

## Twenty-First Century Nigerian Migratory Fiction: A Postcolonial Analysis of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*

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**Abstract:** This paper examines how Nigeria's narrative fiction has been dominated by issues of migration and trafficking in the twenty-first century which have led to the formation of a Nigerian migratory fiction. The major argument is that two dominant experiences of the twenty-first century Nigerian fiction are the experiences of migration and trafficking which are manifestations of postcolonial distortions of reality after independence. This paper explores the fictional narrative of migratory Nigerian fiction and the experiences with a view to mapping out how this pole has conditioned the literary imagination in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*. The major focus of this essay is on how Adimora-Ezeigbo has represented the postcolonial conditions of migration and the experiences of exile. The major finding is that conditions of banality or loss of meaning are the dominant motifs of twenty-first century Nigerian fiction, and in *Trafficked*, Adimora-Ezeigbo uses the experiences of the female protagonist, Nneoma to capture the experiences of migration and trafficking which are the dominant trends in modern Nigerian fiction. The paper adopts Homi K. Bhabha's strand of postcolonial theory to contextualize this emerging discourse in Nigerian fiction. The interrogation reveals a strong useful link between what he calls "conditions of anomie" and migration or the desire for exile. The paper argues that Adimora-Ezeigbo's narrative contextualizes postcolonial contradictions, thus making the narrative a platform for exploring the consequences of both forced and voluntary migration in recent Nigerian fictional narration. The paper further argues that because of the willingness of the characters to migrate in search of better opportunities, the novel can be classified as belonging to the Nigerian migratory fiction of the twenty-first century. The paper concludes by interrogating the psychological shock which immigrants trapped by the forces of globalization experience within the contexts of disempowerment and banality.

**Keywords:** Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo; trafficking; migration; postcolonial; disempowerment, banality; malfunctions; Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION

This study examines Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* as a depiction of postcolonial conditions of 'anomie' in Nigeria. This informs the choice of Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory in the analysis of the novel. The novel deals with the questions of economic disempowerment in the Nigerian society after independence. This disempowerment has caused the migration of the youth and the trafficking of women into better economies of Europe. Bhabha's postcolonial theory brings into focus the undercurrent narratives of anxiety and loss of meaning which plague the Nigerian society after independence. The study further explores how the farce of national independence and lack of choices have caused migration and trafficking of women. The paper further examines some of the narrative tools of writing the author has used to narrate the bitter experiences of migration and trafficking in twenty-first century Nigerian fiction.

### Theoretical Reflections

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have argued that postcolonial theory "involves discussion about experiences of various kinds: migration, slavery... and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe..." (2). This paper will anchor on Homi K. Bhabha's argument on postcolonial theory. He argues that the postcolonial theory "seeks to explore those social pathologies—"loss of

meaning and conditions of anomie—that no longer simply 'cluster around class antagonism [but] break up into widely scattered historical contingencies'" (246). Bhabha makes an important observation when he asserts that "...Contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement... of Third World migration to the West after the Second World War, or the traffic of economic and political refugees within and outside the Third World" (247). The implication of this observation is that postcolonial conditions are the outcome of the historical realities that have shaped conditions in the former colonized countries of Asia and Africa. These conditions of anomie manifest in socio-political deficiencies. Edward Said notes in *Culture and Imperialism* that postcolonial societies are dominated by "political and economic questions" (5). This "political and economic questions" manifest in high level of social crises, corruption and failure of leadership (5). The manifestations of postcolonial conditions in Nigeria include high "level of poverty, unemployment, ignorance and disease" and uncertainty in education and health services (Ushie 8). Achille Mbembe states in his work *On the Postcolony* that "the postcolony encloses multiple *durée* made up of discontinuities and reversal..." (14). The 'discontinuities' generate what he calls "displacement and entanglement" (15). Mbembe

describes “dislocation” as distorted realities in the social system (15). These distortions are the realities that constitute social “disturbances” (Mbembe 15). Mbembe’s ‘discontinuities,’ ‘displacement’ and ‘disturbances’ will illuminate Bhabha’s conditions of ‘anomie’ or ‘loss of meaning,’ because they reflect the social deformities like unemployment and economic disempowerment and poor educational opportunities which Adimora-Ezeigbo uses the narrative structure of the novel to interrogate. Besides, *Trafficked* resonates with the echoes of globalization. John Tomlinson argues in *Globalization and Culture* that globalization is the effect of “complex connectivity”--- which is the interconnections that now characterize modern social reality (2). For Tomlinson, globalization is a process that involves ‘linkages’ wherein “...goods, capital, people...crime, pollutants, drugs and beliefs all readily flow across territorial boundaries” (2).

The important point to draw out of this argument is that ‘linkages’ exist in different forms and shapes in contemporary Nigerian society—commercial sex trade, trafficking in persons, kidnapping, failed leadership, voluntary or forced migration. In Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked* these ‘iniquities’ or ‘linkages’ have transformed into the global sex trade and trafficking of women for consumers in Europe. Therefore, the new generation of Nigerian writers like Helen Oyeyemi, Taiye Selasi, Okey Ndibe, Chibundu Onuzu, E. C. Osundu, Chika Onuigwe, Segun Afolabi and Teju Cola have used their literary imaginations to capture and narrate Nigerian migratory and diaspora experiences. Homi K. Bhabha posits that the postcolonial “seeks to explore those social pathologies—‘loss of meaning’ that cause social infractions (246). It was J. Habermas who formulated this position in his work, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*.

