66, 92). She refuses to change and continues

to live a way-ward life style at Oasis. In her conversation with Nneoma and Efe, it becomes evident that: “she sleeps with the security guard” (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 120-121). She gets expelled when Fola reports her to the Oasis management the second time for bringing a man into the room in the hostel. She blames the scarcity of job employment in Nigeria as being responsible for her predicament considering the fact that she holds a university degree (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 162-164).

In consonance with some indecent behavioural pattern which should not be accosted with women, most especially in Nigeria, and somewhere else in the global cultures, as being the principle of postcolonial feminism, Sargent (2009, P. 170) takes cognisance of feminist economists who posit the economic roles of women by suggesting “a transformation of economic life.” Postcolonial feminists have always realised the central role women play in the area of agricultural production, economic empowerment, and political activities of the African women to liberate themselves from boredom and wanton ways of life. Ogbomo (2005, P. 255) confirms: Matriarchy appears to have associated with agriculture – women probably invented it – and the pantheon of goddesses was usually concerned with human and soil fertility, the vagaries of the climate, the difficulties of birth, mysteries of death, and relationships between genders.

Ogbomo furthermore adds that, women in pre-colonial Africa performed significant economic roles within their societies, especially as traders, their

involvement in such economic enterprises meant they accumulated wealth and economic independence which guaranteed increase socio-political status. He affirms that, women were quick to exploit such avenues of advancement. However, he states that, societies abounded in pre-colonial Africa where women rode on the back of their economic fortune to political acceptance (Ogbomo, 2005, P. 368). This implies that Adimora-Ezeigbo could not have succumbed to the irresponsible and wanton life patterns for the new Nigerian woman. The more reason, the deported sex-industry-trafficked girls – Nneoma, Efe, Fola, and others, are rehabilitees at Oasis Home, and trained in various trades/occupations to prepare them for a better life in the Twenty-first century.

Furthermore, postcolonial feminism exhibits much self-consciousness and concentrates its analysis on “the procreative roles” of women represented in, and, or constructed through cultural “forms such as literature” (Donovan 1975; and Ellman 1979). However, Kaplan (1986, P. 98) questions why postcolonial feminist critics fail to offer adequate analysis of the relationship between ideology and representation, and thus as, in advertently affirming the universalism and subjectivism of traditional liberal – humanist critics.

As a postcolonial feminist, Adimora-Ezeigbo in-corporates a traditional form of dispute settlement, norms and rules of traditional institutions as part of the doctrines of postcolonial feminism. She uses this event to project a typical heart that is clouded with evil. This goes a long way to confirm what the

biblical scriptures states: “The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it...?” (Jeremiah 17: 9-10). Adimora-Ezeigbo uses Lebechi as a contrast of Adaeze, to portray some traits of a typical villain in women. She is described as lousy with no form of intelligence. Lebechi lacks the enlightenment that will transform her from a troublesome and wicked woman to a peaceful woman who can be beneficial to her fellow women. Lebechi, the rebellious and troublesome wife of Ogukwu Eke’s late elder brother is the image of a common typical Nigerian woman pictured in the narratives with the patriarchal orientation of cruelty, spiteful, oppressive towards others (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 46, 85). Lebechi is never tired of perpetrating havoc against Ogukwe and his family. When Lebechi is accusing Ogukwe of being “too evil to live in the compound,” she does not reflect upon her own unwholesome practices.

Adimora-Ezeigbo uses the character of Lebechi to portray the different characteristics of human beings – the good, the bad and the ugly – that live in real life and fiction. The novelist also echoes to the reader the inside of Ogukwe Eke’s frustrated mind. He remembers when he had been working in Enugu some years back. He sent some money to Ezeozo, his late brother, to build a kind of family house for them. However, as at the time he retired and came back home expecting beyond doubt to live in the house he spent his live-earnings on, he met with disappointment. Nneoma reflects: The events of those days came clearly into her thoughts. The first serious quarrel between her father and her uncle, Ezeozo Eke, took place

soon after father's premature retirement. Her mother had not taken it kindly to the idea of living in a hut that had once been her grandmother's quarters. It's only until I settle with my brother which rooms in the main building our family will move into... But we have told them we were arriving home today... Why have rooms not been set aside for us already? Now we're having to move into this tiny hut on a little patch of land. It's not even big enough for two people.... (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 69).

