MOTHER-FIGURE ARCHETYPE IN SELECTED WORKS OF AKACHI ADIMORA-EZEIGBO

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Abstract

Whereas contemporary global feminism, as propagated in the West tends to present narratives by women as fundamentally targeted at gender war against sexual inequality, many female writers in Nigeria are more given to projecting aspects of Africa's cultural humanism that elevates womanhood without necessarily leaning on gender conflicts. One of such female writers that has impressively carved for herself a space in Nigeria's Feminist discourse is Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. She elevates the Mother-Figure in her works to the extent that it is possible to speak of motherhood in its archetypal sublimity. This paper examines how Adimora-Ezeigbo projects the extra-humaneness which the Mother-Figure represents, beyond the pettiness and ordinariness to which the patriarchal world has confined women. She is comprehensively selfless and does whatever is positive to improve human life. The discussion uses C. G. Jung's Archetypal Theory to establish the extent to which the Mother-Figure reacts against men's stereotypes of women. It shows that the modern woman has since risen above the traditional limitations imposed on her by men. The paper concludes that Adimora-Ezeigbo brilliantly constructs female characters imbued with bold and daring qualities which effectively confront some patriarchal structures in Nigeria.

Keywords: Mother-Figure, female empowerment, archetypal, African feminism, patriarchal

1. Introduction

The domain of women's writing in fiction is consecrated ground because it discusses many issues that concern women. Women's creativity is both corrective and demanding in nature. It is often designed to re-evaluate some anomalies done to them through negative presentations of their characters as witches, prostitutes, destroyers, trouble-makers, and talkative beings. Keyssar (1996, p. 1) explains that the new way of rejecting those pejorative portrayals may be achieved by "manipulation… (written or acted) that deconstructs sexual difference and undermines patriarchal power… and creates women characters" in what Dolan suggests to be the "subject position" (Dolan, 1988, p. 37). The study of literature, we observe here, often broadens how the continuity of the "female tradition" (Showalter 1996, p. 106) that women seek to portray metamorphoses into that "… subject position" (Dolan 1988, p. 37).

Evwierhoma (2002, p. 116) agrees with Keyssar's position when she argues that writers of literary pieces should pay attention to salient issues within and outside the social system. This is possible because literature is

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corrective and purges society of its weaknesses. For Field and Newick (1973, p. 1), literature is "man's defense against psychological rigidity". This also confirms Gordon's (1972, p. 86) suggestion that literature [art] is the only means open to man [woman] to break the "seal that locks him [her] fast into his [her] inner world and has the primary means to cultural cohesion". The implication of Gordon's statement is that a literary work focuses on the aesthetics which Tyson claims "acts as a *stimulus* to awake feelings, associations, and memories" of the familiar and stirs particular "responses/ emotions which occur as we read ...the text acts as a '*blueprint*' that we can use to correct interpretation when we realise it has traveled too far afield of what is written on the page" (Tyson, 2006, p. 173).

The essence of this paper is to examine how Adimora-Ezeigbo portrays the extra-uniqueness which the Mother-Figure represents, beyond the pettiness and ordinariness to which the patriarchal world has confined women using *Children of the eagle (COTE)* (2002) and *The adventures of Anum the tortoise (TAATT)* (2006).

2. Theoretical Issues

An archetype is a kind of super-type or model. It suggests original different versions that recur throughout the history of human creations: in our myths, literature, dreams, religions and rituals of social behaviour. The term "archetypes", as portrayed by Jung (2010, p. 91), is "a figure or character or image, whether it be human, a demon, or a process that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative fantasy is freely manifested". This implies that archetypes exist in various unrelated works of fiction. The structure of stories is often similar in spite of differing plots, settings and characters. Jung (1875-1961) is identified as one of the founding fathers of the theory of archetypes. His criticism is modelled after the concepts of the "collective unconscious", "myths" and "archetypes" which, as Dobie (2009, p. 50) clarifies, "have helped readers see literature as an expression of the experience of the entire human species".

Archetypes can supply a functioning paradigm or schema in which an individual can experience the world, be compelled to action and offer a model for desired behaviour. Hart and Brady (2005, p. 413) claim that an "archetype itself is never directly expressed in a symbol or image, but rather it guides mental use of images and symbols to conform to certain themes or motifs that are found everywhere". In other words, an archetype can be regarded as "an internal mental model of a typical generic story character to which an observer may resonate emotionally" (Faber & Mayer, 2009, p. 307). The archetypal characters, plots, themes, quests, conflicts and attachments are robustly relevant in adult cognition. In Tyson (2006, p. 223), the word "archetype" refers to any recurring image, character type, plot formula, or pattern of action. This explains that there is the Mother-Figure archetypal image that can elicit certain responses.