The conditions of anomie and “loss of meaning” in Nigeria and Africa first began to be reflected in the novels of postcolonial disenchantment from the early 1960s onwards as represented in Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People*, *Anthills of the Savannah*, Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s *Devil on the Cross* and *Petals of Blood* and Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, to mention but a few.

It is Gregory Castle who not only tries to enunciate the significance of postcolonial theory, but also

links the theory to the conditions of life in post-independence societies. Castle asserts:

The emergence of postcolonial studies is tied to a number of factors...The relation of postcolonial nations to colonialism and the colonial era. Hence the prefix ‘post’ refers to a historical relation, to a period after colonialism ... implies that the Significance of the term *postcolonial* extends beyond the historical relation of Colonialism to include other times, themes and discourses.(135)

Modern Nigerian fiction in the twenty-first century has been dominated by the experiences of colonialism, post colonialism, diaspora and migration. As Maximilian Feldner argues in *Narrating the New African Diaspora: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigerian Literature in Context* “... it is not surprising that two dominant areas of their literature are the experiences of migration and diaspora...” (2). The literature of migration in Nigeria came in with the publication of Ike Oguine’s *A Squatter’s Tale* in 2000. Though the author leaving in Nigeria, imaginatively captures life in the United States of America and recreates the story of migration in which the protagonist, a young Nigerian, eager to leave Nigeria to the USA realizes that life in that country is different from what he had hoped for or thought. The new generation of Nigerian writers who have used their creative imaginations to capture and narrate migratory and Nigerian diaspora tensions include Segun Afolabi’s *Goodbye Lucille*, published in 2008, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked*, published in 2008, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*, published in 2013, Teju Cole’s *Every Day for the Thief*, published in 2014, Chigozie Obioma’s *The Fisherman*, published in 2015, Chibundu Onuzo’s *Welcome to Lagos*, published in 2017, to mention just a few of Nigerian migratory fiction of the twenty-first century. All these narratives deal with the experiences of migration and the ambivalences of exile and return which constitute the thematic structure of Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked*.

This study explores the fictional narrative of migratory Nigerian fiction and the experiences with a view to mapping out how this matrix has conditioned the literary imagination of Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked*. Adimora-Ezeigbo adopts the narrative devices of irony and satire to narrate the postcolonial conditions in Nigeria.

In Adimora-Ezeigbo’s narrative these ‘conditions of anomie’ manifest in trafficking, social

deformations, poor leadership and lack of quality education-- all postcolonial realities in Nigeria.

The idea of history is important in fictional narratives. Bhabha posits that lack of meaningful socio-economic choices in Third World countries like Nigeria has led citizens of these countries to seek for improved life choices in the developed societies of European countries and America. The thematic preoccupation is to examine how the narrative has captured those issues of 'displacement' in Nigeria's socio-political history that have caused migration as represented in Adimora-Ezeigbo's novel. The Nigerian society depicted in *Trafficked* is one of military dictatorship, oppression, 'lack of meaning,' unemployment, economic and social woes—politically, economically and social meaninglessness. Adimora-Ezeigbo's impulse to capture the socio-historical conditions of the Nigerian society after independence in *Trafficked*, in part, is a possession of historical consciousness, to imaginatively reflect the tumultuous moments of Nigeria's history which has kept the youth on the edge of migration and refuge outside Nigeria.

Nigerian migratory fiction is the consequence of what Frantz Fanon has described as "the farce of national independence" (qtd. in Boehmer, 237). It is this farcical reality of leadership after independence in Nigeria that has forced the Nigerian youth "to seek refuge – if not to be forced to seek refuge... [in] richer places in the world" (Boehmer, 237-8).

Thus, postcolonial discourse focuses on the pre-colonial and postcolonial landscape and how these landscapes have distorted and ruptured individual social identity. This rupture of identity is the outcome of what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin call "dislocation," resulting from... the experience of enslavement, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour" (*The Empire* 9). These are some of the concerns that dominate the narrative structure of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*. According to Homi Bhabha this kind of social distortion of reality "produces a restless urgency... [As the characters engage [in] doomed search for dialectic of deliverance...]" (58). As writers mirror their societies, it is inevitable that postcolonial literature necessarily reflects the socio-economic and the traumatic travails the society experiences.

It is this "doomed search for deliverance" from the harsh oppressive Nigerian environment that

contributes to the willingness of young women like Alice, Efe and Nneoma in the text to be trafficked victims of the commercial sex trade in Europe (Bhabha 58).