The main reason Adimora-Ezeigbo is depicting this scene is to confirm the act of Lebechi's wickedness as a villain. She has not just started showing evil inclination towards Nneoma's family, but it is an endemic trait in her (Lebechi). Despite all her atrocities towards this family, she still proceeds to wish Ogukwe's family dead (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, Pp. 81, 116). The council of elders have not only ex-communicated Lebechi and her son from the Umunna for not obeying the elder's judgement of appeasing to her late husband brother, Ogukwe Eke, by cooking a fowl for him, and paying the hospital bill of Mma, his daughter, whom she (Lebechi) fought with (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P.115); but they also arrange the delegates that went to disclose Lebechi's madness to her parents (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 216).

Why does the novelist project the character of Lebechi in this narrative? The essence is to position the views that in a typical human culture, it is not only patriarchy that might be against women's progress, that fellow women also display dissension towards other women. And the novelist is claiming that

such wicked feature should not be a package of postcolonial feminism. Rather, postcolonial feminists should enable a peaceful co-existence with other women as one harmonious family. It should equally be stated, whether we understand human beings perfectly or not, Carl Jung succinctly puts:

The normal man is a fiction, although certain generally valid laws do exist. Psychic life is a development that can easily be arrested on the lowest levels...The mind is not cultivated for its own sake but usually in its original condition, altogether primitive, unrelated, and ruthless, but also as true, and sometimes as profound, as Nature herself. (Jung, 2010, Pp. 60,133).

The patriarchal Nigerian cultures creates an avenue for the economic exploitation of the girl-child as a source of wealth to her family. How? And through what means? These questions get answered by the novelist, when she espoused Nneoma to be a source of wealth to her family Her father, Ogukwe, states: "My daughter, my little mother, I have always known you reincarnated specially to bail me out of my predicament" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P.20), her father made this declaration a few days before she disappeared. Ofomata's father, Mbonu equally promised her father a plot of land if the union was cemented (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008, P. 70). Here, Adimora-Ezeigbo reflects that the girl-child should not be recycled as an object for sale or business transaction. She has a soul that reacts to feelings and actions, and her independence should not be limited. Consequently, this position corresponds with the concept of woman, when de Beauvoir (1966) anticipates

Betty Friedan in seeking to demythologize the male-view asserts:

A myth invented by men to confine women to their oppressed state. For women, it is not a question of asserting themselves as women, but becoming full-scale human beings (de Beauvoir, 1966, P. 50)

Adimora-Ezeigbo in the second novel *Roses and Bullets* (2014), selected for this paper proceeds to recreate the impact of the Nigerian Civil War, which took place between 1967 and 1970, on the female gender. However, she depicts that the trademark of postcolonial feminism is education and enlightenment. It is this concept of education that motivates Ginika's interest in learning to upgrade herself in knowledge and learning to be able to challenge/withstand the devices of patriarchy. Adimora-Ezeigbo in *Roses and Bullets* (2014) deploys the narrative style – postcolonial feminism - to presents Ginika, the protagonist as the one who fights considerable odds to be educated. The theme of educating the girl child is explored extensively in *Roses and Bullets* (2014), as it is illustrated when Miss Taylor writes to Ginika's father not to slow her, Ginika, from going to a Higher School to enable her to work in a bank. Ginika displays inquisitiveness while she was still in the Secondary School before the Civil War started. The history teacher, Mr Ohanele was teaching them the update of the various occurrences in the country and out of curiosity, Ginika asks: "Sir, what do you think Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu will do? How will he react to the death of Aburi Accod?" She, however, knows how to manage her curiosity as a typical educated female should. At Miss Taylor's place:

Ginika wondered if her (Miss. Taylor) position as a foreigner and as a missionary prevented her from discussing politics. She wanted to ask her, but changed her mind so as not to annoy or embarrass her (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 109).

Ginika represents the postcolonial woman that sums up courage to upturn the status quo by confronting the male oriented society she is consigned to. She insists her father has no right to determine where she should stay. She should not be treated as a nonentity even in her own right. Through Ginika, Ubaka, a patriarchal representative could come to the realisation that now is the time, for the Nigerian female total emancipation. This is because Ubaka might never had believed that little Ginika could ever confront him, in spite of his father-figure attribute. He does not want Ginika to have freedom over her body. Besides, not listening to the female voice, he is patriarchal in his actions towards Ginika when she was a child. He scrutinized her vagina after returning from a dance at Ugiri with Bobby, Anna, Ken and Ugozuka when he commanded young Ginika: "raise your underwear and lie down on a bed I am going to examine you". (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P.100). This examination of her vagina is seen by Ginika as a violation of her body. This makes her to express hatred for her father's action to Nwakire, (her brother), who helps in challenging their father, Ubaka. The hurt she nurses towards her father heals up when she can express her grievance in the language patriarchy understands.

