

*A Rhetoric on  
Conflicts in Akachi  
Adimora-Ezeigbo's  
Trafficked*

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**Introduction**

Since rhetoric has maintained a pivotal place in literary criticism from classical epoch till the present, writers have continued to explore the possibilities of entrenching their ideologies through rhetorical emblems. In the novel, *Trafficked*, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo ostensibly reclines from projecting the typical radicalized feminist personas in her trilogy: *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle*. While an attempt is made to conjecture patterns for erecting a matriarchal stronghold in trilogy, there is a visible directional switch

in *Trafficked*. Therefore, it gives warrant to the assumption in this work that there is a maturation in the craft in *Trafficked*, as the (dis)inclination to extending her revolutionary stance on the feminist question gives place to a rhetorical strength. Therefore, it behooves the exploration of more urgent creative missions in African literature, circumstantial in relating the urgency to interrogate the interplay of these rhetorical strategies and how they are accomplished. It is imperative to examine how the writer's project mediates what sounds like a disproportionate fissure of the distant extremes of these perceptions: her-stories (feminist writings) versus he-stories (writings characterized by male-dominance), and how they all implicate the feminist matter.

While rhetoric has always been seen to apply to the art of speaking, the imperatives of the rhetorical appeals—logos, ethos and pathos—have become most expedient in accentuating the ideological frameworks in literary expression. Rhetoric was made the fulcrum of the ancient Greek curriculum, a substantive programme for nurturing the leaders of their future generations. Rhetoric pertains to the persuasive force in a text and the appreciation of its consequence on a given subject matter. Abrams and Harpham agree that “the concern of rhetoric is with the type of discourse whose chief aim is to persuade an audience to think and feel or act in a particular way” (Abrams and Harpham 2012, 342-343). In the understanding that literary creativity of compelling

merit promises a measurable affectation of substantial audience, each thematic exploration has to embrace the interests of a given era. Regarding oral and written compositions, J. A. Cuddon locates five processes of logical order; invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. In translating these rules from speech presentation to literary creativity, two of these become most desirable – ‘invention’ and ‘style’ (Cuddon 2013, 606). While ‘invention’ relates to a new discovery, or a re-discovery of an old order within a new scheme, ‘style’ entails imbuing each invention with a unique mode.

Adimora-Ezeigbo’s ‘invention’ in *Trafficked* is most logically predicated on the postcolonial confrontation with a version of slavery. While the enslaver is indicted, there is the rhetorical strategy which implicates the society that is negligent of the plots of certain villains. These deviants inadvertently extend the frontiers of slavery by exploiting the ignorance of the people as well as the indiscretion of the government. Adimora-Ezeigbo’s feminist concern is ostensibly overshadowed by other conflicts within the society which rather require a collective investment on the part of both the male and female writers of African literary kinship. The ideological installation in the novel, *Trafficked* aligns with Ann Dobie’s own exposition of Augustine’s philosophy. Dobie view is that this is but a translated perception of the world as an ordinary essence of a super-ordinate realm. It is such re-presentation of known images and themes, a lit-

erary device in giving meaning to other elevated matters. The submission here is that Augustine is concerned with how “figurative meaning looks through things, treating them as only signs of more exalted levels of truth” (Dobie 2009, 55-56).

The compelling matrix of inordinate incidents for which the likes of Nneoma yield to their traffickers, indicts the status of the members of different labour groups in Nigeria whose ‘take home pay’ can hardly take them home. Most fittingly, the portrayal of the characters’ gullibility becomes the measure of aggregate naïveté within a society in which the government proves irresponsible to the masses’ plight. These conflicts trail Nneoma’s innocence and her quest to survive and be rehabilitated after she had inadvertently procured the stigma – the *Trafficked*.

### **Perspectives on Adimora-Ezeigbo’s Switch**

There are differing perspectives on Chinua Achebe’s switch in the characterization of women in *Anthills of the Savannah* as against the portraiture of women in his earlier novels. Consequently, Ijeoma Nwajiaku insists that the unfair mould of women in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* is mediated in the circumstance of the contemporary stature and status of women and indeed the status of feminist struggles. Nwajiaku puts it thus: “That Achebe seems to have undertaken a thorough study of the female psyche is evident. For *Anthills of the Savannah*

profers a depth of insight that is at once compelling, authentic and unprejudiced” (Nwajiaku 2013, 162). Nwachukwu-Agbada, clearly, does not sweep this conflict under the carpet in affirming that “In case one thinks that this view of Achebe’s handling or mishandling of women refers to his early novels only, even his *Anthills of the Savannah* is not spared...” (Nwachukwu-Agbada 2013, 47). Nnaemeka is cited here in validating the study of transfigured characterization in Achebe’s *Anthills...* Nnaemeka’s position is that Achebe’s crime remains “the depersonalization of women” which is made to “serve no other purpose than to be made love to, breed children, prepare food, massage the men’s exploding ego and most importantly, remain SILENT” (Nnaemeka 1990, 282).