### **The Significance of the link between history and fiction in Contemporary Nigerian Literature**

Because the experiences explored in *Trafficked* are so thoroughly steeped in Nigeria's social history after independence, it is important to explore the significant link between history and fiction and to stress from the onset that "literary texts helped sustain the colonial vision" (Boehmer 44). Nigerian writers generally use their works to represent and express what the Nigerian society means to them. Since the birth of modern Nigerian literature with the publication of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, Nigerian writers have used their creative imagination to represent or capture the various stages of Nigeria's history, from colonialism to the problems of post independence period. A reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, *A Man of the People*, *Anthills of the Savannah*, Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of A Yellow Sun* will vividly illustrate how Nigerian history has transformed from the stages of colonialism to the failure of post independence Nigeria, leading to the Nigerian Civil Conflict of 1967 to 1970. These works have a lucid representation of life, the prisms of conditions of life under independence, then through post independence disillusionment as a result of the political and economic mismanagement after the exit of the British Empire.

Eleni Coundouriotis argues that "to narrate history has been a key preoccupation of the novel in Africa since the genre's inception" (269). Coundouriotis further added that the African fiction seeks to reveal what is called "the myriad entanglements of private and public life" (270). Onyemaechi Udumukwu remarks that the Nigerian society depicts "a series of events which portrays the negation of the ideals of independence" (265). These negations are the social conditions of anomie which characterized the Nigerian society after independence. Martin Munro captures the significant link between history and fiction when he argued concerning the relationship between Caribbean history and fiction: "Literature and history in Haiti have for two centuries fed off each other; history has become poetry and fiction, and fiction have become history" (34).

Harry Levin defines this connection between fiction and life when he argues that "... novels are so thoroughly immersed in our social problems..." (4). This brings out the reciprocal relationship between fiction and social reality because "not only that it be true to life but that it shape life into a pattern" (Levin, 6). Based on this strong connection Levin boldly asserts that "Literature is not only the effect of social causes, it is also, the cause of social effects" (14). The imaginative artist like the novelist must follow the trends of social history of the society.

Irele argues that "...all history begins a story..." (157). The observation establishes the link between history and fiction in modern Nigerian literary imagination. Nigerian creative writers have used their works to interpret their societies at various moments in time. Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* has appropriated the vision of migratory pole to examine Nigeria's postcolonial history. Abiola Irele notes that "the effort of recollection serves to order experience of the past in the mind and may well lead to the discernment of a pattern of events upon which the minds activity is engaged..." (158). Irele suggests that literary writers use fiction to imaginatively reorder historical reality in order to achieve aesthetic effect as writers. For example, the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adiechie was not born during the Nigerian Civil Conflict of 1967-1970, but she is able to imaginatively capture the events of that historical moment in her novel, *Half of A Yellow Sun*. Herein lies the relationship between fiction and history. The experience of the narrative goes beyond the novel. Roland Barthes observation is relevant in this context. According to him: "Narration can indeed receive its meaning only from the world which makes use of it beyond the narrational level..." (qtd. in Irele 159). Barthe's argument situates fiction as representing social reality—real facts are what constitute fiction and can be considered as the raw materials for fiction. These arguments buttress the fact that art approximates life. This thesis is demonstrated by Wellek and Warren when they argue that "literature 'represents' 'life,' and 'life' in a large measure, is a social reality" (94). Therefore socio-historical facts are the necessary raw materials for the fictional imagination. Abiola Irele captures this when he asserts that "It is this formal equivalence between history and fiction, determined by the intrinsic properties of the narrative genre" that cements the relationship between art and social reality (159). Thus, Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*

provides a picture of Nigeria's socio-economic conditions in postcolonial Nigerian society, conditions that have led to the rise of Nigerian migratory fiction.

Contemporary Nigerian prose narrative has been dominated with issues of engagement with economic and socio-political realities. A large number of Nigerian novelists have used their narratives to interrogate engagement with socio-economic anomalies in postcolonial Nigeria. This engagement with social vices attests to a renewed awareness with social responsibility and the determination of Nigerian writers to place their art at the service of the Nigerian people. Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*, published in 2008 is a model of modern Nigerian novel that deals with engagements with postcolonial contradictions that have created distortions in the Nigerian social fabric. The narrative explores the economic anomalies in the postcolonial Nigeria which are reflected in the legacies of colonial dislocation, economic deprivation and disillusionment evident in Nigerian society today.

#### **Migration and Trafficking as Dominant Motifs in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked***

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's narrative, *Trafficked* has a tripartite structure that corresponds with the experiences of exile, return and restoration or redemption. When the novel opens, Nneoma, the protagonist of the narrative is seen disembarking from the aircraft in the afternoon: "...when the sun flaunted its nakedness, shooting its rays like a machine gun and driving people into houses and other shelters" (1, ch, 1). This homecoming enables Nneoma to repair and reclaim her battered identity: "She, the young woman, and some fifteen girls—without passports, without any form of identification—were the last to disembark. They had been stowed away at the back of the plane during the journey" (2-3, ch, 1). The girls loaded in the plane like cargo were all trafficked young women who had now been deported from the UK. The experiences of being trafficked for commercial sex exploitation and slavery were quite horrifying and traumatic for Nneoma: "She was grateful to be rid of the ordeal though she dreaded disembarking" (3, ch, 1). However as the narrative progresses we glean that migration or exile was not a choice, but that some of these girls were victims of trafficking by criminal gangs due to the socioeconomic situations in Nigeria. For example we learned that when the pilot insisted that two of the girls be removed from the plane by the immigration officers. One of the girls cried:

“I’d rather die than return to that country” (3, ch, 1). So what has fuelled the trafficking industry and migration is lack of opportunities and economic disempowerment in the Nigerian society after independence. The organizing principle of migratory fiction is the travelling metaphors. Adimora-Ezeigbo adopts it as a narrative technique in *Trafficked* and elevated it into a cultural symbol of restlessness and the search for a better life in developed economies of the world. In the narrative, travelling to the West and Europe has become a metaphorical movement of escaping the poor condition of life in the Nigerian society after independence. The metaphor of journey and return, what I describe as “exile and return” is one of the techniques of narration in *Trafficked*. This is what provides a symbolic and metaphoric technique in the narrative.