By confirming the above issue, Ekwierhoma (2002, P. 11) differentiates four

major features of a woman writing thus: the use of “female body images”, “woman’s language, expressing the “female psyche” and showing women’s cultural position, which contain elements of self-determination, and self-affirmation. Furthermore, Women in postcolonial feminism present information about themselves in the language of colonisation which according to Todd (1983, P. 60): “... shows the platform for the post-colonial takeover adoration, and continuation of colonial attitudes to (indigenous) languages, cultures and institutions of learning....”

Ginika portrays the image of a Nigerian girl-child and her transformation to the new emancipated image of the Nigerian woman. She can pick up her life in spite of the Biafran war experiences that could have crippled her life. She tries to withstand her father’s command to return to Mbano from her aunt’s house. She does not just silently follow him against her wish; she demonstrates her dislike for the decision by crying and creating a scene that attracts people throughout the journey home. She demonstrates her position violently to her father, unlike the silent and voiceless image of an African woman portrayed in the earlier novels. Here, Auntie Chitto counsels Ginika, by telling her that she is still too young to take decisions by herself. This is because Ginika, becomes offended with her father when she receives his letter informing her to relocate from Enugu to Mbano:

“Hmmm, well he is your father and has the right to ask you to come home... Auntie Chitto proceeds to make her understand further, “You’re barely eighteen ...When you’re

twenty-one, I believe you’ll be free to do as you wish” (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 4)

Auntie Chitto has influenced Ginika morally, socially, educationally, and even marital, to the extent that Ginka yearns to be like her. This is reflected in Adimora-Ezeigbo’s description of her.

Ginika admired the way her aunt ran her house. Even without a housemaid or domestic help, she coped pretty well... she watched the older woman’s deft moves, believing that one day, she would perhaps also be a wife and a mother, but that would be much later, after she would have completed her education and secured a good degree like her aunt. (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 5)

The novelist explores the effect of the Biafran war on the girl child in her fictional work. Ginika is exposed to sexual harassment in the hands of Kanu Ofodile where she is receiving her training. Ginika is intelligent enough not to accept the palm wine given to her by Kanu Ofodile, and by so doing, averts being raped. Adimora-Ezeigbo comments on the need for women to be at alert and be courteous in their dealings with men to avert being molested/ cheated sexually and mentally. Adimora-Ezeigbo uses the war as an outlet to voice out a kind of practice that is absent in the pre-colonial settings, but which postcolonial feminism has brought along with its enlightenment. She explains: “it was only when a girl had a boyfriend that eyebrows were raised, that tongues wagged. Parents frowned when they saw their daughters with boys (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 47)

Adimora-Ezeigbo raises the unique importance of parental care to their girl-

children in the novel, *Rose and Bullets* (2014), as one of the features of postcolonial feminism. At Ginika's visit to Philomena's house at Anara, she realises that "Philo is fatherless, while she, Ginika, is motherless. Which is worse, she wonders ruefully: "to grow up without a father or without a mother." (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 58). Philomena's mother gives an answer and says:

Philo and I eat whatever we have, what we are able to lay our hands on. It is only when there is a man at home that complex meals are cooked. It is then that a woman scouts about looking for a special meal. When women are alone, they eat anything, sometimes, they eat nothing at all... (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 62)

Here, it can be deduced that the presence of a man in the family creates complex protocols that one is compelled to just oblige. Adimora-Ezeigbo, here, reveals the complexity of marriage and its effect on women. The patriarchal system places a lot of responsibility on the female gender as to following protocols to satisfy the men. Nigerian women are so attached to their marriages and men that they cannot stand comfortably on their own. A clear case of this instance is Philo's mother who succinctly explains that it is the presence of the man/husband at home that motivates the wife/woman cooking "a special meal." A feminist literary grandmother, Flora Nwapa (2007) once asked a simple question: "Are there no women in Africa today who can say: "To hell with men and marriage I don't want to have children I want to be free to do just as I please" (Nwapa, 2007, P. 530). The implication of this assertion is that a typical Nigeria woman seems incomplete without the man by

her side. And this is clear why some women do not have such guts to make such declaration.

