

Chapter Five

COSMOPOLITANISM AND GENDER: ISSUES IN ADIMORA EZEIGBO'S FICTION

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Abstract:

*The current era of globalization and increased migration across borders and cultures of the world continues expectedly to give rise to diverse topical issues. In response, writers across the globe remain earnest in an animated exploration and investigation of such emanating matters. African female writers, a strong arm of the writing force on the continent, correspondingly engage with several such emergent subjects of concern in their discourses. Aside of course from the migrations across national and international boundaries, there have also been massive internal movements from the rural to the more urban centres in African countries, with equally significant implications. This study seeks therefore, to examine how these dual movements across international or local boundaries affect the lives and realities of African women in general. In particular, we seek to discover how urbanization and consequent multicultural influences impact on gender in contemporary Nigerian society. Selected for the study thus, are the renowned Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's novel *Trafficked* and *Children of the Eagle*. While the former narrative focuses on female trafficking, its multifarious dimensions and the scourge it has become on the continent and beyond, the latter, the concluding part of a trilogy, enables us to explore the individual lives of five modern women whose lives and ideologies have been refashioned in extensive and significant ways by their exposures to cosmopolitan ways.*

African urban spaces are scenes of diverse cultural formation. African urban centers are dually composed of traditional African cities transformed by colonialism into their present urban status... These cities reveal the unique formation of autonomous cultural creation and orders. Many creative orders inhabiting the African urban space manifest creolized forms. These forms represent the diverse forms of modernity and traditional

elements fused together into constituting
objectification of signification.
(Agbali 295).

Introduction

The rapid rate of globalization flowing over from the twentieth century into the present one continues to engender unparalleled transformations in virtually every sphere of life on the African continent. Evidently, diverse historical developments birthed significant integrations of global forces and formations. In turn these progressively result in societal changes, institutional reconstructions of values and ideologies and indeed the structuring and restructuring of social and cultural concerns.

An aspect of these changes – urbanization will be the focus of this study. Agbali (2005) describes African urban spaces as “scenes of diverse cultural formations” (295). Writing further, he states: “African urban centers are dually composed of traditional African cities transformed by colonialism into their present urban status, and nascent creation... “(295). As multi-disciplinary studies scholars relentlessly probe state transformation, attention is also drawn to gendered spaces within national and regional experiences and on a broader scale across international boundaries (this, a direct effect of globalization). Consequently, emerging literary works on the continent have equally been engrossed by the interactions between the effect of urban spaces/urbanization on gender constructs and relations.

Motivation for this study stems from a need to understand the socio-cultural impact of the dynamics of urbanity on the female gender in particular. It aims through an exploration of selected narratives by Ezeigbo's to present critical perspectives to the subject matters of urbanization and gender. Perceived as it is as a centre of new modalities and social relations, several questions emerge as to the status of the female within this domain.

II The Lures of Cosmopolitan Cities and the Trafficked

The urban centres in Africa clearly lend themselves to a plethora of significations. Drawing attention to this fact, Falola's “Urban Cultures: The setting and the situational,” notes:

Cities reveal the energies, the rebelliousness, the even expanding desire to extend the cultural and political space beyond the reach of the state. Urbanization and the multiple cultures they generate complicate politics and society, and make the study of cities one of the most interesting areas in African studies. (3)

The nature of the urban centre is at once abstract and impersonal, thus initiating new levels of interaction that incorporate traditional models, and yet transcend them. Migration to the urban areas (from the rural), remain critical on account of perceived opportunities for strengthened economic independence and perhaps self-actualization. Of course, the city zones have over the years been regarded as terrains of freedom and liberation.

This means also that the city dwellers would invariably be as affected as they are influenced by the variegated colours of cultures and cultural beliefs that pervade the atmosphere around them. The city characterised as it is by its impersonal nature often affords its inhabitants the space, opportunities, and avenues to seek self-expression, fulfilment and actualisation. Since the existence of a unilateral or sole dominant culture is greatly reduced, the need for individuals to adhere to confining traditional demands is equally reduced to insignificant levels. Perhaps like already noted, life in the metropolitan cities has indeed changed the attitudes, perceptions, inclinations and yes, even fundamental ideological beliefs are all influenced by exposures to influx of varied ideas and other backgrounds.

The above ideas would serve as backdrop for an exploration of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*. Published in 2008, the work assumes the position of a narrative which is at once also an insightful incursion into the menace that human trafficking across international borders has come to symbolize in modern Nigeria. The novel focuses on the story of Nneoma, a young female who flees her home in a rural area in the eastern part of the country. Desiring to escape some unfavourable circumstances, Nneoma recalls that a friend had told her how "some people had helped her secure a teaching appointment in the United Kingdom" (126).

Since the friend had offered to introduce her to the people, so that they could travel together, Nneoma decides to go along with this option. It is not until she finds herself in Italy, without any passport or travel documents, that a realization of her true situation dawns on her. As she puts it:

In Italy I discover I am trafficked. I have no say in the matter. There's a woman called Madam Dollar – nothing comes between her and money. She owns us... She keeps us prisoners in her flat. Life is hell in Rome – we are always walking the night, selling sex to Italian men and foreigners. (129).

The issue of human trafficking and particularly the mass movement of Nigerian females to Europe is one that has stirred not a few outcries and outrages across the length and breadth of the nation over the last few years. As young females continue to be deported back from European countries and stories about their dehumanizing experiences began to be rumoured around,

several non-governmental organizations sprang up to look into the depressing and sensitive issues surrounding female trafficking. The government has not been left out either, as its participation at both the federal and state levels is ostensibly visible.

Human trafficking in its most modern form is most probably a direct off-shoot of globalization. Issues around globalization remain prominent in contemporary debates as efforts are made to comprehend cross-cultural connections. Within the ensuing transformational changes and integrations, are bids to negotiate that which is 'local' as it were within the broader framework of the global. Describing a further effect of globalization, Korieh and Okeke-Ihejirika (2009), observe how "Globalization has also opened up a technological frontier that is making our world smaller in terms of communication and movement, helping to forge and sustain the vast immigration streams from the South to Western countries." (3)

It is this mass movement of human beings that form the basis of Adimora-Ezeigbo's pre-occupation in *Trafficked*. The protagonist Nneoma alongside twenty-three other girls are rounded up in different parts of Italy and the United Kingdom and repatriated. While the reader does not get to know the exact details or circumstances of each person's rationale for fleeing the country, the few revealed serve as focal point for their story.