However, the girls’ attitude at the airport in London makes Nneoma to question the foolishness of migration because of economic disempowerment in Nigeria, having seen the traumatic experiences of being trafficked. She questions the wisdom of the two girls’ protests of their deportation from the UK and the desire to remain illegal immigrants in a foreign land: “She had sat in her corner, observing the two girls’ disgraceful behaviour with contempt. Did they not realize what faced them back there in that detention centre? She was sure they would be taken back to the ‘prison’ where all of them had been kept ... (3-4, ch, 1).

The journey metaphor as a narrative device falls under what Zoltán Kövecses describes as “a conceptual metaphor” (4). Conceptual metaphors help us to understand our experiences about the world. Adimora-Ezeigbo adopts this tool to explore the migrants’ experiences of loss and grief—to understand the events of physical journey, the grief of physical separation from their home country and the grief of physical destination. The narrator is using the journey metaphor to offer a rejoinder to the argument of migration—migration has been motiveless. Adimora-Ezeigbo combines this with the parabolic narrative technique through which she warns of the social consequences of migration. After their return from exile, rehabilitation and restoration begins for Nneoma and the other trafficked young women at the Oasis centre, an NGO run by some good-spirited Nigerian women dedicated to fighting the global trade and rehabilitating those who were victims of the evil: “Nneoma gazed at the 2-storey building and saw that the inscription written on it

was exactly the same as the one on the bus: Oasis Youth Centre for Skill Development” (48, ch, 7). The youth are always angry at the inability of Nigeria to plan for her citizens. This can be seen when one young girl angrily remarked at the rehabilitation centre: “This is Nigeria for you...There was anger in her voice” (49, ch, 7). The reason for the anger is that Nigeria after independence has failed to fulfil the dreams of nationhood.

The social consequence of being trafficked has been quite traumatic for Nneoma even as she is undergoing rehabilitation at the Oasis Centre. This accounts to why she wants to be anonymous and maintain a low profile at the centre: “Nneoma had decided that she would maintain a low profile and try to shield her identity from prying eyes and ears...” (50, ch, 7).

The author adopts the omniscient narrative technique here to reveal what is going on in the mind of the protagonist, Nneoma. There is a high level of social and psychological trauma associated with being a trafficked victim. At the Oasis Centre, Mrs Nike Oderinde, the managing director of the centre told the trafficked young women who were undergoing rehabilitation the aim of the organisation: “Our organization is dedicated to empowering young women like you, who have taken a wrong step in life...” (51, ch, 7).

There is the use of the objective technique in this narration. The narrator’s use of the objective device is to convince the listener about the possibility of psychological recovery from the effects of migration. There are certainly a number of deductions that we can glean from this speech. One is that falling prey to trafficking is the outcome of lack of choice for most of these girls because of poor leadership and the inability to expand social and economic opportunities. Another is that because of social and economic disempowerment. Adimora-Ezeigbo satirizes Nigeria’s leadership failure.

Meanwhile the rehabilitation centre has given the returnee girls a new focus and direction to restore their identity. Nneoma is impressed at the bearing of the women who ran the centre: “Knowledge is power, Nneoma mused. She was struck by how simply they were dressed, in comparison to how over-dressed middle-class women often were in the country” (52, ch, 7). Mrs Ejekam, the chairperson of the centre now told the girls the

opportunities being lined up for their rehabilitation and restoration:

You will be allowed to choose a trade to learn as part of your rehabilitation. On offer are; tailoring, hairdressing, catering, and pottery. We apprentice our girls to the best practitioners in these trades in Lagos and transport them to and from their work locations. (52, ch, 7)

It is the failure of political leadership in Nigeria to cater for its citizens, especially the youth that has encouraged both forced and voluntary migration of its citizens to Europe. This is the subject of the speech of the Commissioner for Women Affairs, one of the directors of UNICEF, when she spoke to the deported girls:

‘The condition of Nigerian women and children has worsened, especially in the past two decades, as a result of military rule. Violence, brutality and all forms of abuse have multiplied...We want to stamp out prostitution from our society; we want international prostitution to stop. The trafficking of our young girls...must be eliminated... We have increased our efforts to ensure that women have equal rights with men in the field of education....’ (55, ch, 7)

The use of editorial omniscience dominates here as the author’s voice has intruded to present an image of Nigeria that is flawed with distortions that have made migration inevitable. This discourse within the context of postcolonial perspectives reveals the discontinuities and the disturbing social imbalances that have made social crimes like prostitution seem attractive to young women in Nigeria. This is because “the international sex trade” is one of the manifestations of globalization. Besides, Nigerian cultural assumptions that place restrictions on the girl child are satirized.