In another submission, Nwachukwu-Agbada draws attention to the compelling progression of Achebe’s characterization. This argument comes with a determined purpose to highlight the natural tendency of writers’ maturation, particularly in the face of critical conflagrations. This idea relates significantly to Akachi Ezeigbo’s progressive portrayal of women, as such culmination comes in *Trafficked*. While explaining the move in Ayi Kwei Armah’s novels: *The Beautiful Ones Are not yet Born* (1968), *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) and *The Healers* (1978). Nwachukwu-Agbada also refers to Ngugi Wa Thiong’O’s novels in which the women are transformed from the crying ‘mothers’ of Njoroge in *Weep Not Child*

(1964) to the gun-wielding Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross* (1982) (Nwachukwu-Agbada 2013, 47).

Citing Stratton's view, Sophia Ogwude responds to the allegation that Achebe legitimizes the exclusion of women from politics in the postcolony by consciously adopting the Igbo pre-colonial setting. Ogwude also counters Adimora-Ezeigbo's charge on Achebe as one of the "notable male novelist who had formerly relegated women's experience" (Ogwude 2013, 119). The argument here is predicated on the key actions which Achebe bequeaths to women in *Things Fall Apart*. One of these, she argues, is seen in the kind of freedom which Achebe bestows on Ekwefi, Okonkwo's wife who had abandoned Okonkwo for the wealthier Anene but returned to marry Okonkwo later. The logic supposes that women cannot be said to be objects of subjugation. Somewhat, like Nwachukwu-Agbada, Ogwude insists that, "what Achebe has done, especially in the depiction of women is consistent with his practice in earlier novels" (Ogwude 2013, 119).

Furthermore, Nwachukwu-Agbada's summation of the gambit in the Adimora-Ezeigbo's trilogy is that,

The three novels are interrelated, featuring major characters, largely females, who belong to the same genealogy but who represent different prongs of the battle against patriarchy. Thus it is the same 'war of the sexes' running over generations, each generation faced with its challenges. In other words, it is 'herstory' told in three eras

of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial settings (Nwachukwu-Agbada 2011, 87).

Another suggestion which Nwachukwu-Agbada relates in his appraisal of “daughteronomy” is that Adimora-Ezeigbo proposes matriarchy or daughtriarchy as agreeable alternative to the common outlook of patriarchy, indeed a reversal of the abiding order. In spite of relating the concept, “daughteronomy”, as a mere pun which plays on the wording of the fifth book of the Bible, Nwachukwu-Agbada seems to extend this derivation to the scriptural paradigm, proposing the practical institution of the laws that had gone before in the Biblical books – *Exodus* and *Leviticus*. This view on *Children of the Eagle* does not just relate the annexation of Adimora-Ezeigbo’s personas in the first two books of the trilogy, but also projects the entirety of feminist dictates that had gone forth to annul all appurtenances of masculinity and accompanying primogeniture. The entrenchment of this position gives a clue to Adimora-Ezeigbo’s intent on the directional switch in *Trafficked*. This switch is also prominently adopted in Chimamanda Adichie’s own writings, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*. It is cushy to find Adichie’s reluctance in furthering the heat of the feminist burden which her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* bears. Similarly, the ferocity in Adimora-Ezeigbo’s trilogy is singed in what is perceived as the ‘maturation’ (or progression) of her craft in *Trafficked*. It may be viewed as an ideological coalition aimed at at dousing the feminist rage in African literature.