Adimora-Ezeigbo furthermore, answers Ginika's and Philo's question on the importance of the mother in every home, when she illustrates the mother-figure as they type that is willing to teach others new ways, as well as sacrifice her life to provide the best for her children and others. Eloka's mother exhibits a high sense of worry over her son's well-being, when he decides to relocate to Ama-Oyi from Port-Harcourt. She pushes aside the condition of her illness, and pulls her strength together, as she gives priority to her son's Eloka's safety and well-being than to her state of health. She says to him: "Now you are moving to Ama-Oyi, I think I should follow you so that I can take care of you, I know you will starve yourself there...Ije Oma, Nwa m, safe journey, she called out to him" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 43). The fact that Eloka is already an adult that could take care of himself does not make his mother to stop getting worried about him and many other things. She could not give herself any rest of mind because the war has commenced, Enugu has been captured, and Port-Harcourt is the next anticipated town. She does not want to lose Eloka to the Civil War. Adimora-Ezeigbo provokes Ginika to reflect upon the sterling qualities of what Eloka's mother worries about, that she wished her mother was alive, she might have been putting her through cooking practices which could enable her to cook better than she is doing presently. She echoes: "I wish I could cook oha soup like you, mama." Ginika said and she meant it. Perhaps if her mother had lived, she might have taught her to cook soup like this

oha..." (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P.63). Again, she ponders what her late mother could have done to welcome her back with much love, after Eloka's mother rejects and chases her from being her son's wife because of infertility; and her father also refuses to accept her.

Another incident that the postcolonial feminist holds dear to her heart is selfless sacrifices the mother-figure puts in by preferring the well-being of others to her own, is equally depicted in the action of little Ginika. Mr. Ubaku, her father informs Ginika that Enugu fell to the Enemies' troops, "...it has been broadcast on the BBC earlier today and Radio Biafra also transmitted it in its news bulletin this evening, it is a big setback for Biafra" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 36). Of course, immediately Ginika gets the information, her first point of concern is on what has become of her aunt –Auntie Chitto, and her family. She could not restrain herself from crying in the process. This motherly love trait for the members of her extended family rips her heart that she forgets completely about herself:

My God, what about Uncle Ray and Auntie Chitto and their children? wailed Ginika, "Papa! Do you think they are safe?" she began to cry...Ginika was not listening to them now; her concern for her aunt was choking her. "What are we going to do to reach them if they are safe?" she moaned, "Papa, may I go in search of them as far as Udi or Awka?" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, Pp. 36, 44)

Why does the novelist capture such a moving scene involving an innocent girl who, though, does not yet give birth, someone who is not yet a wife/ mother is allowed to carry the

burden of anticipated family ties loss? This implies that the concept of the mother-figure archetype trait belongs to the collective unconscious of the female race. It is innate. Cherry (2016, P. 1), explains "archetype" connotes innate, inherited ideas or ways of feeling or thinking generated by the experiences of the human race that has existed in the unconsciousness of a person or society." When one considers the fact that little Ginika lost her biological mother at infancy, and she has only stayed briefly with Auntie Chitto at Enugu before her father takes her away at the onset of the war, then where could such affection have come from? But the strong cord of the mother traits fills her subconscious mind that she wails for Auntie Chitto and her family. But Auntie Lizzy, Ginika's stepmother, is a reverse of Auntie Chitto, because the aura of war has not pricked her heart to show such emotional concern towards Auntie Chitto, being her husband's sister-in-law.

The postcolonial feminist, creative writer/ novelist – Adimora-Ezeigbo – advances her rational argument by positing that majority of the women in Nigeria live in the rural areas and are uneducated, and there are not many alternatives to being married and having children. It is the contention of this crucial study that a woman procreativity / fruitfulness in child- bearing within the confines of marriage do not need alternatives, if the African woman must find fulfillment, happiness and experience the joy of motherhood. The Supreme Creator's reality in commissioning the woman to be "the mother of all living," of which Adam took to heart while giving the woman a name" EVE

(Genesis 3: 20), attest to this fact that a rational and healthy Nigerian woman can never say: “To hell with” sane, reasonable and understanding man and marriage, though she may be groaning under the weight of the man’s inconsistencies. Marriage is a sacred bond that transcends a simple union between a man and a woman. The Nigeria woman values the union of marriage more than the male counterpart. She does everything within her reach to keep her marriage and procreate within its confines in as much as it lies within her power. A typically African woman appreciates her marriage because she desires to give her children the societal protection and security. She abhors her children to be tagged “bastards,” so she treads her newly assertive and emancipated self with caution.