Adimora-Ezeigbo’s narrative interrogates government economic policies that stifle creativity and the growth of small businesses in Nigeria. Nneoma tells her friend Efe: “‘You know, I’ve been wondering if tailoring is the best thing for me; I mean, would I survive as a tailor...The only people who make money are politicians, bankers... and there’s the sex trade and oil bunkering” (67, ch, 10). There is the use of the confessional mode of narration as a technique here, Nneoma who is narrating how Nigeria’s social environment is going to affect her and other low income earners. This narrative technique adds immediacy to the narrative. It is rather sad that Nigeria’s socioeconomic environment after independence

does not support the growth of small businesses. The social climate makes crimes to look glamorous. Nneoma’s speech touches on some of the postcolonial contradictions that have characterized the Nigerian society. Through Nneoma’s eyes, we catch a glimpse of the social reality:

Her mind went back to the year she completed her National Certificate of Education training. *She couldn’t find a job. There had been a time when trained teachers were guaranteed employment. But those days were over. Other students had the same experience, of assiduously looking for a job that was not forthcoming.* (70, ch, 10 emphasis mine)

This is a catalogue of social deformities, like unemployment and lack of opportunities which are antithetical to the values of social cohesion, the social dysfunctions which have left young people to seek social vices as a viable means of livelihood. The narrative is built around a pattern of images and symbols of social decay. The inability of the Nigerian government to maintain social contract has caused crisis in Nneoma’s family. She narrates the trauma her family has suffered: “But her father was never paid his retirement gratuity; nor was his pension... He descended into depression” (71, ch, 10).

The socio-economic maladies have become a source of trauma for Nneoma’s father, Ogukwe. He reflects at the traumatic experiences of the inherent social contradictions:

His pension was still not being paid; he had given up the hope of ever receiving his gratuity. The last time he had gone to Enugu... two retirees like him had collapsed in the queue and died. He had joined other pensioners to demonstrate in the streets to protest the government’s neglect of retired workers... police had used teargas on them.... (87, ch, 11)

The use of the omniscient and objective techniques allows Adimora-Ezeigbo to see with a god-like eye the impact of government insensitivity on the life of Ogukwe, Nneoma’s father. “Teargas” in Ogukwe’s consciousness satirizes the oppression and insensitivity that exist in post independence Nigeria. Literature is neither history nor social document but the closeness of Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked* to Nigeria’s postcolonial society shows that literature reflects social reality. There is a breakdown of social contract by postcolonial governments in Nigeria. The oppression of the

indigenous people has been described as “a feature of post-colonial societies” (Ashcroft et al *The Empire*, 9). Adimora-Ezeigbo deploys the satiric device here to question Nigeria’s social values that neglect the welfare of citizens. Therefore one can appreciate the social vision behind Oasis Youth Centre where the trafficked girls are kept for skills acquisition and reintegration into the society.

The shame and disgrace of being a trafficked sex worker makes Nneoma to hide from her family after her deportation. She reasons that acquiring a skill and university education will offer her redemption to regain her tarnished ego and identity: “She had made no attempt to contact her family... She did not want them to know she was in a shelter for trafficked women” (88, ch, 12). The failure of the Nigerian government after independence has led to other social infractions like wanton destruction of lives and property by bandits across the country. Nneoma and her friends recall this in the television channels at the Oasis Youth Centre, one Sunday. The newscaster had reported:

“The riots that began on Friday evening in Maiduguri have spread to locations in the north. Lives have been lost and property worth millions of naira has been destroyed or looted. Violent attacks have been reported in Katsina and youths in Onitsha... pounced on northern traders and slaughtered them.” (91, ch 12)

At every social level, post independence Nigeria has represented an infraction, such as insecurity.

Ogukwe learned that the federal government was ready to pay the retirees their gratuity and pensions and passed this piece of information to his family:

There was an air of celebration inside the hut when he gave the news to Adaeze and Nma, who had remained at home for nearly nine months during a teachers’ strike protesting against the non-payment of four months’ salaries. The state government had done nothing to address the teachers’ grievances... Most of the teachers had started trading to survive, as did many of the pupils and students... *A few had become armed robbers, terrorizing in their homes or snatching car from drivers...* (109, ch, 14, emphasis mine)

Therefore Adimora-Ezeigbo deploys the satiric mode to question the conditions of social reality in Nigeria and highlight the important historical issues that have plagued Nigeria after independence: “Nneoma told herself that many leaders and their collaborators had got away with

murder. Saro-Wiwa’s killers had gone unpunished. She remembered many others... Dele Giwa, Kudirat Abiola, Bola Ige and Victor Nwankwo, whose killers remained at large” (123, ch, 15).

This indicates that Nigeria after independence is a failed state bridled with issues of insecurity and poor leadership. These are socio-political problems that have led to migration and trafficking of young women.