Richards (2008) provides a provoking analysis of the history of an

archetype as an embodiment or example, or model with ideal features. He states:

> Archetype theory appears quintessentially to exemplify the 'true to nature' attitude. It seeks to show that individual species have an unsuspected unifying bond in the archetype. The archetype itself had been given different origins, the fecund and productive ability of nature or the infinite and creative mind of God, or yet the generative historical ancestor (p. 15).

Richards' assessment of archetype as "the generative historical ancestor" corresponds with Jung's opinion of archetypes as the "characteristic pattern that pre-exist in the collective psyche of the human race that repeat themselves externally in the psyche of individual human beings which has contents and approaches that are more or less the same everywhere, and within all individuals. It is, in other words, identical with itself within all men" (Jung, 1963, p. 90). Jung (2010, p. 117) equally notes that the contents or package from the collective unconscious is called 'archetypes'. The collective unconscious, however, connotes the latent (existing, but not yet very noticeable or active) thoughts or ideas that are "common to all members of the human family" (Jung, 1964, p. 3). He views the collective unconscious as containing archetypes discovered in myth and ancient tales, and pre-dispositions to mood behaviour that show symbolically as archetypal images in dreams, fantasies, art or other cultural forms. The archetypes in literature are passed on from generation to generation whereas the knowledge from our collective unconscious is innate. For Jung, the collective unconscious is replete with myths and stories. Any form of story-telling projects the collective unconscious. As he reports:

> The collective unconscious appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious (Jung, 1971, p. 152).

This means that every myth proffers an opportunity to view, realise and decode what happens in the collective unconscious. Furthermore, myths confirm the existence of our psyche and, most importantly, they show how the different layers of the psyche work together to produce myths and stories. Jung's formulation, as stated above, is the collective unconscious which he explains as "the deepest layer of the psyche, containing the experiences, fears, memories and all cognitive perceptions shared by all human beings on earth" (Jung, 1959, pp. 3-4). Jung concludes that each unique individual "also represents the eternal man" or "man as a specie and thus has a share in all the movements of collective unconscious" (Jung, 1968, p. 42).

As previously revealed, Jung (2010, p. 117) emphasises that archetypes come from the "collective unconscious", a shared set of psychic instincts that are with us from birth. Frye (1957), however, disagrees with Jung and advocates instead that archetypes are found in literature and can, at that realm,

be incorporated into our lives. He argues that the collective unconscious is not something we stumble on instinctively. It is not directly accessible, but it is sourced in archetypes and myths (Frye, 1957). He equally posits that archetypes are closely knitted into myths. Frye recognises three organisations of myths and archetypal symbols in literature. First, there is "un-displaced myth," generally concerned with gods or demons, and which assumes the system of two opposing worlds of total metaphorical identification, one desirable and the other undesirable. These worlds are most often identified with the existential heavens and hells of the religious contemporary with such literature. These two types of metaphorical organisation are called "the apocalyptic and demonic respectively" (Frye, 1957, p.139). Second, there is the general predisposition which is called "romantic," the tendency to suggest implicit "mythical patterns in a world more closely associated with human experiences" (Frye ,1957, p. 139). The third organisation is the tendency of "realism," which emphasises content and representation rather than the nature of the story. The ironic literature initiates realism and tends toward myth; its mythical patterns commence as a rule more expressive of the demonic than of the apocalyptic though sometimes it basically continues the romantic tradition of stylization. (Frye, 1957, p. 139). The third form of Frye's "realism" corresponds with Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected fiction examined in this paper because it emphasises the content and representation of the story portrayed in female archetypes. The focus of this paper is especially on the analysis and comparison of major female characters using Jungian critical theory.

For Jung, the archetype is not only a *dynamis*, a directing force, which affects the human psyche, as in religion, for example, but it also corresponds to an unconscious "conception" and content. In the symbol, that is, the character of the archetype, a meaning is communicated that is integrated by a highly developed consciousness. As a result of this, the following remarks of Jung is very much applicable to the modern consciousness:

> Myth is the primordial language natural to these psychic processes, and no intellectual formulation comes anywhere near the richness and expressiveness of mythical imagery. Such processes deal with the primordial images, and these are best and most succinctly reproduced by figurative speech (Jung, 1974, p. 25).