Adimora-Ezeigbo deploys postcolonial feminism to counter the erroneous traditional belief system that, it is a crime for a Nigerian female to profess love to any man of her choice. Moreso, it is equally traditionally condemnable for any woman/wife to exercise an absolute freedom to discuss her sexual desires and feelings with her husband. Any woman that does such will be seen as lacking in moral ethics and has turned against norms and tradition of the Nigerian cultures. It is generally accepted that it should only be the man that has the audacity to approach any female, and to confess or express his love and sexual desires for. But the new image of the Nigerian woman as portrayed in contemporary societies by Adimora-Ezeigbo, is total brusqueness of a woman that can express her feelings to satisfy her interest. Ginika professes her love to Eloka the same

day he asks her out. This may be seen as non-African, unlike the initial belief-system that a woman is not supposed to woo a man in love, as this was not assumed to be supercilious. Ginika is even the initiator of their first sexual intercourse. She is the one who invites Eloka to her bedroom which she has already prepared for the sexual act to take place. When Eloka enters:

he understands immediately that she has spent time preparing the room to receive him, for it is obvious to him she has planned that they would be together in her room and not in the living room as had been the case, each time he comes to see her in the past two weeks. (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 160)

Ginika, in addition, assertively informs her father that there is a sexual relationship between her and Eloka. She admits fearlessly to her father: “...Yes, he has touched me, but he did not force me” (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 175). This act suggests the new image of female rebellion contrary to the earlier action which Ubaka, Ginika’s father, scrutinizes her vagina after returning from a dance at Ugiri with Bobby, Anna, Ken and Ugozuka (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P.100). Then, Ginika obeyed her father because she was a little innocent girl, who had not tasted the modern way of life. The old image belonging to the older generation had not permitted her to make known the sexual escapades with a boy or man. She was expected to bear the memory in silence, and even those who were forced were not to make it public thereby giving the opportunity for the rapist to escape punishment. But the regenerated Ginika does not need to pretend nor deprive herself of what

she feels like doing for the fear of being questioned or embarrassed by the adults.

Adimora-Ezeigbo, portrays Njide as the new image of postcolonial modern Nigerian woman, as a follow up of Ginika's reflection. She expresses her feelings contrasting the action of a stereotypical woman who would fall in love with a man and would not show it. Here, Njide professes to Eloka that she is in love with him. At the beginning of the rehearsal, she uses almost all the chances she has to send a love message to Eloka the first day Ginika participates in the rehearsal. She entices Eloka thus: "Elo, well done" Njide greeted, trying to catch his eye, and frowning when she failed to achieve her aim... Njide tries to drag Eloka away... Elo, let's go over there. I brought some snacks, gara oti. I'm sure you'll like it" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 153). She refuses to hide her feelings of love and lustful desires burning intensely for Eloka. This implies that the practices of postcolonial feminism differ from the existing stereotypic paradigm known to the Nigerian people before now. Adimora-Ezeigbo, the postcolonial feminist, is advocating that the time is ripe, and that now, for the female gender to live the same normal life style led by men. Women should endeavour to express their love desires and feelings without any guilt in them. Ginika and Njide are the opposite of the stereotypical women who engage in gossip.

Even when Ginika learns that her father-in-law, Chief Odunze, is having extra marital affairs with Nwoyibo, she does not divulge the secret to her mother-in-law. This could be seen during her conversation with Janet. When Janet asks her:

will you tell your mother-in-law?" She replied, "never!" She is also against Mrs. Odunze's action by beating Nwoyibo up when she learns of her husband's sexual escapades: "...She felt it was wrong to have beaten her up as her mother-in-law, and Michael had done. Ginika's mother-in-law should have confronted her husband before taking further action (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 241).