Incidentally, and at least with the Nigerian experience, the young girls are almost always laden with similar tales of poverty and deprivation. Efe shares her story with Nneoma, she discloses: "My family was poor; it was a struggle to put our meal on the table" (98). Her three brothers were forced to drop out of school at the primary level, while her elder sister and herself barely managed to make it through secondary school. At nineteen therefore, with little education, no job and a most bleak future, she is only too quick to respond to a newspaper advertisement offering job opportunities to "young men and women who wished to work abroad" (99).

Efe's search for a better life, or even perhaps for any form of employment had led her to Lagos. It is in Lagos, (a metropolitan centre), that she chances on the newspaper advertisement. As already mentioned, migration to the urban areas even within the country remain critical, on account of the continuing quest for enhanced opportunities for education, jobs, businesses, etc. Perhaps because these dreams of fulfilment, acquisition of wealth, or self-actualization are no longer met adequately by city centres in the country, and also perhaps because of improved migrations across borders, young people are irresistibly drawn to the lures of unseen but imagined possibilities lying just across the borders.

Efe is not alone in her response to the job advert. Several others apply also and are interviewed. Recalling this incident, Efe expresses the sentiment that “people longed to leave the country, especially during the military regime” (99). Nneoma disagrees slightly. She insists that people have always remained desperate to leave the country; and that the situation appears to be worsening even under the civilian administration. It is important to note that only females supposedly qualify for the jobs at this selection interview. They were therefore appointed for the jobs in Europe. In retrospect, Efe confesses that this ought to have alerted her to some danger, but her sense of desperation at that time apparently beclouded all reasoning.

Nneoma’s story does not differ much from Efe’s. Her personal experience in life had caused her to re-evaluate the universal belief that life is bittersweet. Persuaded that neither she nor her family had tasted the so-called sweetness, Nneoma ruefully reflects:

To them life had unconditionally been bitter with no sweetness; only brandishing a puff adder’s deadly fang... She had watched her family’s fortune dwindle all through teenage years. Misfortune had dogged them with horrendous consistency. Her most recent experience had shown that there was nothing to hope for. “He that is down needs fear no fall!” (5).

The despair and hopelessness which assail Nneoma and seem to tread the course of her life, are characteristic of the plight of several young people in a turbulent and ailing economy. Reading the accounts of the peculiar cases portrayed, one surmises that these individuals seem deprived right in their own country, of much bargaining power. They thus represent a category of young females (young males are not excluded here), who have not been adequately empowered to seek or demand much out of life. Readily, they become easy prey for human predators on the prowl for easy targets. Brainwashed by painted pictures cum stories of the rosy life beyond the shores of the country, they allow themselves to be carted away into lives of pain, misery, regret and at times deaths at the hands of their captors.

While these facts, sordid as they are do not justify human trafficking, they at least serve to foster an understanding of why people sometimes allow themselves to be trafficked, as well as why the “business” still thrives in spite of the considerably aggressive efforts to curb it. Adimora-Ezeigbo’s text attempts to unearth and lay bare the disquieting circumstances of this reality. With deep insight, the work probes its multifarious angles in thought-provoking ways while urging immediate redress. Because females constitute a majority of trafficked victims, the novel is gender sensitive and strives to depict

the nature of what is universally perceived not just as gross injustice to womenfolk, but perhaps even worse as dehumanizing of any human gender. The work reveals how oath taking is an integral part of the deal. The victims are compelled to undertake fearsome oaths. This ensures that these young females are sworn to secrecy and loyalty as fear instilling means are employed—holy books or visits to intimidating shrines. Through Efe and Nneoma's accounts of their experiences, a reader is offered a glimpse into the life of a trafficked individual. Recounting her arrival in Europe, Efe narrates: "...we were taken to Italy and ended up in Palermo. It was terrible. I was sold to a woman called Madam Gold, a Nigerian. She was vicious. She used us shamelessly, made us walk the streets every night" (99).

The girls both weep as Efe recalls her ordeal. Clearly, the unsuspecting victims are rarely told the exact nature of the business they would be engaged in overseas. Continuing her story, Efe adds:

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 some money to return home. If I had had money of my own, I would have returned home straight after my escape. Then the police arrested me and I was deported. (100)

One can only imagine the extent of anguish and psychological trauma which the young females undergo. Completely stranded in strange foreign lands, with no money and no travel documents, (these are kept in the custody of the traffickers), and with no clue as to how to even escape, these girls are often in nightmarish conditions.

Nneoma's experiences, though similar to Efe's in some ways, is perhaps even more harrowing. She is made to believe that she is going to the United Kingdom to teach. Not only were she and the other selected candidates given their appointment letters duly "signed by people with English names," (127), they were further shown pictures of the schools in which they would work. It is only at the airport where they are handed over to 'a man and a woman' who would travel with them, that they are told they would first go to Italy before going to Britain. Nneoma sadly tells her friend: "In Italy I discover I am trafficked. I have no say in the matter." (128).

The sheer violation of an individual's human rights as occasioned by trafficking is intense. Nneoma reveals that they are imprisoned in the flat of their owner (Madam Dollar) and made also to walk the streets at night, "selling sex to Italian men and foreigners" (129). Her hatred of Madam Dollar is palpable,

though it makes little difference to anything, for Madam Dollar loves money passionately and would stop at nothing to ensure that her girls (captives) earn more for her. Totally enslaved, imprisoned and bereft of choices, majority of these females are psychologically traumatized. Nneoma describes her own experience thus:

I am completely devastated by the life I was 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 at nightfall. (129)

In addition to the emotional torture the girls are often physically assaulted. Again Nneoma narrates her ordeal:

I'm often assaulted by captain because I'm stubborn and bring the least amount of money home," ... "I sometimes refuse to cooperate with the customers, especially when they demand positions I find despicable or when they refuse to use a condom or make one of the other nasty demands ...when I am difficult, the men beat me and throw me out of their cars or kick me out of wherever they have taken me – sometimes a car park or a field or public garden. When this happens, I go home with little or no money. Madam raves at me, and Captain beats me up, but he makes sure he does not disfigure me, for this will mean loss of revenue for Madam Dollar (129).

These issues in themselves have significant gender implications. We already observed that the several males who turned up for the screening interview for these supposedly advertised foreign jobs were not selected. This suggests that males are not usually trafficked (at least not for commercial sex purposes). Also the females are only abused and battered physically by their captors as well as the men who hire them on account of their gender. In several instances, men are often able to overpower women, when it comes to sheer physical strength. It is truly doubtful if Captain or any of the male customers who pick up these girls would readily attempt to beat up a fellow male in similar situations.