In the course of the narrative, we learn the operative devices of the trafficking agencies. Nneoma tells her fellow trafficked victim Efe how she became a trafficked victim:

For personal reasons, I fled from home one Friday morning without telling my family. A friend and classmate had told me some weeks before that some people had helped her secure a teaching appointment in the United Kingdom and she would introduce me to them and I could come with her. (126, ch, 15)

The author combines the first person narrative technique with irony to make Nneoma’s story authentic. From her personal revelation we can conclude that lack of choices in Nigeria and the prospects of better life opportunities outside the country is the reason these young girls are victims to trafficking cartels. So, Nneoma sets out to see if her classmate’s invitation was still open. She tells Efe: “We are six young women between the ages of seventeen and twenty. They tell us we will have plenty of time to pay back our debts to the agency when we start earning money...” (127, ch, 15). The sex trade has a global link: “...we hear we will get to Italy before travelling to Britain” (128, ch, 15). Then Nneoma recalls her shock at realizing that she has been trafficked:

In Italy I discover I am trafficked. I have no say in the matter. There is a woman called Madam Dollar... She owns us and the man, whom we learn to call Captain, is her bodyguard... Life is hell in Rome—we are always walking the night, selling sex to Italian men and foreigners... I am completely devastated by the life I’m forced to live: hit the night street, waiting for customers, winter, spring, summer and autumn; come back at dawn, wash... (128-29, ch, 15)

The ironic mode is the dominant technique the author has adopted to tell the story of migration in this narrative. Nneoma’s account of her being trafficked is the repetitive life cycle of pain, trauma and shame which trafficked young

Nigerian women endure in the hands of their greedy abductors. Madam Dollar is a capitalist who exploits and use the girls for money: “She keeps us prisoners in her flat...” (128, ch, 15). This illustrates the nature of the exploitation of the trafficked women by the agents of capitalisms and globalization. Nneoma as a first-person narrator of her experience is also a reflector character. The key narrative device in rendering the migratory story is the use of the ironic mode which allows the character to reflect on her migratory ordeals. Nneoma’s experience echoes the experiences of many trafficked young Nigerian women to Europe and the West—the outcome of the forces of globalization, which is the result of what Dayna Oscherwitz describes as “consumer capitalism” (54). This manifests in postcolonial societies because of “the continuation of colonialism in the postcolonial era...” (Oscherwitz 54).

Adimora-Ezeigbo reveals Nneoma’s agonizing experience of being trafficked twice in Europe through the use of the ironic technique:

‘Then help seems to come in the person of a man called Baron. He takes me and two other girls to London and says he has rescued us. In actual fact, he has bought me from Madam Dollar, thus cancelling my debt. He drives a white car and we travel only at night; it takes us two nights to London via France, across the Channel by ferry and finally to an area I later learn is called Soho. Baron tells us his mother is Nigerian and his father English....’ (132)

Both Madam Dollar and Baron symbolize domestic insecurity and discomfort in the text. By employing the ironic technique, Adimora-Ezeigbo negates the values and heroism of migration and instead stresses its nihilism in the lives of the Nigerian youth. The ironic mode adopted in the narrative negates the illusion of a better life in Europe. Through the ironic situations depicted in the work, the author gives a picture of a Nigerian society. Adimora-Ezeigbo’s characters, especially the heroine, Nneoma are projected through the use of the ironic technique.

Then from Nneoma’s account we glean how the girls have been subjected to sexual slavery for consumers in European cities: “Baron sends the other girls to brothels and keeps me in his flat... He brings men to the flat... He rapes and beats me... and does not allow me to go out except when he takes me with him” (132, ch, 15). With these horrific pictures Adimora-Ezeigbo highlights

the tragedy of the reality of poor leadership in post-independence Nigeria. The trafficking in human beings and the international sex trade are the evils of globalization. We can glean this from Nneoma’s narrative to Efe: “They—Madam Dollar and Baron—never gave me any money. They always claimed I would get no money of my own until I had paid my debt. “Even when the customers gave me money, they took it from me” (133, ch. 15). This is the form of inhuman slavery that trafficked women are subjected to. Nneoma narrates her escape from Baron:

‘On this occasion, he stops for a second to buy a newspaper and as soon as he turns his back, I open the door gently and get out. I do not look back until I have disappeared round the corner of the next street... I roam the city for two days until a Nigerian woman... Chindo Okehi, takes me home. She is a university teacher. Later she introduces me to a Nigerian man, in whose house I live until the police raid. Within days I am deported and brought to Oasis.’ (133-134, ch. 15)

Nneoma’s narration of her trafficked experiences to another, Efe provides a therapeutic healing. This can be inferred from her response when Efe asked: “Nneoma, how do you feel?” (135, ch. 15). In reply she said: “I feel cleansed. My body feels light. Efe thank you for listening to my story” 135, ch. 15). After Nneoma’s traumatic narration, Efe perceptively remarked at the curative power of her telling her experiences. Her remark equally reveals the inhumanity and irony of the global sex industry and migration:

‘Your experience was even more horrible than mine, and you were trafficked twice in two different countries. That Baron is a special breed... He’s a cheat and a heartless exploiter like many Westerners and a corrupt hustler like many Africans...’ (136, ch.15).