## Language Conflict as Rhetorical Strategy

The commonplace presentation of the initial situation as the plot trigger in literary creativity gives the justification for appreciating Adimora-Ezeigbo's rhetorical stratagem. Evidently, the attention of the reader is sustained through the consternations which conflicts impose on the text, *Trafficked*. Ultimately, her 'Snail Sense' rhetoric effuses in the language of the text which becomes the tool for mediating in intrinsically submerged clashes, particularly crucial to feminist extrapolation. The rhetorical game in Adimora-Ezeigbo's craft effuses in the concatenation of symbols implicating matters with which she lends practical existence to the 'Snail Sense' theory. In this regard, the trafficking business evokes the pool of postcolonial woes, among which is a post-cultural view of masculinity, the feminist agitation for empowerment and all the attendant consequences. The author's employment of rhetorical strategies simply comes through the subtlety of language whose objective is to produce the desired persuasive effect, especially in the face of abiding conflagrations.

Adimora-Ezeigbo's 'Snail Sense' theory derives from the Igbo mythical proverb, *ire oma ka ejula ji aga n'ogwu* – it is with a sweet tongue that the snail treads the thorny path. While the tongue remains the constant organ in speech articulation, it does not only touch on language use as it were, but the several adoptions which draw on rhet-



oric whenever and wherever a journey is made across conflicts. 'Ire oma' (sweet tongue) assumes a mythical tenor, with implications of appropriateness in language use. It also seems to call attention to the probabilities of the misuse, the abuse of language which linguists have had to engage in the discourse of speech act and verbal hygiene. The language which the writer bestows on to the characters gives the clues to her purpose, explicating certain myths which draw from the Igbo culture and subverting the others. These are visible in that the patterns of dialogue which the narrative in *Trafficked* also employs.

In *Trafficked* therefore myths are divulged and subverted with emblematic hint that the obscurities which attend key conflicts in Africa require to be given some attention. Among these are the feminist and religious conflicts. Also, government structures, policy implementation and activities seem to be drawn against the operations of the Non-Governmental Organisations whose schemes come as a palliative to the shortcomings of the governments in power. And indeed, they give inkling to a convergence of the psychological wranglings which allude to the present day versions of slavery and all propellants of postcolonial matters. These are the issues which the author highlights in varied modes of contrast. The complexity of mediation suggested in the twist in Ofomata's psyche as revealed here:

He wondered why he had come to the university to study instead of going into trading or...Should he return to his father's lucrative palm oil mill and palm kernel-cracking industries in Ihite-Agu and forget this pursuit of a degree in Estate Management?" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 28-29).

From personal psychological conflicts, the author's focus extends to interpersonal interactions as well as divergent ideals which generate different levels of entanglements that are not far removed from cultural (dis)orientations. An instance comes as Ofomata's lecturer berates him thus:

"Sit down," Dr Komolafe said. "Do you want to make people come to my office when I'm already late going home? Is it not your people's belief that when a visitor is not offered a seat, he will attract more visitors to his host" he laughed.

"Yes I think there is a belief like that." Ofomata shrugged. (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 30).

The perceptions of variance here include; host versus visitor, the command to sit down at the beginning of the statement versus the laugh at its end, the disclosure of the listener's belief against the speaker's, and the fact that the listener does not appear to believe what he accepts as his people's philosophy. Dr Komolafe simply expresses shock at such interface again and concludes that "The large number of superstitions still circulating in our technology-driven society is astonishing" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 28-29).

Other superstitious beliefs are presented in a hyperbolic design, drawing attention to myths that require to be subverted. Nneoma is made to invite their village god of sleep, Oroura, from Ihite-Agu to the Oasis NGO rehabilitation camp in her desperation to overcome her raging thoughts. Ironically, Fola who had no such belief, (in any god of sleep) slept with ease. Fola in her own sleep, is pictured as she “changed gear and zoomed off” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 78-79). But for Nneoma, she begins a new journey of thoughts into her past memory and could only find sleep almost at dawn “after the clock had chimed four” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 79). The author’s rhetorical tone indicates how the “unpredictable” and “mischievous Oroura” (the god of sleep) had “eventually got tired of playing a game with Nneoma” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 79).

The depiction of superstitions and rumours are made to lie against certain perspectives of myths, emotively alluding to the need for their subversion. In a given context, the non-payment of gratuities to civil servants who had long been retired proved to be one of those conflicts for which many dispensations of the Nigerian government are arraigned. Nneoma’s father, Ogukwe becomes a victim of an unconfirmed rumour – that the retirees were summoned for the payment of their gratuity. Ogukwe, elderly as he was, and with aching arthritis, had suffered immensely after embarking on a fruitless long journey to Enugu, in a bid to get his pay (gratuity). Ogukwe had

only been drowned in the summit of his great expectation. The conversation in the Ogukwe family had revealed their apprehension thus: “I don’t trust our government. Look at the teacher’s strike nothing has been done about it. But it is the federal government and not the state government” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 110).