Perhaps even worse than the sexual and physical exploitation of these females is the idea of selling them at will to prospective buyers (male or female), who in turn become their new masters/owners to do with these "objects purchased" as it pleases them. The absurdity and irony of this 'buying and selling' of human beings is heightened by the realization that this is the 21st century. An era in which the dual phenomena of globalization and urbanization combine to foster awareness and enlightenment about several issues, including the personal rights of an individual in society. In a study "Refugees and Human

Rights: The Prisoners of Circumstances,” Sudhir Hindwan (2014) makes this relevant point: “Women have increasingly been subjected to injustice and sexual abuse. There are numerous cases across the globe of women being abused and raped by people who are supposed to protect them” (145). How sad indeed that trafficked females become in some way prisoners of circumstances, denied justice and their fundamental human rights.

In Nneoma's case, she does not fare any better in the hands of her buyer. Incidentally, he is a man, and so he decides to put his “merchandise” to a dual purpose. Sending the other girls to the streets, he keeps Nneoma at home locked up in his flat. Of course Baron “brings men to the flat” (132), to sleep with her. He further rapes her himself while beating her at will. This is in addition to the physical assault she receives from customers when she either refuses to consent to their demands for “oral or anal sex” (132) or dares to insist that they use condoms. The rest of Nneoma's story is typical and characterises the experiences of young women illegally living and working as commercial sex-workers in different cities in Europe. She eventually escapes from Baron, but her illegal immigrant status makes it easy for her to be arrested and deported back to Nigeria.

Back in their own county, Nigeria, all the repatriated girls are gathered together by a non-governmental agency and given talks about the need to reform their minds in order to successfully utilize the opportunities now being offered to them. Ironically, these opportunities had not been available to them before they fled their country and ‘deplorable situations.’ They are encouraged to settle down now in the centre and be willing to be apprenticed to workers who will teach them whatever skills they chose. This rehabilitation process is instructive and represents Ezeigbo's aspirations for these young females who could be said to have become victims of their unique circumstances.

Through, the narrative, the author also urges the government and its agencies to engage unemployed youths meaningfully, in order to forestall their ventures into nefarious activities. One notes that as some of these young ones overcome their psychological trauma over time, they appear happy to be home and to be given the fresh chance to pursue new lives. They thus apply themselves to the lessons and skill acquisition activities meant to equip them to fend for themselves. Here evidently, these ones are making choices, perhaps not with regard to their circumstances, since events seem to have been taken out of their hands, but they must ultimately choose what their responses must be to the multiple changes that life keeps throwing along their paths.

These aspirations further underscore the African Womanist ideology which Ezeigbo's oeuvre often tends to portray. Its holistic and humanistic approach to gender issues is broadly inclusive. In seeking the survival of the whole, it wittingly desires to foster compassion in human relationships. The Womanist

advocates the critical unity of a people through the evolution of a philosophy of life that is acceptable to both men and women. (Okonjo-Ogunyemi: 1996). In spite of the incredibly distressing picture created by this author's preoccupations in *Trafficked*, several of her other works depict some positive outcomes of contemporary migrations; while not overlooking the impacts of the resultant inter-mingling of cultures in this era of globalization. Such impact has become visible in some measure in the lives of virtually everyone on the African continent, for the world truly continues to shrink daily into a global arena. Especially, one dares to argue that this current trend has opened up vistas of new lives, new experiences and needless to say immense opportunities in diverse facets of life. Perhaps this point is best illustrated in the Ezeigbo's work titled *Children of the Eagle* (2002).

III The Soaring Daughters of the Eagle

The concluding part of a trilogy, this narrative chronicles the lives of five dynamic women who are descendants of the legendary Obiatu and Ejimnaka whose lives were portrayed in *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996) the first of the trio. The women come across in the novel as well bred, highly educated, thoroughly enlightened and positively cosmopolitan in their outlook. Their mother, Eaglewoman (the female protagonist in *House of Symbols*, 2001), stands formidable as a strong force in their lives. A truly extraordinary woman in her own right, Eaglewoman has travelled extensively within their local region, constantly moving her children along, so the entire family could be together with her civil-servant husband, wherever his job took him. Without much formal education, she had been a very staunch support for her husband as he faced diverse challenges in his career. Her brief periods of stay in the developing cities at that time further serve to enhance her already forward-looking and emancipating ideas.

Children of the Eagle, consequently engages the lives of Eaglewoman's now grown up daughters. Right from the beginning of the narrative, the reader notes that there is an ongoing effort by Nnenne to chronicle the biography of the family. She, the second daughter, is not only a senior lecturer in a university, but also a writer. In the novel, four daughters gather at their home in the village to attend the important Obufo festival and in particular to make preparations for the joint celebration of their mother's birthday party and late father's memorial service. This gathering affords Nnenne a much needed opportunity to gather first-hand information from the family members about the personal details of their lives. These stories about their lives serve to mirror the successes they record in their respective locations as they continually face challenges on account of their gender. The work thus contrasts very sharply with the unrivalled exploitation of the female protagonists in *Trafficked*.

It is thus interesting to read Adimora-Ezeigbo's intense expositions of several aspects of Umuga culture in *Children of the Eagle*. The deliberate and particular focus on the challenging complications that emanate from the

absence of a male child in an Igbo family, is one clear instance. In some sense one may not be off the mark to deduce that alongside other factors, a man within this culture is also rated for his achievements by the number of thriving sons he sires. One recalls Okonkwo's unabating anguish over what he considered as his son Nwoye's 'soft nature' or 'womanish disposition' in Achebe's epochal *Things Fall Apart*. To Okonkwo, the valiant warrior, as crucial as having a son was, having a weak one was as terrible as having none at all. Indeed having a capable son remains essential, and the heroines in *Children of the Eagle* strive to confront the challenges which assail the family on account of the absence of an adult male son in the homestead.