The implication of the figurative speech as posited by Jung is as language of the symbol, the original language of the unconscious of mankind. Human life from the onset is determined by the higher degree of the unconscious than by consciousness. This life is directed more by archetypal characters or images than by concepts; by instincts than by the voluntary decisions of the ego (conscious mind); and by man who is a unique part of his group than by an individual unconnected with a group. Furthermore, man perceives the world not through the activities of the consciousness, as an objective world assuming the differentiation subject and object, but he encounters

it mythologically, in archetypal characters, in symbols or in language. As part of a spontaneous expression of the unconscious that assist the psyche to programme itself in the world language, archetypes also explores mythological motifs that describes the early history of all human races. This suggests that the symbols do not, like the importance of consciousness apply to the individual ego (conscious man/woman), but to the entire psychic system which culminates consciousness and the unconscious. For Jung, the symbol consists of both conscious and unconscious elements, and in addition to symbols and characteristic components that consciousness can assimilate relatively immediately; there are also others that can only be comprehended in the process of long developments or not at all, which remain irrational and beyond the scope of consciousness (Jung, 1966).

Korkmaz (2010) confirms Jung's viewpoint on symbol when she states that it is quite reductive and simplistic to employ a totally symbolist view of myths to submit that all symbols and archetypes, irrespective of their historical, social or cultural milieux, have universal meaning. Knox (2003), another Jungian disciple, advocates that the human body carries with it some forms of image-schemas which she characterises as "a mental Gestalt, developing out of bodily experience and forming the basis for abstract form, such image-schemas exist, beyond the realm of conscious awareness but possess the ability to provide a reliable scaffolding on which meaningful content is organized and constructed" (Knox, 2003, p. 64). As far as these critics are concerned, the collective unconscious is not something that anybody can dispute. It is an occurrence that has developed in the ancestral lineage of one's family; there is nothing any person can do to change it.

Roberts (2002) explains that the significant influences of the female characters serve as powerful symbols for readers of all ages. She ascertains that, except for the heroic roles of mother-figure, the female archetypes are absent in other heroic roles that men are featuring. She posits that both males and females are in equal need of the diversity of strong characters to provide examples of femininity and masculinity that would totally eradicate stereotypic roles. Polster (1992, p. 18) supports the opinion that the "Female Rescuers Archetype" of the Mother-Figure envisions a universe where "Women's heroism has been equally brave and equally original as that of men. But in some forms it differs from the traditional pattern of heroism, it has often gone unrecognized."

Archetype, as a literary theory, reflects on women's changing roles in contemporary society. Adimora-Ezeigbo fights gallantly to change the portrayal of African women as mere subordinate or sexual objects meant only to satisfy men's pleasure. Adimora-Ezeigbo's campaign against female negative objectification equally approves Danziger-Russell's (2012) objection against women stereotyped as those who could not live successfully without a man, and women who would give up their careers, their ambitions, their independence, to be by his side. Such assumptions reinscribe the notion that women are helpless without men. But Adimora-Ezeigbo in this paper refutes

such assertions; instead, she heralds the significant achievements made by women in all fields of human endeavour. Adimora-Ezeigbo by using Jung's archetypal theory constructs positive female archetypes in the Mother-Figure. She projects significance roles of the Mother-Figure archetype in Africa as different from what is obtainable in other cultural locations. Riska (2013) states that the Indonesian archetypal character of the Mother-Figure is presented in a more indifferent and non-nurturing manner. She explains that the Mother-Figure (and women) in Indonesian folktale does not exhibit much of kindness, affection and nurturing as compared to the noble and unique characteristics that most African women display in Adimora-Ezeigbo's fiction.