More emphatic is the parallelism on the grip of delusion that precedes such wasted long journeys, a visible parallel to the illusion of the trafficked girls, their wasted adventure and their eventual deportation. At long last, Ogukwe exclaims here, “It was a rumour... just a rumour. There was no invitation to assemble; no money was paid. We gathered for nothing. As usual, they sent the police to scatter us... Let dog lick the eyes of whoever started this rumour” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 112). As it is for the trafficked lot, Adimora-Ezeigbo’s contempt ostensibly lies more with the acceptance of these misleading rumours than with those who initiated or spread them. The proverb which had been made to come earlier in the novel aptly foreshadows events of this kind where blames are inordinately apportioned. In the proverb, “A foolish chicken overlooked the knife that cut its throat and got angry with the pot that cooked it” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 4), there is a projection in Nneoma’s outburst of anger as the stewardess expresses resentment at the trafficked girls. Also, this proverb applies to the circumstance of Ogukwe’s fit of anger against the initiators of the rumour. It is supposed that

the narrator rather anticipates the measure of self-indictment for such gullibility. Morally speaking, this ought to birth the process of rehabilitation for persons, and most probably the nation at large.

In spite of the writer's attempt to subvert certain myths, her employment of the oral tradition comes to sustain certain practices which enshrine cautions in traditional Igbo society. Adimora-Ezeigbo explicates the proverb, "It is not every fruit that is good to the eyes that is good to the belly", by recalling the story which Hannah's grandmother had told her. The kernel of the story goes thus: "The excreta swelled and swelled until it turned into a handsome young man... All the maidens wanted him as a husband. Finally the young demon, who had told the villagers that he was a prince, chose seven of them and took them away" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 209). Much more, the caution comes in the song accompaniment to the folktale – "Who are you following/ the magic bird is asking/ are you following excreta" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 209). Once again, the conflicting view of myths comes into focus, suitably analogous to the gullibility of the trafficked girls and the consequences of yielding to abominable people, much like the 'dispelled excreta' – the demon.

Fittingly, Adimora-Ezeigbo chooses proverbs that are laden with mythical sense in generating a justifiable link with the events that had gone before. Each is made to

lend vigour to the preceding context. In Ogukwe's proverb, there is endemic rhetoric "Our people say that when something is done and done properly, it brings peace and pleasure to the heart and to the mind" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 260). Here, in 'Our people say', tribute is significantly paid to the timeless authorship of traditional wit, its rhetorical essence and the communality of its possession. The consequence of Adimora-Ezeigbo's rhetoric appears to portend conciliation for the erstwhile decimated patrilineal order.

### **Conflict in the Historicist Perspective**

Adimora-Ezeigbo's portrayal of trafficking as a gruesome postcolonial signpost also stands as certain tribute to history. Its posture here relates how the slavery of the past has transmuted into the postcolonial woes prevalent in the Africa of today. There is the determined reconnaissance to history which betrays a plot that is not in any way accidental. This obvious in the reference to episodes in Ofomata's university hostel, 'Jaja Hall'. They are insightful of the travails of King Jaja of Opobo in the early challenge with the colonial warlords. The author evenly immortalises this historical event thus:

The Jaja Hall was the biggest male hall of residence on campus. It was named after Jaja of Opobo, who had presided over a prosperous kingdom in the southeastern part of the country in the nineteenth century until the British Colonial Administration dethroned him, sacked and

looted his kingdom and deported him to the West Indies, where he died in ignominy (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 60-61).

This reference does not only give inkling to the prominence in the privatization of the campus hostel management, but much more, the capitalist machinations of present government surge forth as earlier precursors of colonialism and slavery. This simulacrum of authoritarian rule in the humiliation and enslavement of Jaja of Opobo comes up in clear terms in other episodes in the narrative just as the symbolism is lucid in the deportation of the trafficked girls. The narrative voice reveals here that, “She and the fifteen humiliated young women shuffled out of the aircraft, past the crew who stood aside, watching them as if they were lepers or slaves disembarking from a slave ship” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 4) The twin qualifiers, ‘lepers/slaves’, implicate the narrator’s view of trafficking, the sex trade and other accompanying vices. The metaphor of the alienation of lepers in the face of the disease, that inflicts its rancor beyond control, also incriminate the coercion of the traffickers, much like the slave masters who incarnated the colonialists. Much more intriguing in the narrative is the reality that the perpetrators of the act are rarely unmasked.