Adimora-Ezeigbo uses Ginika's reaction to Eloka's mother to condemn the acts of women that resolve to violence as a form of protest against their cheating husbands. It is lack of education that makes a woman feels rejected, aggrieved, deflated, when her husband engages in extra-marital affairs. The novelist presents the new modern Nigerian woman that can live her life with her head raised high, despite of all what she might have gone through in marriage, and culture. She should develop the high spirit to ignore all odds, pick her life up, and live to the fullest the type of life she desires for herself, even if there are many circumstances militating against her. Ginika is an example of this new woman. It is said of her that: "she was her old self again, she thought, except that she was wiser..." (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 369).

Adimora-Ezeigbo also condemns, rejects, and abhors, the evolved Nigerian woman's adaptation to the western feminism which advocates for lesbian continuum, through Philomena, a lesbian character. She expresses her feelings for Ginika in the night by having intercourse with her when she slept at her place in Ama-Oyi. The reaction of Ginika shows that the African woman is not in support of such unwholesome practice.

Consequently, this rejection tallies with Grace Ibang's (2012/2013, P.86), position in expatriating lesbian continuum to mean: "sexual difference," as the freedom radical womanists, (lesbians) ...adopt to define the way by which the extremist feminists choose to accomplish their sexual pleasure. This type of pleasure is different from the traditional heterosexuality – the man/woman mode of sexual relationship – highly recommended in marriage relations in African culture."

The issue of asserting oneself as a girl child is treated in the fiction of Adimora-Ezeigbo. Ona, the daughter of Chitto, loves asserting herself. The issue is debated by Uncle Ray, Chito and Ginika at the dining table. Chitto says: "She does not know she is a girl. While Uncle Ray asked that "should a girl not assert herself" and Ginika replies: "I think she should. Anyone who feels like it should assert himself or herself." (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 136). The novelist's position on this matter of a girl-child assertion of herself confirms what Moi (2000) succinctly explains: "a woman defines herself through the way she lives her embodies situation in the world; put differently, through the way in which she makes something of what the world makes of her". A woman, Moi adds must regain subject to escape her defined role as the "other" (Moi, 2000, P. 103). In consonance with Satre argument that the body is co-extensive with personal identity (a "perspective" that one lives) he also suggests that consciousness is in some sense beyond the body. This proposition rhymes with Cartesian view-point. "My body is a point of departure which I am and which at the same time I surpass" (Butter, 1987, P. 129).

Conclusion

Adimora-Ezeigbo advises all women to be educated. The history of Ginika's community in educating the girl-child is devastating as it is said that: "Ama-Oyi had not yet produced female graduate, and none of her women was even an undergraduate" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 152). A woman deprived of education will have her gaze centers on material possessions, and her children because there is nothing she can engage in except domestic activities. Eloka's mother gives an insight into the character of the old image of the African woman. All she is thinking of, is her clothes and her son. She advises her son to take her box of trinkets away from Port Harcourt to keep in a safety place even while she is still there. Again, she focuses all her hope on her son as her career. She explains that she would not mind going to Ama-Oyi with Eloka, simply to make sure he is well fed: "Now you are going to Ama-Oyi, I think I should follow you so that I can take care of you. I know you will starve yourself there." (Adimora-Ezeigbob, 2014, P. 43). The novel ends with the heroine seizing independence for herself, with preparations to start a fresh life. Ginika rekindles her desire to further her education. She gains admission into the University of Nsukka, to study journalism, with a scholarship through the help of Miss Taylor. She also plans to travel to America for her Master's degree (Adimora- Ezeigbo, 2014, P. 374).

From the afore-goings, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's works have investigated how substantial body of creative literary works have strategies forms of speaking to different

women as Chandra Mohanty (1992, P. 196) assesses: “a discursive political suppression of heterogeneity of the subject in question.” The study reveals how the novelist has dealt directly with women’s achievement and challenges. She highlights women’s conditions by creating awareness of the psychological and physical injuries perpetrated by the patriarchal structure, and the need for reformation. She does this through the stories of real/fictional women/other activists by employing the daily language of her culture. She instigates a revolution in women’s health care system, their love lives/sexual desires, and above, education as the parameter for total liberation of the new Nigerian woman. She pays more attention to gender dissonance generated by traditional culture. Adimora-Ezeigbo projects profound changes in the Nigerian women lives, which the society had initially assumed that patriarchy is always the norm, and that separate research on women was unnecessary.

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