Adimora-Ezeigbo uses her narrative to comment on some of the social maladies that have plagued contemporary Nigerian society and Africa—poor leadership. This is the subject of discourse at the Senate Chambers of the university. Dr Chindo Okehi, a lecturer who has just returned from a Common Wealth Fellowship at the University of London is asked by Mrs Obe, a colleague in Chindo’s faculty: “How are you coping with the fuel shortage and the long queues at the filling stations?” (141). As if to affirm the crises of leadership, Dr Alade from the Department of Electrical Engineering added: “And what do you



think of the bank workers' strike?" (141). This is a picture of decaying social system that makes life and living difficult in Nigeria after independence and the satiric mode is the dominant form of capturing social reality. The meeting of the senate of Lagos University was conveyed to discuss some of the infractions in the Nigerian university system. The Vice Chancellor revealed this when he told those seated: "We received petitions against two members of staff, who are alleged to have demanded large sums of money from students" (143, ch. 16). This kind of infraction in the Nigerian education has made many youths who have the desire for university education to migrate with its attendant consequences. The author informs us through Dr Chindo Okehi's remark: "...female students were being sexually harassed. Students from affluent homes were forced to donate money to greedy lecturers. Most students choose not to complain officially. But now, here is a student courageous enough to do so" (144, ch.16). This shows that the Nigerian university system has not been spared of the decay plaguing the larger society. The Nigerian government after independence has shown inefficiency and insensitivity to good governance. Ogukwe laments this apparent decay in the Nigerian society:

Almost a year after the teachers' strike started, the state government had yet to address the issues...most teachers had become emergency farmers, traders and artisans in order to generate some income. *How could a government be so insensitive to the needs of the people it ruled... How could they allow the young to miss out on school for a whole year?* (152, ch.17, emphasis mine). Adimora-Ezeigbo has subtly used the satiric technique to probe the failures of post-independence Nigeria that has left the youth, especially the girl child vulnerable to criminal trafficking agents. Ogukwe's observations unmask the social problems that generate both forced and voluntary migration of Nigerians to other countries.

The students' protest within the context of the narrative is used by Adimora-Ezeigbo to interrogate the postcolonial conditions that exist in the Nigerian society. The students are demonstrating against government's plan to privatize their hostel accommodation and increase their tuition. The students' president touched on the core issues when he declared:

'We are tired of our education and welfare being trifled by both the government and the university

authorities. Our country is richer by far than many African countries, yet their educational institutions are better funded than the ones here. What is responsible for this? Corruption, pure and simple.' (159-160, ch.17)

The most obvious threat confronting Nigeria after independence, therefore, is the corruption and greed of those in positions of authority. The president of the students' union used his speech to satirize this greed and highlight its effect on the population: "why the hostels should be privatized? How many students can afford to pay higher charges? The money this government gets from oil is enough to give scholarship to every student in the country" (160). The students' president's discourse is a sharp satire on the corrupt and inept leadership that has floundered Nigeria's resources. The president of the students' union used the discourse to satirize the social vices that have characterized post independence Nigeria: "what is responsible for this? Corruption, pure and simple" (160, ch.17). Alice, one of the victims of the trafficking business but now rehabilitated at the Oasis centre reacted with disdain when she was expelled from the centre due to bad behaviour. She contemptuously declared after her expulsion: "who wants to stay in this stinking place anyway? It has nothing for me. I'm a graduate with a good degree. *If I had a job I wouldn't have been trafficked.* I wouldn't have ended up in this horrible place. I wouldn't have been deported. I'll look for a job or go back to Italy" (163, ch.17). Alice's reaction to her expulsion from Oasis is a veiled satire of Nigeria's socio-economic deformities after independence, conditions of lack of choice and opportunity. These conditions have persisted and created situations of the desire for voluntary exile or flight from postcolonial Nigerian society: "I'll...go back to Italy" (163, ch.17s). However, Nneoma and Efe, two of the girls who have chosen to use the opportunity offered at Oasis to restore and rehabilitate themselves saw Alice's reaction as degeneration:

Nneoma and Efe sat down, their eyes watchful. Listening to Alice, Nneoma understood why some young women deliberately allowed themselves to be trafficked a second time. It was clear that Alice would return to sex work abroad if she had the opportunity. (164, ch.17)

This experience of being a trafficked victim is an indictment on some of the victims. But for Nneoma, getting a good education and a university

degree will complete her social and psychological restoration: “‘I will try. I’ll never be happy until I get a degree. That’s the only thing that will complete my healing’” (164, ch.17). This resolve to restore her battered self-worth drives her to registers, study and pass the JAMB examination, a requirement for entrance into Nigerian universities. Prior to her physical and psychological rehabilitation, Nneoma had lived in morbid torment of her trafficked experience. She is tormented by her past, especially her memories of Baron: “‘She lived in the fear of him’” (167, ch. 17). Adimora-Ezeigbo has therefore elevated Baron to the status of a symbolic character representing evil. Trafficking in young women for commercial sex is a flourishing trade on global scale; its agents include men like Baron and Fyneface who capitalize on the dysfunctional realities in the Nigerian society to trick, adopt and sell young women as sex workers in Europe.