In the novel, there are multiple pictures of conflicts that come with a lot more emphasis on the despotism of the colonial era.

A thunderstorm was brewing; winds from the four corners of the town converged and collided, sending dust and dead leaves into the air. It was as if Ihite-Agu was experiencing a locust invasion, the type that last occurred in 1942, when Hitler's war was raging and young men were being sent to Burma, by the white man who ruled Onitsha, the then headquarters of Onitsha Province (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 113).

It is with the religious crises in the conjoint setting of the novel, Ihite-Agu that Adimora-Ezeigbo accentuates the charge against the historicity of Nigeria within the spate of conflicts which the novel recollects. Perhaps, it is to sustain the logic that a given outrage results in a susceptibility to extended abominations. The narrator likens this atrocious situation to a combined infliction of (*ibi*, the scrotum disease) and *afo otuto* {a distended belly} (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 44), twin maladies which in the traditional Igbo society condemn the victim to be thrown into the evil forest. Such implication of trafficking, as abominable alienation, touches on slavery as well. The outrage on slavery is visible in Efe's confession to Nneoma here,

Madam Gold sold me to a pimp – a white man – after four years of slaving for her. I worked for my 'new owner' for two years before I escaped. Then I fled to Verona and teamed up with a prostitute I met there and worked independently for about another year because I wanted to save up money to return home.... Then the police arrested me and I was deported (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 100).



While such mercantilist spirit (with and of humans) is made explicit, it provokes the harrowing sting on the casualties' psyche. Nneoma's acquiesces to Efe's story, very much like her own story, confirming the relatedness of the consequences as well as the precursors to the trafficking involvement. The complicity to each event of enslavement becomes clearer to both Efe and Nneoma as they relate their experiences to each other. That these victims only allow themselves to be deluded is seen in the fact that Efe willingly enslaves herself again with another prostitute even after she was being liberated from her initial 'trafficked' status.

The similarity in the names of the villains of the trafficking enterprise, 'Madam Gold' and 'Madam Dollar', does not just implicate deluded identity, it also reflects the allurements and entrapment for their trafficking venture. It is the same portraiture that Efe gives of Baron—"He's a cheat and a heartless exploiter like many Westerners and a corrupt hustler like many Africans—a thoroughbred Englishman and a typical son-of-the-soil Nigerian" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 136). The revelation of Baron's parentage—"English father" and "Nigerian mother", represents the geneological admixture that attributes the stronger force of evil to the colonizer, and particularly some kind of initiation that accounts for the postcolonial conflicts in the Nigerian setting.

In all, Adimora-Ezeigbo seems inclined to restoring Nneoma to her undefiled state before the deportation, just as the personality of King Jaja of Opobo is seen to be reclaimed within this retrospection, the encounter with the colonial conquerors. Therefore, while the period of trafficking represents the colonial era, another epoch is evoked with boarding the trafficked girls at the rehabilitation camp, indeed a time for understanding how their delusion had come about. However, Nneoma's progress in the period of her rehabilitation represents the positive view that some delinquents are able to overcome their past, and chart a new course in their lives.

### **Religion in Conflicting Dispositions**

There is a seeming intent to de-mystify religion and de-mythify the objects and the places of worship. A metaphor is spun in the conflict which ensues with the trafficking of the gods of Irite-Agu. Here is a situation which does not only implicate the complicity of Africans in the devaluation of their tradition and culture, but one that also echoes the bait which draws Africans into colluding with their own slave traders. The reason given for selling the images of the gods, another mis-acculturation, is that, "Some people said they will sell them to white people. I heard the white people are called *ati kolekito*... 'art collectors'" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 40). Nonetheless, the conflict resulting from the trafficking of the gods of Irite-Agu disparage such religious senti-

ments whipped up for perverted intents. From the dialogue between Ogukwe and Alagbogu in which it is affirmed that ‘religion has lost its true meaning’, both men agree that it has become “a source of making money and exercising political and psychological power over others, especially the poor and the weak” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 275).