Eaglewoman's daughters are remarkable in their concerted, albeit combined efforts to tackle each obstacle they meet in their resolute determination to protect their widowed aging mother from the harsh strictures of the patriarchal traditions in their hometown of Umuga. Early in the narrative for instance, we read about a land dispute that is reminiscent of the incessant land squabbles which remain rife across villages in eastern Nigeria. In this case, Eaglewoman's husband had acquired a parcel of land adjacent to his compound from a neighbour Umeaku. Although, the said neighbour had sold the land to redeem a debt he could not pay, their settlement had been an amicable one that granted him happiness and peace of mind (73). After the deaths of both men however the seller's sons suddenly begin to encroach on the same land, suddenly questioning the original boundary and vandalising the land markers. A distraught Eaglewoman sends SOS messages to her daughters. As she puts it, she could do nothing as she had neither husband nor grown son to fight for her. (71)

Her daughters swing into immediate action. They quickly arrive the village with the intent to prove to their mother that her daughters are not as helpless as she thinks. She is quickly assured that they would "show these people that we know to fight for our rights" (72). The eldest daughters decide to visit the Ogunano Ezeala, the highest decision-making body in Umuaga to lay their petition. They are astonished to learn from their mother that this is not possible as "women are not permitted to approach Ogunano Ezeala directly or address the council" (74). Her suggestion that they approach the council through a highly trusted male friend further infuriates these ladies, who find it preposterous to imagine that the tradition of the land actually forbids women from approaching a council set up for arbitrating cases for its indigenes. Amara clearly wonders if Umuga is retrogressing: At this time and age women are not allowed to approach a group set up to keep peace in the town? (74)

Rejecting their mother's counsel, the ladies finally resolve to write a carefully worded letter to the council, with subtle threats of going to court if they failed to obtain the required justice. Of course, their bold and tactful approach

eventually yields positive fruit. One believes therefore, that while Adimora-Ezeigbo is poignant in her depiction and condemnation of such limiting traditional norms, she is also quick to create females who arise not only to confront such impediments, but who remain resolved to overcome them all. One is quick to note however, that mere strong resolutions to overcome obstacles do not in the end translate to actual victory over such. The females in this narrative are thus seen to manifest unflinching resolve as they seek out ways of surmounting their many obstacles. It is a testament to their tenacity that they succeed in many instances.

The example cited above is actually just one of several lucid cases of inhibiting traditions found in Umuga which in reality remain totally undermining of the female folk. Perhaps the author is deliberate in her articulation of these, with the hope possibly; that the much needed change will ultimately be heralded in such societies. The matriarchal figure in the story is Eaglewoman, whose beloved husband Josiah had died year back. She later recounts her ordeal at the hands of her husband's relatives:

His death exposed me to the sharp tooth of Umuga's unkind customs directed against widows. I tasted the poison of malice brewed by his envious and greedy relatives. I was humiliated, brow-beaten and pressured to perform the three-day ritual lament at cockcrow, after the burial. Thank God for your intervention - you and your sisters - after the first day. It saved me from howling like a hyena for three days (160).

Eaglewoman is fortunate. Her daughters 'feeling murderous' towards their mother's tormentors rose to the challenge and were able to save their already traumatised mother the further anguish of shouting endlessly at dawn each morning for no other reason than the demands of their tradition. Wailing in this manner signified that a bereaved wife was truly mourning her dead husband. One can only imagine the fate of countless other widows who are compelled to undergo this tortuous ritual with no one to come to their rescue. The author highlights how part of Eaglewoman's ordeals remain traceable to the absence of a male child in their home for several years. While her husband, the kind Josiah Okwara decided to accept his fate over not having a male child, his relatives disdained his harmonious relationship with 'this wife' who could only birth female children.

To drive home the point, a close male relative visits the Okwara family and demands that their four plots of land in Enyimba city be sold to him. In his traditional way of reasoning, his brother Josiah had no male child; it therefore made little sense to keep holding onto the land. He takes great offence when Josiah refused to acquiesce to his demand. Turning around, the aggrieved man blames Eaglewoman for her husband's refusal to sell the property to him. He

accuses her of turning his brother against him and of "hoarding family land for [her] clan of daughters" (94). Overcome by such acts of provocation and oppression from cruel and envious relatives, Eaglewoman wept bitterly, violated as she was by his taunts. She could not resist asking him how the land bought with the profit from her bakery qualified to be designated as 'family land?'

This incident became an eye opener for the growing girls. They were dismayed at the realisation that "women were not expected or permitted to own land in [the] culture even when they pay for it with their own money" (94). We catch a glimpse of Ogonna's thoughts:

If land is bought with a woman's wealth, the real owner of the land is her husband, if she is married. It is viewed as a misfortune to have a family populated by daughters, without a son. It was a shock from which I did not recover for a long time. ...

After this experience, Mama took steps to secure what belonged to her. There was no male child in the family then. She accepted the reality that the female property, especially land, located in Umuga would be lost to us her daughters as a result of our gender. And she lived with the fear then that she might not have any more children. To her it was as if a son were a rare commodity, which had disappeared from the market when she went shopping. Her sorrow was great (95).

Here also we note the preference for male children over the females. The absence of one indeed had so much impact on family members as it affects relationships. Even worse, it seems to cast an unyielding shadow of gloom over everyone, for it tends to portend the inevitability of the terrible fate that would befall the family whenever the father in the home died. The terror that kept a permanent grip on Eaglewoman's heart is aptly captured in the above passage as one takes note of such phrases as "she lived with fear..." or "Her sorrow was great." Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the situation is her quiet acceptance of the fact that her daughters would be divested of their father's possessions. In Eaglewoman's case also, the relatives were in such a haste to take over their properties that they did not even wait for the demise of her husband. Aside from the instance cited above, there is also the occasion during which the family members managed to persuade her husband to give up the building in front of their house for his divorced sister to live in.

The building was originally designed to be a shop. This meant that it did not have the conveniences which a residential apartment ought to have. The extended family decide and insist that a small kitchen be constructed behind the building for the would be tenant's use. But incidentally, this 'behind,' would

be the front of Eaglewoman's house. She knew the plot was calculated to infuriate and frustrate her. Yet as she imagined how smoke emanating from the woman's cooking would engulf her home, her distress in the face of her helplessness knew no bounds. Left with no idea about what else to do, she turned to her young daughters. They did not disappoint. On the appointed day for the take-over of their space, they took up positions in front of the house shouting out their rejection of the arrangement. The bold young females insisted that their opinion should be asked for and taken into consideration in a matter that affected them. Their plan worked, when the enraged family members walked away from their compound silently. Recounting this incident years later, Ogonna recalls how they had merely armed themselves with courage as their sole weapon of war, what else could they indeed have had? She was barely twenty, while their youngest sister was eleven.

Is Adimora-Ezeigbo thereby advocating courage as a necessary weapon for the war? It does seem really that there is a war to be fought by the females within this culture. This becomes evident against the boundless traditional customs that clearly limit women and hinder them from self-realisation, fulfilment and actualisation. In what has become a daily battle for survival, one deduces that a success requires bravery that might at times border on audacity as continually exhibited by Eaglewoman's daughters. The narrative shows the many successes and victories recorded by the women as they dare to be brave. Eaglewoman's second daughter is Nnenna, a university lecturer. While revealing her awareness of the injustices against women within her culture as well as palpable scorn for them, she does not hesitate to confront such issues headlong. She speaks out as a voice against what she considers issues of injustice. As she puts it herself:

My crusade for progress and my burning desire to change things around me swung to social issues. Umuga became the object of my gaze. I isolated issues, which I considered undesirable and attacked them vigorously, like a boxer. Gender inequity in the award of chieftaincy titles among Umuga citizens by Eze-Oha II, the Eze of Umuga in partnership with Umuga Progressive Union (UPU) was one such issue. Some Umuga men were honoured with titles, but not a single woman was similarly treated. I was completely dismayed at the gross injustice. One month after the award ceremony, I wrote a letter to UPU and copied Eze Oha II and the *Umuada*. The most strongly worded protest letter I had ever written (170).