Korkmaz (2010) observes that the inferior positioning of women in hierarchical societies is conscious and intentional, an agenda practised for centuries to despise women. Feminist thinkers and writers too have used myths to justify the reasons, means and consequences of the determined oppression and marginalisation women have been suffering over the ages. To Gill, Howic and Munford (2007, p. 93), myths in society and culture portray a situation whereby women are "entirely autonomous agents that are no longer constrained by any inequalities or tyrannies." However, Korkmaz (2010) still encourages the up-coming feminist theorists to identify with Gill *et. al.*'s advocacy, uncover new and vibrant myths and use them to enable women address their experiences; since through such restructuring of myths and archetypes, would they create the coding of imaginative or fake identities imposed on women and their working systems as the oppressed group. All these ideologies indicate that the modern woman has since departed from the realm of docility and silence, and she is now at the height of celebrating her independence and freedom. Little wonder Adimora-Ezeigbo is among the new female writers who have not only used re-contextualised archetypes and myths in her fiction, but have also tried to discover new ones by unveiling, subverting, and/or deconstructing the previous archetypes and myths. Her selected works: *COTE* and *TAATT* brilliantly affirm that the archetype she uses in her fiction recollects the recurring experiences of women. They provide psychological probings of the cumulative influences of the Mother-Figure's identity which have long been misrepresented by patriarchal myth makers.

It is significant to observe that Third-World feminist thinkers (El Saadawi, 1983; Nnaemeka, 2007; Gayatri, 1990; Emecheta, 2007) are not completely silent on the discourse of women's projection in contemporary mythologies. Ogundipe-Leslie (2007), for instance, suggests that African women could recover from the monument of women oppression and subjugation as well as gain more knowledge of the manner in which men think and feel about women's history through their study of the men. This would help to quell male dominance if actions are taken based on the results of such studies. It is based on such reasoning on male domination that African women's fiction needs to tackle new and positive challenges to conform to

Nnolim's (2013) request for modern writers whether male or female. Nnolim argues that "The African writer in the twenty-first century should forget the complexes of the past and be more imaginatively aggressive and expansive… striving to have a global outlook in his/(her) creative output…" (Nnolim, 2013, p. 29). Pertinently, Adimora-Ezeigbo fictionally adopts the Mother-Figure archetypal approach to explore the economic, political, social and cultural challenges of the day. Her narratives depict women as agents of progress, change and creativity in its various ramifications. The possible result is what Ojukwu (2013, p. 9) describes as "the total work of reconstruction of the continent for the complete development of humanity."

3. The Mother Figure Archetype in Adimora-Ezeigbo's Fiction

The Mother-Figure is a glorious virtue and it is held in high esteem by African women. They ascertain that motherhood is blissful and it is the cradle of every human culture. The importance of motherhood is universally acknowledged, thereby confirming Ngcobo's (2007, p. 533) observation that "in Africa they preserve a special place of honour for motherhood…African motherhood is about children". A close look at the process of conception, which is as a result of the divine mystery of fertilising an ovum (egg) in the womb of a matured female by the spermatozoa from a matured male, is the first structure of women's contribution to the development of humanity. The nine-month duration (three trimesters) of the foetus in the womb of female, where the blood spurts through her lungs and blood vessels rhythmically, at about eighty "breaths per minute" (Llewellyn-Jones, 1998, p. 157) to give life to the growing baby during pregnancy, is the second structure of women's involvement in the expansion of human race. The third contribution of the female/woman to the structural development of the society and culture is the period of nurturing the babies, be they males or females. She brings them into the world and nurtures them until they become independent.

A close observation of the inter-connectivity between the lives of the woman and child in the womb and outside of it affirms Roberts' (2002, p. 47) opinion that: "…forever connected we are to the mothering we receive and how the connection extends back into the generations seemingly lost and forward into the daily lives of subsequent generations". It can be perceived that remarkable power exists in mothering whether in our physical lives or in literature. This is why the Mother-Figure archetype continues to occur wherever life is detected. We find evidence of the Mother-Figure character quite compelling in Adimora-Ezeigbo's fiction.

The Mother-Figure in all cultures is given the roles of caring, nurturing and bearing the burden of her family and children. In Adimora-Ezeigbo's *COTE*, we encounter a heart-moving incident where the protagonist decides to bear a public shame on behalf of her daughters. The novel tells the story of a young girl, Obioma, during the Nigeria-Biafra war. At a stage, Obioma's father, Osai Okwara, could not send money and foodstuff to her. Stranded in her boarding school, she follows a friend of hers, Florence, to visit her

boyfriend, Major Ibrahim. In the process, Obioma is introduced to one Captain Lanre Robert who took advantage of her innocence and got her impregnated. Upon discovery of the pregnancy, Florence encourages her to abort the foetus. She almost succumbs, but when she remembers the nurture and love she enjoyed from her own mother, she immediately kicks against the idea. She returns to her parents instead. Her mother, Eaglewoman, accepts and rehabilitates her, and even decides to bear the shame and burden of taking care of a child born out of wedlock. Hear Eaglewoman:

> I have decided to carry this pregnancy and give birth to this baby... I will be the mother of the baby Obioma is carrying in her womb... I am doing this for my child and my baby that is coming... if we all agree the public will hear that I am pregnant. When the time comes, they will hear and see that I have had the baby; that I am a mother again...look at it this way: I act as if I am pregnant while Obioma is sent away until the baby is born. Then I take over from there (*COTE*, pp. 241-242).