The displacement and trafficking of the gods presuppose the impotence and the lifelessness of these deities. There is a fitting transfer of epithet in the transmittal from the abduction of humans to the trafficking of the gods of the Irite-Agu land. There are measures to which the abominable acts of enslavement are spiritualized, especially with their evident consequences. In the writer’s ploy here, the potency of the altars from which the deities are abducted is repudiated. The impotence of the gods also supposes the appraisal of delusion in their patronage. This is emphasized in the abductor’s recourse to oaths, at varied altars and in compelling conditions, driving the ignorant folks to abide by strange deeds and agreements. The writer reveals these in the confessions of Efe and Nneoma respectively;

None of the men who were interviewed was taken. That should have alerted me to danger, but I barely gave it a thought at the time. Anyway, before long, all the girls – ten of us – were given our travel schedule. We took an oath to work for the agency until we had paid our debts (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 99).

As usual, both casualties did not only have similar stories but the same terms of agreement and consequences of their breach. However, it is in Nneoma's own confession that the locales of the altars are captured in the dialogue that assumes part of the narratology here,

Efe stopped her with a question. "Where was the oath taken? In a shrine?"

"No, they used the Bible and an image of an arusi."

In my case, they took us to a shrine somewhere between Lagos and Ibadan" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 128).

In matching the *Bible* and arusi the writer intensifies the view of religions in conflicting disposition. Much of the conflicts pertaining to the sects seem to relegate the influence of the deities which these religions represent. Rather, the confrontations are manifest in the abominable actions of their adherents.

Hannah, living with Prophet Elias without any bride price paid on her head; Hannah, joining the gang that destroyed the shrine of arusi Udo; Hannah, abandoning her parents and siblings and St John Anglican Church where she was baptized, and running to the founder of a Satanic religion (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 44).

The name, arusi Udo (god of peace or peaceful god), is not only significant in alluding to the likely consequences of distorting the serenity of the people's life and cul-

ture in the guise of new religions, the writer ostensibly berates the fanaticism which has become a product of Western ideals. Worse pictures are propped up of this consequence in the Nigerian society here,

Muslim rioters attacked churches in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, at the end of the Jumat service on Friday, burning down more than twenty buildings. They killed many Christians with machetes, axes and bows and arrows. Some were stabbed to death in the churches where they had taken refuge (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 90-91).

The view of religion as ‘the opium of the people’, Marxist in its tenor, underlies Adimora-Ezeigbo’s rhetoric of conflicts. Prophet Elias is made the embodiment of these conflicts. Hannah testifies, “He says Jesus whipped sinners who desecrated the temple, so he’s simply emulating the Master. Women are not exempted. After whipping us, he invites us to his bed” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 182). These conflicts are not only multifarious, but also ironical of the status of delusion at different levels in the society.

### **The Government in Conflicting Dispositions**

There are several pictures which betray Adimora-Ezeigbo’s indictment of the structures of government in Nigeria. Indeed, these come to provoke the reader’s appraisal of the state of affairs in many of the countries where the transference into the postcolonial epoch appears to broaden the conflicts that had earlier been

generated. Again the writer employs very pertinent symbolism in generating the rhetorical force.

Ofomata looked up from time to time to watch the heavy traffic on the Mainland Bridge which had been constructed by one of the military governments that ruled the country between 1966 and 1999 – except for the four intervening years between 1979 and 1983, when President Shehu Shagari became the first democratically elected president. But the soldiers had overthrown him and taken over again as if to rule was their birthright. Civilians were back in power now but little had changed really... (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 35).

The ‘bridge’ picture does not only stand as metaphor for the broadening conflicts, indeed misrule, from one dispensation of government to the other, it also highlights the insatiable appetite for power in the hint to the ‘rulers’ birthright’. In this regard, the allusion to Obasanjo, the most prominent in this matter of the ‘rulers’ birthright, supports the writer’s recourse to the historical events, in the light of the metaphorical bridge. Remotely, the case of Odi community which Obasanjo’s (supposed) democratic rule destroyed, with the aggressive mode of the military, the auspices under which he had taken the first mantle of headship in the country. It is the conflict in Ihite-Agu that provides the opportunity for the reference to the Odi matter here, “The police will arrest them and sack Ihite-Agu as they did in Odi, that unfortunate town in Bayelsa State. Or was it soldiers that did it?” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 220). In this, the logic of the

narrator's allusion to the years, "1966 and 1999" ingrains and the inordinate employment of force, indeed the abuse of authority (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 242-243). Also, the bridge easily points to the actions of all the governments from the days of slavery to the colonial era where warrant chiefs were imposed to wreck havoc on the citizenry. In *Trafficked*, sufficient attention is drawn to the spate of corrupt practices that indict the state of endorsed disorder – organized crime (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 35).