The letter required tact and force at the same time. It therefore took Nnenna sometime to carefully articulate her thoughts. She admits that she wrote with passion and pain in her heart. She artfully copied the mail to the *Umuada* and

admits also afterwards that this was the avalanche that jolted the men awake. The Umuada roared like enraged lionesses (171). They sent at once for Nnenna and had a meeting with her. Thereafter, they mounted tremendous pressure on the male leadership, "and did not relent until they were assured of redress in a reasonably short period." (171-172)

Several issues come to bear in the progressive looking attitude of Eaglewoman's five daughters. They have all had the benefit of quality education which unarguably has a way of liberating one's mind, as it equips its recipient with requisite tools for asking questions and probing around knotty subjects. There is also the added advantage of residency in urban cities, known for their dynamism and cosmopolitan outlooks. Aside from education and living in cities within their country, they females have been privileged to travel beyond the continent to visit, spend considerable time or even live in parts of the western world in different capacities and for diverse purposes. Chiaku for instance lives in London, where she works as a medical practitioner, while Nnenna has had extended stays as an academic either on sabbatical leave or for research work.

The difference between African rural centres and the villages remain clear-cut. Mbanaso and Korieh (2014) argue that a "constant phenomenon which is pervasive across the continent is an urban development policy that disproportionately favors large urban centres over the small towns and the rural areas" (181). The implication is that in offering more service amenities including electricity, portable water, better roads, enhanced communication services, better school systems and the like, people naturally gravitate towards these urbane centres. The cities in attracting diverse peoples from all races, cultures, religions, beliefs and so on, become a conflagration of cultures.

We turn now to look at the lives of these remarkable women in a slightly more detailed manner. Ogonna the first female lives in Lagos with her family. She had met and married her husband Uzoma after her first husband dies tragically in the Nigeria-Biafran war which had greatly affected the lives of these people in the most adverse ways. Although she was not really in love with Uzoma when she elected to marry him, she had hoped she would grow to love him over time. This hope does not come to be as the man turns out to be a rather difficult person. He is equally described as opinionated, miserly and selfish. Overtime, their marital relationship deteriorates to the extent that they live almost like strangers, with each person independently engrossed in their own private life and activities. Ogonna describes the situation as terrible, yet in spite of her frustrations, she opts to remain in the marriage. She abhors the effect which the trauma of divorce would hoist on her young children.

Emancipated as Ogonna is in her mind, she is not blinded to the stigma of divorce in her society, or to the "embarrassing sniggers of people: the finger pointing..." (126). She dreads the scorn too and does not look forward to the single life of a divorced female in a hostile and spiteful atmosphere. Another

major source of worry for her too, is her mother and how news about her wrecked marriage might affect her. Ogonna resolves to find joy and solace in her thriving business, work, and children. She seeks and finds emotional stability and as her sister puts it, is “able to carry this burden with such a mien of equanimity” (124). Perhaps Ogonna’s liberation is yet stemmed (even if subtly) by her environment. For her sister Chiaku has been able to walk out of a bad marriage. When Nnenna points this fact out to her, Ogonna simply reminds her that Chiaku lives in London where no one cares about another’s marital status. Her Aunt Rachel who had gotten a divorce had not fared well. She had merely floated around like “like a boat cut adrift from its mooring moving from one place to another...” (129). Both sisters admit however how education has armed them with resources to support themselves should they ever find themselves single from divorce.

Nnenna is the second daughter. Through her character, Adimora-Ezeigbo explores the path a female lecturer has to tread. She must strive to hold a marriage and family together while aspiring to excel in the arena of an academic career, already filled up with men who have no wish to grant her space to thrive alongside them. Nnenna shares her frustrations and disappointments. She has arrived at the university with her head bursting with knowledge so to say. Ideas bloom in her head. She has dreams of assisting to give the institution a new lease of life, a fresh breath as she puts it to invigorate the section where she worked (168). She admits to being starry eyed and idealistic. She hopes also to trigger off research in her department as well as encourage collaborative work. Her dreams and aspirations soon meet mountainous obstacles:

Soon enough, however, I was to realise that my dreams would dash to pieces against some rocks – rocks stronger than the famous Olumo Rocks. These rocks were not only strong, but also jagged. They were no ordinary rocks: they could move, grow and multiply. There was no getting around them (168).

The disillusioned woman withdrew, as she puts it, to charge to a new front where she yet hopes to make a breakthrough. She writes carefully worded letters to ten professors, inviting them in her capacity as the seminar coordinator, to present papers in their fortnightly seminar series. Afterwards she describes their reactions, “You would think she was inviting them to infect them with smallpox or the dreaded HIV-AIDS” (169). Their responses were interesting. A few wrote to say they would think about it. Two mentioned as they met her along the corridor that they received her letter. Others choose to remain mute, neither mentioning nor referring in any way to the letter. As she pondered over the reactions of these senior colleagues of hers, she

wondered among other factors of course, if her being a female might have affected their reactions.

Not one to be put down however Nnenna sought and discovered other ways to express herself and her ideas, as well as how best to pursue the dreams for her life. At peace with herself, the intensely gifted female, channels her energies into her writing, and into other social issues in the society. She also takes up the challenge of chronicling her family's biography, a project which elicits the following wise counsel from their mother: "it is not everything the eyes see that the mouth talks about: it is not everything the heart knows that the mouth declares" (93).

Obioma, the pastor and evangelist is the third daughter. She is privileged to be the successful pastor of a church, alongside being a good wife and mother. While her life has the similitude of peace and stability on the surface, she remains haunted by an error from her teenage years. During a particularly challenging period for the family, her father had been unable to quickly send her funds as he was wont to. The recently ended war at that time had left most of the people in the south east bankrupt and destitute. She had returned to school where hunger and extreme poverty marked their shallow existence at that time. On this occasion after having had absolutely nothing to eat for two days, because she had no penny left, Obioma's "body screamed for food that would not come" (220). It was in this state of near-starvation that she allowed another student, Florence to unwittingly persuade her to go along to the Army Barracks, where she met Lanre Roberts. Again without really intending to, she found herself in a relationship with him.