Adimora-Ezeigbo uses the narrative to satirize the socioeconomic conditions that are responsible for migration. Dr Chindo Okehi expresses this after the students’ riot:

‘But if the government actually planned to increase tuition and accommodation fees, I think the students were justified in protesting. Why are we surprised that so many young people want to live the country? Is it a wonder that all these girls end up getting trafficked?... Suddenly she remembered the beautiful and intelligent young Nigerian girl, Nneoma, trafficked to Europe, whom she had found weeping outside Russell Square Tube Station in London.’ (178-179, ch.18)

Here, Adimora-Ezeigbo places the blame of trafficking young women and the problem of migration of Nigerians at the door step of government actions in the post-independence Nigeria. Adimora-Ezeigbo employs the satiric technique to critique Nigerian society after independence. Yet even in the face of the stark choices of her life as a trafficked sex worker, Nneoma is determined to empower herself by getting educated:

She remembered how she had hoped to be able to stay in London and make enough money to educate herself either there or in Nigeria. She had been under the illusion that if she managed to stay in Britain for a few years, she might be allowed to stay... the information she had received was not correct. (205, ch. 19)

The quest for educational empowerment has been the driving force that has sustained Nneoma in her trafficked situation. Little wonder she is determined to acquire a university degree once she is undergoing rehabilitation at Oasis unlike her friend Efe who is obsessed with getting married: “‘... I want to get married and I’m making progress with my boy friend... You know, getting married is one sure way of escaping from men like Baron’” (205, ch 19). Baron has come to symbolize the international trafficking of young women into the sex trade in European cities. However, Nneoma does not see marriage as a viable choice:

She wondered if she would ever marry. Where would she find a man she could love again—and one that would love her as she was? She became cynical about everything, except going to the university and getting a Degree. (206, ch.19)

Adimora-Ezeigbo’s novel satirizes the Nigerian society after independence. In a broadcast to the citizens the head of state admitted the distortions that have hindered Nigeria’s growth:

‘... it will take time to correct the mistakes of the military governments that have mismanaged the economy for decades. Our youths must learn to be self-reliant and not wait for government to do everything for them. There are no jobs; the government will be unable to recruit new workers for five years. Self-employment is the secret of a buoyant economy.’ (207, ch. 20)

Nneoma’s dogged determination to reinvent herself and acquire a new identity paid off when the JAMB result came out—the qualifying examination into Nigerian universities: “‘She knew that another aspect of her dream was at the threshold of fulfilment. Armed with her JAMB result... she was ready at last to travel to Ithite-Agu to see her family (215, ch. 20). Nneoma believes that her reinvention and the restoration of her identity are tied to her education in the university: “‘Nneoma postponed going home to see her family for a few more weeks... she could legitimately claim she had a job as a professional tailor... introduce herself as a prospective undergraduate of the best university of technology in the country (239, ch.23).

Adimora-Ezeigbo shows through her narrative that being a trafficked woman is an indelible social stigma. This is an indelible stigma on Nneoma’s psyche even as she struggles to reshape her life: “‘Her past was her own business’” (239, ch. 23). However, Chief Amadi rebuked her sharply when

he caught his son, Kevin kissing her: "Why didn't you tell me you were a deported prostitute when I interviewed you for this job... You are a good worker and talented tailor... But I cannot keep someone with your background... (272-273, ch. 25).

As the narrative shows Nneoma's complete redemption is achieved when she meets her estranged fiancé, Ofomata at Dr Chindo Okehi's office at the Lagos university of science and technology. Agitated at this reunion, Nneoma took a paper and wrote for Dr Chindo Okehi's attention: "Never to tell anyone what happened to me in Europe. She gave it to Chindo, while Ofomata looked on mystified" (310, ch. 29). This reunion marks Nneoma's total redemption, thereby completing the tripartite structure of the narrative: migration (trafficked), return (back home), and rehabilitation (redemption) as Ofomata spoke to Dr Chindo concerning her: "I'm sure she'll love me again. I'll make it happen" (311, ch.29). With these words coming from her estranged lover, Nneoma felt she has recovered from her trafficked ordeal: "Suddenly she felt sure that this man would take her back... She would not need to lie again" (311, ch.311)

## CONCLUSION

The major concerns of this paper can now be restated. The main hypothesis is that Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* captures the ambivalences, contradictions, the hypocrisy, the violence and the tragedies that characterize the Nigerian society after independence. *Trafficked* shows that Nigeria after independence has receded to the exploitation and neglect of the welfare of its citizens due, to corruption and poor leadership. The argument that underlies this paper is the observation that Adimora-Ezeigbo uses the novel to call for responsible governance in Nigeria by examining the socio-political issues that inhibit Nigeria's socio-economic growth after independence. The narrative adopts the satiric and ironic devices to interrogate postcolonial Nigerian society.

Through the interrogation of these issues, the novel flays the corrupt practices and greed of the political elite whose action generate the social deformities in Nigeria.

The paper identified important narrative tools used by Adimora-Ezeigbo to explore Nigerian migratory experiences. Some of the dominant forms are the use of the journeying metaphor, the use of the parabolic technique, the ironic mode of narration, the symbolic technique and the satiric

technique, through which the author tells the story of the Nigerian migratory fiction of the twenty-first century in *Trafficked*.

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