The author refuses to portray the goings-on at the departure airports in Nigeria, from where the trafficked girls usually take off. However, another rhetorical approach is put to use in pointing to the apathetic stance of the government on security matters. The Edo Governor is made to represent the government's negligence on the trafficking matter. The same apathetic outlook is made to pervade all the dispensations of government. Visibly, the government's insensitivity to the plight of the common people is evident in student's protests on campus. This demonstration enjoyed support even from non-students who enthuse that, "I think that the students were justified in protesting. Why are we surprised that so many young people want to leave this country?" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 178). Another evidence of the capricious leadership is seen in the attitude to infrastructural debilitation here, "and the road had been tarred since she left home, though it was already badly pot-

holed” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 245). In depicting the loss of government credibility and authority, the matter resonates in the Ihite-Agu case as Lebechi persistently refuses to comply with the verdicts of the Umunna (kith and kin) on the family conflicts.

Much more, the activities of parallel institutions like the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO’s), do not indeed fair better in their activities. While they are set up to intervene, most often with government support, it appears in Adimora-Ezeigbo’s consideration that not much of the anomies are mediated. To a certain extent, the strengths of the NGO’s are seen in their rehabilitation of the victims of trafficking and the empowerment skills they are made to pursue (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 52). The rules in their camps also afford the inmates the opportunity to follow the paths of discipline. However, the inadequacies in the affairs of the NGO’s are perceived as lacking depth because of the loose acquaintance with the key challenges that brew these conflicts. The awareness of the NGO’s is made to compare with the women who saw the trafficked girls heading for their bus to the rehabilitation camp. Nneoma’s irritation gives the appraisal here: “Those two women had spoken from ignorance...Did they know the condition that drove girls from the country to Europe. They should find out how the girls became trafficked in the first place before opening their smelly mouths” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 23).



Nneoma is rather humiliated by the ironic proclamation by the Commissioner for Women Affairs that, “We have declared war against slavery, child abuse, the international sex trade and HIV/AIDS. What is hardly seen is the weapon with which this war is fought. Much like the Commissioner, the Director of UNICEF came to the event with posters which seem to only define these problems,

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE FROM PLACE TO PLACE, WITHIN AND ACROSS BORDERS AND THROUGH FORCE, COERCION OR DECEPTION AND INTO SITUATIONS INVOLVING THEIR ECONOMIC AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 56).

An appraisal of this inscription is that a mere definitive approach submerges the expected pro-activity of these international bodies which profess to bring relief to these challenges, perhaps an attempt to suggest a mistrusted commitment. In *Children of the Eagle* there is a further revelation of the Adimora-Ezeigbo’s mistrust for the NGO business,

Nnenna reminds her other sisters as they take a march round the village, “You remember Adanna had to leave her university job to form a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Her action was a result of the harrowing experience she went through in her university, especially in her department” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 203).

This perspective does not only reveal the unpreparedness of the initiators of these NGOs, it also recollects the unemployment status as well as the counter-productive attitude and deprecation of labour in Nigeria. Nneoma's sack at the skill acquisition centre gives the indication of the denigration of the labour force, and for which there was no intervention on the part of the NGOs. It is not in doubt that the NGO's lacked the requisite authority to accomplish certain goals. Again, their reluctance in effecting the arrest of Baron or any attempt at all to investigate the activities of the plotters of the trafficking business, stands as another indictment against the NGOs. However, the university set up and the treatment of Dr Komolafe matter – the diligent actions of ascertaining the involvements of the offenders by setting up a panel reveals how sanity may be obtained within an institution in which there is seriousness in maintaining law and order (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 106).

Adimora-Ezeigbo berates the government of today as not being different from the oppressive slave merchants and the antecedent groups of missionaries who bridged the gap between slavery and imperialism. Much more, the government is indicted for not being able to reconcile much of the volatile matters that impinge on peaceful co-existence. In this regard also, the key thematic disposition in the *Trafficked* aligns with what Nwajiaku had observed about Achebe's choice of Beatrice and Elewa. Although Nwajiaku's charge denounces all

forms of “subjugation and intimidation”, her reference to Kolawole mellows the feminist rancor and rather underscores the need “to unite with men in a concerted effort to reject racist and imperialist subjugation” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 162). In this recognition, Adimora-Ezeigbo seems to have become more sensitive of imperialist manipulations in several cloaks, even in the present day society. This visibly relates her penchant for traditionalism and the rhetorical experimentation with theorizing ‘snail sense’ feminism.