Obioma remained plagued by a throbbing and remorseful conscience throughout the spell of their relationship. Within the recesses of her mind were reverberations of her father's haunting words of warning each time she left home: "*Remember who you are*" (229). While she struggled on with her thoughts, Lanre did keep his word and provided her with more than enough to meet her needs and assuage her hunger. By the time her father finally arrived with all the money she needed, she wept profusely, even as she resolved within her to utterly sever every contact with the army captain. Obioma kept her vow, but discovered shortly after, to her utmost dismay that she was already pregnant. Florence again came up with the suggestion to have the pregnancy terminated. Midway through the procedure, Obioma had a change of heart, as pangs of conscience and remorse engulfed her. She realised she needed to confide in her parents and so fled home, ready to face the consequences of her disappointing acts.

Events however take a different turn for her and for the family. After their initial disappointment, shock and pain, her mother hatches a plan in which she simulates a pregnancy. Obioma is whisked away to friends in Ibaland,

where she remains until she is delivered of a baby boy. Once again, her mother, the remarkable Eaglewoman takes over. She becomes the mother of the baby boy and the circumstances of his birth remain a closely guarded family secret, known to only five members of the family. Perhaps, it is part of the ironies of life that an incident which would ordinarily have brought great shame and disgrace to an otherwise well regarded family; an event which might have ruined the academic pursuit of this young girl brings the family tremendous joy through the birth of the 'highly coveted' baby boy. The baby becomes a source of great respite for his parents as they suddenly become empowered to make plans for the future of their homestead assured now that an heir would eventually inherit it. The boy becomes the centre of Eaglewoman's life, after her husband's death, for he embodied in entirety the continuity of her husband's lineage.

Perhaps however, it is through the lives of Chiaku and Amara, Eaglewoman's younger daughters that Adimora-Ezeigbo's depictions of cosmopolitan influences come to the fore. Chiaku the medical doctor lives in London. She met and married a Ghanaian man, who at the time also appeared to be resident in London. When she discovers that the man takes delight in moving to new locations and getting married to unsuspecting females, whom he abandons routinely after a couple of years, she does not hesitate to divorce him. Devastated and unable to apprehend the uncanny truth she had just uncovered, she nonetheless resolves to stir herself up from the nightmarish experience and to forge ahead with her life. Her sole joy after the encounter was that she did not have a child out of the false relationship. She recovers afterwards and begins to share a flat with an African American female friend. During a brief visit to her house in London, Chiaku's younger sister Amara, becomes suspicious about the nature of relationship existing between the two women. She decides to probe her sister and bid her time for an opportune moment. Her time came on a night when the African American lady, Emma retired early. Amara plucks up courage and after prevaricating in the manner of her Igbo people before broaching a critical matter in a discussion; she finally gets to the point and asks quite directly: "Please, tell me, this American woman you live with, what is she to you?" (183). Prodded by Chiaku to explain what she means by her question, an undeterred Amara replies: "I mean, what is your relationship with her?" (183). Chiaku's calm response that she is a close friend fails to satisfy Amara, who pursues her investigation as we read thus:

Is she something more than a close friend?" I hesitated. "I mean, more than a good friend in the ordinary sense? We all have close friends, but I'm asking if she is something to you more than my close female friends are to me. Surely, you know what I mean?"

I groped for the right, the tactful words to make myself clear. Words that are not only appropriate, but also respectful and inoffensive (183).

Chiaku feels offended at this point and chides her younger sister for disrespect, and reminds her that she is at least three years older and that ought to be respected. Amara refuses to be dissuaded and urges her sister not to evade the question:

I stared back at her, determined not to be intimidated. "Chiaku, do not try to evade the issue. Answer me. Have you done something people at home will be shocked to hear? Are you doing something that will grieve Mama's heart if she hears, if she knows? Please, *sista nkem* - my beloved sister - do not do anything that will make our ancestor turn in their graves (184).

Chiaku laughs and insists that nobody should turn in their graves on account of her and later reminds Amara that she was probably doing a far worse thing by consorting with the descendants of the Europeans who caused their grandparent's deaths; and planning to marry one of them. At the end of the day however, Chiaku neither affirms nor denies the allegations. This in itself speaks volumes. She merely informs Amara that what she (Amara) was thinking was not necessarily what she was doing with her life, and puts an end to the discussion by advising her to mind her business, so she will equally mind hers.

Since Chiaku remains hedgy about the subject, one can only surmise that there might be some truth therein. This position is further strengthened by the fact that Amara had been staying with them for a few days, and most probably noticed some unusual closeness that triggers off the suspicion that her sister might be in a lesbian relationship with Emma. Perhaps then, Chiaku's wholehearted attempt at marriage ends disastrously and she finds love and authenticity in a relationship with another female. This in her words may well be her business and no one else's. It is not too difficult to view this as an offshoot of her now urbanised perceptions and outlook. If she dares to engage in a lesbian relationship back home, (something totally abhorred within her culture, but which may nonetheless occur secretly, as Adimora-Ezeigbo cursorily portrays in *Roses and Bullets*), she would never be bold enough to move in with such a person to co-habit as it were in a home. Her freedom indeed to mind her own business in this cosmopolitan city gives her the leverage that would be totally non-existent in her home country.

Eaglewoman's youngest daughter Amara is perhaps the most vocal in her verbal denunciations of her traditional norms which she finds utterly

deprecating. Ironically though, it appears she still draws a firm line against lesbianism, convinced it is abhorrent to her people and culture. At several points in the narrative Amara is seen decrying what she constantly perceives to be the gross injustices which her culture metes out to women. Interestingly, her questioning began early in life. She found herself progressively revolting even if in her psyche, against the culture, so we read her thoughts:

As years, rolled by, I became increasingly estranged from my hometown Umuga. My soul revolted against some of the unjust traditions practised by people. Why should so much importance be attached to male children to the detriment of their female siblings? Why should daughters be disinherited, especially where land is concerned? Why should an industrious woman like Mama be made to feel inadequate because she didn't have a male child all those years before Nkemdirim came to the scene? Why? Why? So many questions my soul asked without receiving any rational answers (177).

...I was not satisfied with things as they stood, as they stand. I grew up challenging, in my heart if not openly, a culture that sought - still - seeks to subordinate and humiliate my sisters and me. A culture that disinherits women. Since I could not change the culture I began to resent and even hate it. It got to a stage where I only visited the town to see my family who lived there. I had no joy being there myself (178).