The implication of this is that the Mother-Figure archetype stands out in all ways and is given to new innovations, thereby confirming one of the pioneering feminist objectives of Mary Wollstonecraft that strongly advocates for the empowerment of the female human (Dobie, 2009). Adimora-Ezeigbo shows that it is the woman alone that is capable of bearing such a risk without breaking down in the face of tradition. The scheme is so carefully strategised that her husband, Osai, is overwhelmed by such an impressive display of wisdom. He exclaims:

> My Eagle, you are full of surprises...who but you could come up with a suggestion such as this one? A lifetime is too short, for one to get to know you. But I am afraid what you mean to do is not going to work (*COTE*, 2002, p. 242).

The fear of women taking over the African cultural heritage and implementing their divine innovations has long been with African men. Some of them think and act violently against women, in order to pull down the structure and hope of such aspirations in women. Sometimes, it is not that patriarchal society does not recognise the contributions made to it by women, but that the fear of women dominating history is lodged deep in men's mind. And such a notion sometimes makes them to doubt whether women can actually handle power and authority. The issue of women's distrust of fellow women seems also to be an endemic problem that eats into the fabric of female relationship. For instance, most women cannot withstand the idea of being ruled by fellow women, thus raising the question of whether women are truly their sisters' keepers. Little wonder Osai, Eaglewoman's husband, expresses some doubt, "...but I am afraid what you mean to do is not going to work!" (*COTE,* p. 242). It might be that Osai thinks that Obioma might misconstrue her mother's genuine intention in future. Obioma may even betray her mother (a fellow woman) in spite of her good intentions.

The Mother-Figure is a person that is given to love and kindness towards

her family, in particular, and to fellow human beings at large. She offers to do anything that is positive, provided that the action can have an impact on human lives. In *COTE*, Eaglewoman equates the Mother-Figure's love for her family, society, culture with *Udara (*i.e., African star apple*),* which she compares with the shape of an English apple. As she explains with emotion,

> ...to us, *Udara* is the symbol of love, it has the roundness of a virgin's breast. It gives up a sap that has the look but not the texture of the breast milk. Our people say that *Udara,* especially when it is split in two halves, is shaped like vagina, that part of a woman's body through which a baby shoots into the world. A woman's innermost core is a symbol of love. Therefore, God and woman share this trait, this nature (*COTE***,** p. 42).

It is love that propels the processes of the Mother-Figure archetype to bring children into the world. It is also love that prompts her to build up the progress and future of her children with enthusiasm since they are the seeds of tomorrow. It is the nature of woman that explains her capacity to love so generously, so unconditionally and so completely, to the point of self-sacrifice. Eaglewoman sums it all up when she expatiates:

> ...Woman's body is a vessel of love, which gives and supports life. All of a woman's inside and outside combines to form and nourish her young; her breast milk is the life giving nectar, which the baby sucks. It is a woman's body that bears fruits not a man's. A child is the fruit of the woman's womb" (*COTE*, p. 42).

The Mother-Figure is also known to have trust for her husband and to value every statement that he makes. This attitude of the Mother-Figure is not limited to humans alone, but to lower female animals as well. In *TAATT*, for instance, Alia, Tortoise's wife, is falsely accused by her husband of tricking him. This is because Anum does not have as much food to eat as he used to prior to the famine. Anum believes that Alia prepares food only for herself and his daughter, little Tortoise, when he is away; and that she hardly leaves enough food to keep him alive (*TAATT,* p. 4). However, there is no evidence that Anum gives his wife feeding allowance or contributes in any way towards home upkeep. His myopic thinking only enables him to look for a means to coerce his wife into providing food for him. Accordingly, Anum devises a scheme to ensure that his wife leaves plenty of food for him at all costs. He deceives Alia into believing "that an important meeting would be holding in his house the following day. Some heads of families like him are coming to discuss the rising prices of food items. The idea of meeting was to decide how to bring prices down" *(TAATT,* p. 45). When Alia learns about this, she asks him to assist her by providing "the money to buy ingredients", but Anum lies to his wife: "...Alia, you'll have to help me. I don't have money" (*TAATT,* p. 46). Alia, on hearing this makes up her mind: "...all right I will sell my best wrapper and my coral bead... I will use the money to buy ingredients. I only hope something good would come out of this meeting" (*TAATT,* pp. 45-46). What transpires here between Anum and Alia buttresses the fact that a

woman's life is full of giving; she sacrifices all that she possesses to keep the family going. She ensures that everybody around her is happy.