## Conclusion

There is sufficient proof that the rhetoric in *Trafficked* is intent on mediating the feminist conflict. Quite unlike Adimora-Ezeigbo’s belligerent female characters in the trilogy, the writer’s grit on the amiable relationship of the man and the woman is apparent. Adaeze is dutiful in cooking for the husband and calls him, “Nnamukwu” (my lord) (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 110). Yet, when the man’s own delusion breeds disillusionment, such as overwhelms him into alcoholism, the woman’s rage is rather commended as a form of desirable psychotherapy. The man, Ogukwe is made to appreciate his wife’s efforts and status in providing the needs of the family, “Thank you, my wife. What can I do without you who have practically become the breadwinner in this house?” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 2008, 109). While it must be observed that the narrative is not entirely bereft of feminist echoes, they have indeed been mediated.

The writer apparently portrays conflicts that pertain more to the postcolonial question than to the feminist entanglement. While these are notable as ideological engagements that confront different levels of marginalization and their probable extension, the concentration of conflicts that pertain to the postcolony only reveals Adimora-Ezeigbo's tenor switch in *Trafficked*. It becomes imperative to undertake a reading of the novel in the light of Olaniyan's view of the portrayal of another era – the postcolonial epoch, “time-space after colonialism, what greater evidence of its inapplicability to Africa can we find than the continent's world-historical debt peonage to its former colonizers...” (Olaniyan 2007, 637). The narrative course in *Trafficked* maintains a logical synergy with the transcendence of slavery. This is emphasized in the confrontation between Jaja of Opobo and the earlier Western incursion into Africa. Nwahunanya affirms the capitalist drive in the enslavements of the pre-colonial Igbo as it is situated in the trafficking venture which Ezeigbo portrays, “With the coming of transatlantic slave trade however, slavery became a strictly commercial venture, and groups like the Aro exploited their existing advantaged position to increase their slaving activities” (Chinyere Nwahunanya 2007, 323). These capitalist temperaments are drawn in visible symbolic presentations. The symbolism in selling the Ihite-Agu god and goddess in the guise of art collection effuses with apt rhetoric drawing a parallel with the trafficking enterprise.

Another view of the symbolic depiction of the Irite-Agu god and goddess defines a new consciousness. The relationship between Adaeze and Ogukwe is incisive in this regard, just as the scenes which picture the acquiescence of Nneoma and Ofomata to an eventual marriage relationship. The willingness of these lovebirds to resurrect their erstwhile acquaintance, for which the bride price had been paid six years earlier, bears the writer's motive in resolving all erupting conflicts. It is indeed a rejection of the coercion and sexual abuse which attend the *Trafficked* victims. Moreover, with the pursuit of learning, Ofomata and Nneoma are positioned in their rightful psyche to decide the course to pursue, even in the circumstance of resolving the conflicts that had escalated from the paths of naiveté, of the citizenry, and grievous irresponsibility of the government. While the novel ostensibly berates the slaving enterprise, there is this combined statement that supposes annihilating, or at best moderating the feminist charge on the patrilineal order.

The title, *Trafficked*, is eponymous of the challenges which Nneoma the protagonist is made to undergo. And, the view of superstition in the Igbo name nne oma 'the father's reincarnated mother', gives an early lead to the view of myths and the consequences of delusion insinuated in the novel. It also provokes the novel's essence, implicating the socio-political structure which also interrogates alienation and the compelling circumstances

preceding each delusive oversea adventure. The lure to the sex trade is presented in this novel as metaphor for the slavery of pre-colonial origin. To this extent, there are measures of indictment on the bourgeois/proletariat structure, another consequence of the colonial formation. In the challenges which give vent to the pull for greener pastures overseas, Nneoma becomes the victim of the extension of such set-up.

Therefore, Adimora-Ezeigbo unifies her theme, setting and characterization as appurtenances for her 'invention'. Ultimately, sexism and the trafficking of women surge forth drawing from the society's view of 'womanity' as sex agents/merchants, yet it is the woman, re-presented here in Nneoma, that re-defines her status. The conflicts which drive the narratology visibly relate the kind of psychic deformation of diverse delinquents in society whose reformation become most urgent.

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