Probably a combination of factors contributes to the consolidation of such a tough stance in Amara's mind. She witnessed as she reveals her parents unpleasant experiences and especially her mother's unending pain and anguish at the humiliating treatment from harsh relatives because she did not have a son at the time. She thus grows up to rebuff virtually everything that is even remotely connected to this culture. She convinces herself that if her town, Umuga continues to cling to backward customs like disinheriting her daughters because they are not sons, she would eventually cease even the annual visits to her ancestor's graves. Indeed unless things change for the better, if her mother dies, there would be nothing at all to take her there anymore. Her rejection is so total that she does not hesitate in the decision to get married to Nick, a white man. For these many reasons, Amara can barely wait to get married to Nick and move over to London to join him.

One can thus imagine this young woman's consternation when Pa Joel suggests that her forthcoming marriage to Nick be suspended pending the outcome of Nkemdirim's hospitalisation. The boy, their only brother, was involved in a car

accident on his way back from the city to participate in the planned family celebrations. From the information they receive, he is in a very critical condition as his injuries are extensive. There is an understandably heightened anxiety engulfing the entire household, as they pray fervently for his recovery. It is during this time that Pa Joel, perhaps acting in good faith, invites the sisters to a meeting. He points out that while they all pray and hope for a favourable outcome for Nkemdirim, they must nonetheless not overlook the slim chance that he could die from the sustained injuries. He thought therefore that Amara's marriage be suspended, so that in the event that the boy fails to recover, Amara would be put through the process of the *nluikwa* tradition. This would enable her remain unmarried at home, so as to perpetuate their father's name by producing a son who would inherit his vast property in Umuga and other places.

Although Pa Joel believes that Amara is the most impetuous and radical of the five sisters, he nonetheless hopes she will agree to go along with his suggestion in the event that there was no alternative. The sisters are all visibly shocked and outraged at Pa Joel's words, which are completely incomprehensible to them all. In spite of their immense displeasure however, Nnenne finds her tongue and responds with a carefully worded albeit impromptu speech. She tells him how the strength of their relationship and his being like a father to them had stopped her from taking offence at him. She further acknowledges his good intentions before reminding him that should their only brother die, there were five sisters left to inherit their father's property and who were resolved not to allow the slightest portion of his property to be lost. An ensuing argument continues for a while, until Ogonna shouts them to a stop, while Obioma points out the absurdity of the situation.

Amara merely sniggers at his words. She manages to refrain from responding to someone she considers a fanatical traditionalist who does not admit that times have changed (386). Pa Joel's daughter, Adanna, their close friend happened to have been sitting with them when her father came to deliver his missive. She too is understandably embarrassed beyond words at her father's suggestions. Her position is worsened by the fact that she runs an NGO that advocates for the rights of women. She thus urges her friends not to judge her father too harshly, for though there were thousands who still reasoned like him in Umuga, yet there were stirrings of change. She puts it thus:

... But thank God, for more and more people in the town and in the country as a whole are realising that women have rights that tradition and culture denied them for so long – the right to own property, to have aspirations and actualise them. This is the new dawn we are all working hard to see to its total emergence in our society (388-389).

Certainly then Amara is not alone in the quest for change in Umuga and in the country as a whole. Ostensibly, they all desire to see significant changes in the fate and destiny of the women in the land. Even Eaglewoman remains hopeful for the long awaited changes. This is not out of place, considering how she was a direct recipient of many harsh cultural practices. Yet although she denounces “the multitude of customs that mortify the soul so much that one wonders how they were configured in the first place,” (318), she seeks a balance. She wisely admits “that there are many things that are wholesome in our culture –things that are worth preserving-...” (318). Having had her say as the elder that she is, she offers some advice for Adanna in her human rights crusade activities:

...The truth is that it would take not a few people but the whole community to fight these unwholesome customs and uproot them completely. This is the time everyone will rise up and say, ‘No, we do not want this and this, that and that to exist in our midst any longer.’ I think this is the only way out. It is not a battle one man or one woman can fight and win. This is what I keep saying to those like you, my children and Adanna, Joel’s daughter who are engaged in this battle. You must mobilise everybody – women and men and even children – in this war. On the other hand, all that is wholesome in our culture should be protected and preserved. Meanwhile, women must find a benign way to survive until salvation comes.” (318-319)

The last line in the above speech re-echos or perhaps foreshadows what has come to be Adimora- Ezeigbo’s ideological stance in the ongoing discourse on African female. Her views have been fully encapsulated in her seminal work *Snail Sense feminism* (2012). Eaglewoman had aired similar views in a discussion with the girls who were irked that the elders sent to erect a pillar in resolution of the land dispute with their neighbours had insisted that their only brother be present before the work could be done. When the sisters explained that their brother was far away in school, they demanded for a male relative. It took Pa Joel’s intervention to calm fraying nerves and get the work done. We thus hear from the matriarch:

Listen my children,” Eaglewoman begins on a serious note. “You have to know how to deal with these people if you want to get on with your life. A woman is like a snail that must crawl over thorns and rocks with a smooth and lubricated tongue. This is the only way the snail can survive, or its tongue will be torn to shreds as it journeys

on rough terrain. But being like that does not mean women are fools (318).

The young Amara does not share this view. She remains persuaded that such conciliatory attitudes have brought women nothing but pain, oppression and insult. Whatever the individual objections however, the women are all in agreement that much change is required for the female folk. There is also the unspoken agreement that the change must involve everyone. Thus when Eaglewoman enthuses that everybody, including men must be mobilised for the battle, one recalls Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's insistence that "we must all be feminists," which has elicited diverse reactions across the world. Perhaps Adichie is only borrowing astutely from the wisdom of Eaglewoman, an old female matriarch who incidentally shares the very same cultural background as the now world famous female writer.

Eaglewoman does not merely talk, she follows her words up with action. The change is truly beginning with her. Ogonna sees her mother's willingness to accept Nick as son-in-law as a major step forward. She thinks therefore that "Mama has changed in ways that seemed inconceivable" (250). Nobody needs to be told that has she not allowed herself to embrace the changing society, she certainly would never grant consent to such a marriage. The magnitude of the change is further accentuated by the singular major regret in Eaglewoman's life. She had because of her great fears and anxiety issued subtle threats that hindered her late husband from embarking on a trip abroad. He thus missed his only opportunity as a civil servant to travel overseas. She who at the time was too afraid to allow him travel, eventually embarked on the journey abroad to visit her daughter. The ironies of life indeed. Without doubt Eaglewoman, embraces changes in her life and is thus justified in advocating for change in the lives around her.

The change begins of course at individual levels. If Nnenna would use the medium of writing however to seek change, her younger sisters opt to tow other paths. Nnenna takes to writing as needs arise to fight for just causes. She fights against injustice against women and promotes fairness and equity in society. We see thus that her carefully crafted letters tend to yield positive results. The Ogunano Ezeala responds to the mail by sending men to erect concrete pillars to mark boundaries on the disputed family land. Even more, the daughters of Okwara who wrote the letter were commended by this leadership for the "mature way they acted on the matter." (315) The protest letter she later wrote to the town union urging them to equally consider worthy females for honour and recognition was also adhered to.

With Chiaku, Adimora-Ezeigbo decides to allow her relationship with Emma to remain undefined. Amara's attempt at inquisition yields no result. As the relationship status remains unclear, the idea comes across very strongly that

what Dr Chiaku does with her life is entirely her business. Amara would shout to anyone who cares to listen how distasteful she finds her culture and traditions. If she sometimes takes her position and measures to extremes, this is also her decision. She feels no regrets at moving out of the country, to put as far a distance as possible between herself and the culture she repudiates so vehemently. Perhaps the most astonishing aspect of her rebellion lies in her resolve to never birth a child. Her mother was aghast the day she heard her utter what sounded like sacrilegious words. Amara had mentioned during a discussion session with her mother that not everyone wanted a child, and she for one did not want any. (44-45). Her outraged mother warns her against saying foolish things that she might later regret. Amara's resolve over this matter remains firm however.

About this stance on children also, Amara's sisters warn her that she would never find a man who would not want to have children in marriage. She clings to her resolve and decisions until she meets Nick. He too does not want to have any children and an elated Amara is only too happy to see her dream in a man come true. It does not matter to her if the man is European. Amara is making her choices to live her own life in actualisation of her hopes and aspirations. As for Ogonna, the challenges in her ill-fated marriage cause her to pursue other interests. She invests time and effort in her business until it begins to flourish. Her decision to remain in the loveless and joyless marriage is equally borne however out of personal choice. She has made peace with her choice, for she is determined not to do whatever would traumatise her children.

It is crucial to note in summary the background of the heroines in Ezeigbo's *The Children of the Eagle*. We already mentioned that this narrative is the concluding part of a trilogy. The story thus begins in *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996), continues in *House of Symbols* (2001) and culminates in the narrative studied here. Eaglewoman is the daughter of Aziagba, who in turn is the daughter of Ejimnaka, one of the most renowned members of Oluada, the representative voice group of the women of Umuga. All three women had led remarkable lives filled with extraordinary feats. Each had in her own time been able to adjust to the dictates of her era, just as they exhibited great prowess in overcoming the challenging obstacles that life threw across each of their paths. Their stories have become entrenched in the memories of the Umuga people for in their eyes, the women were legendary.

Our heroines are daughters of a female named Eaglewoman. The eagle as Nnenne discovers from her research is "the only bird of distinction accorded symbolic value in our culture" (191). The name of this bird features prominently in many names and titles given to males and females in their town. (Ugochukwu, Ugonma, Ugoeze, Adaugo, Ugonna, Ugonwanyi and many others are examples). Besides this, everything about the eagle is valued highly, including its feathers (which adorns the dress items of titled men), and its

claws. Nnenne finds out too that the eagle is the most intelligent bird in the world and can soar higher than any other winged creature (191). Proudly, these daughters of the eagle are seen soaring high. Five female descendants of mighty women, they take pride in the bravery of these forebears and currently remain spurred on to embrace whatever they need to, in order to find fulfilment in their individual lives.

Conclusion

It comes across rather vividly from the narratives examined thus far, that Adimora-Ezeigbo remains significantly concerned with portraying the ways in which on-going migrations across local, national and international boundaries continue to impact on the African female in particular. In addition, there is an encompassing interest in the cultural/intercultural intermix that is engendering an escalating hybridisation of new values. These new trends in turn currently influence in no small measures the vast majority of men, women, youth and even children across the globe. These changes in diverse ways become the subject of many a literary artist including Adimora-Ezeigbo in their works. The reality is that the societies of the world are undergoing transformations at all levels and in all spheres of life, with humans at the vanguard. The changes however come to the fore when people are invariably compelled to respond to developments around them. Perhaps then, it is the responses that matter.

Again the responses form part of what the writer seeks to examine. In *Trafficked* for instance, one notes how the young girls lured by the promised (cum assumed), attractions of the cities, and by the endless possibilities awaiting them out there, begin to respond to the harsh realities that eventually confront them on arrival at the destinations. Some attempt escape, others feel trapped and elect to do nothing, while yet others choose to keep rebelling at the situation, etc. By deporting them back home and arranging rehabilitation centres, where they are gradually prepared for reintegration back into normal life, the author seems to be placing before them once more options from which they must select. The ability to put the past experience behind, to recover and to attempt to make new meaning out of life is one option, just as choosing to wallow in self pity, while refusing to heal is another. It requires will power for the girls to surmount the tragic past. At the end, only those who muster the requisite will power to transcend will prevail.

With the females in the second narrative, *Children of the Eagle*, one sees clearly that they all are united in their push for enhanced quality of lives for themselves. They are determined, assertive and proactive. They see themselves as daughters of an eagle who have no choice other than not just to fly, but to soar as high as possible. Their responses and choices thus speak for themselves. They do not concede defeat on account of their gender and are persuaded that there must be a way around every obstacle that attempts to hinder their paths to self-actualisation and self-fulfilment. In several ways then, it appears the

author models them in some way as sources of encouragement for would be successful women.

Whatever directions the changes in our societies and universe tilt toward therefore, one thing is clear: there would always be the positive and the negative outcomes of the current movements across regions and cultures. However, this writer points out as we see in *Trafficked* for instance, that women must resist demands that dehumanise them in the way that prostitution does. The horrors are unimaginable and the treatments abhorrent and debasing. Each female must thus resolve to embrace the change that would suit her best. This may not always be easy and may involve battles, but fight she must. Her survival must remain uppermost in her mind.

In our narratives we have seen therefore that, while one cannot argue with evidences of what amount to gross subordinations of women within this culture, the writer correspondingly urges for change through the strong females she creates. Whether the change will come through subtle and conciliatory moves as advocated by Eaglewoman or through fiery radical confrontations, the truth is that certain moves must certainly be made. The characters thus make their own moves in their peculiar ways. They are determined not to remain undermined because of their gender. As Adimora-Ezeigbo summarily enthuses: A woman who wishes to live a fulfilled life expends her time fighting many battles: winning some, losing some. The struggle begins in her childhood and continues as long as she lives.

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