Commenting on how all modern women fend for themselves and their children as well as share with the menfolk the cares and anxieties imposed by poverty and its evil, Murray and O'Regan (1991, p. 39) declare:

> ...as wives and mothers it falls upon us to make small wages stretch a long way. It is we who feel the cries of our children when they are hungry and sick. It is our lot to keep and care for the homes... We know the burden of looking after children and land when our husbands are away on farms in the mines and in the towns earning our daily bread....

It is based on such sincerity that Alia uses the money she realises from selling her best clothes and her coral beads to cook the best dishes, one of which is *akidi* which Anum loves most, in anticipation of the phantom guests and imaginary meeting. The fake husband would later trick Alia and Little Tortoise by taking them to a certain palm plantation to gather some palm nuts which he claimed to have harvested for them to process palm oil. As his family starts the work, Anum returns home from the farm, in the pretense that the heads of the animal families are waiting for him to attend the imaginary meeting. He then uses the opportunity to eat all the food that Alia had prepared (*TAATT,* pp. 41-50).

It is significant to observe that even within the context of a universe populated by lower animals, the oppression emanating from the male gender is apparent. That Adimora-Ezeigbo would devote interest in the aesthetic exploration of this seemingly irrelevant life of animals attests to the writer's cerebral energy and literary inventiveness. Man, like other lower animals, emerges as a symbolic creature that only totalises its tendency to dominate his environment. That this tendency to dominate would lead to the systemic inferiorisation and oppression of the female gender, however, becomes an existential tragedy that must be confronted.

We observe that menfolk, or male animals, always believe that power resides with them. This is why they tend to insult women and undermine their role and their development. *TAATT* portrays the male protagonist as a cheat who deceives his wife on two consecutive occasions and succeeds. The third time, however, he fails. Alia and Little Tortoise soon discover that Anum had deceived his wife to cook different dishes for him to eat alone without his conscience pricking him. The latter had disposed of her valuables and invested the proceeds in preparing food for her gluttonous, cheating and self-centred husband who is too irresponsible to provide for his family. By that singular action, Anum violates the culturally accepted biblical position that anyone who does not provide for his family is worse than an infidel (1Timothy 5:8) or to phrase differently, a fiend – a wicked and cruel person.

Allowing Alia rethink Anum's action is a way of investing the woman with intelligence. This is also a means of celebrating the woman's legacy,

freedom and empowerment. Otherwise, Alia would have given in to dismay, frustration, depression, sorrow and regret, and she would have fought or quarrelled with Anum. But, here, the novelist imbues the archetypal female character with boldness, resilience and daring qualities which cause her to confront Anum: "...So this is what you have been up to? ... Shame on you ... Anum; for deceiving your wife and daughter. And you made me sell my clothes and coral beads for nothing" (*TAATT*, pp**.** 51-52). She makes Anum to realise that he could not succeed for long at the expense of his wife. Alia replaces what Snyder calls "attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition" (Snyder, 2008, p.176) which checkmates indecent traditional practices. Alia's open confrontation with her husband brings patriarchy face to face with the reality that women are not fools when they allow men to live in the illusion of being over-wise. Little do men know that the wisdom to positive performance does not end with them. "Anum exclaimed: Ah! Alia, my wife, you caught me red handed!" (*TAATT*, pp. 51-52).

A close look at the female archetypes that Adimora-Ezeigbo has constructed shows that they rhyme very much with the practices of the third-wave feminism, of which Snyder (2008, pp. 175-176) succinctly observes:

> ...third wavers embrace multi-vocality over synthesis and action over theoretical justification. Finally, in response to the divisive sex wars, third wave feminism emphasizes an inclusive and non-judgmental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the feminist politically. In other words, third wave feminism rejects grand narratives for a feminism that operates as a hermeneutics of critique within a wide array of discursive locations, and replaces attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition.

If the Mother-Figure archetype is endowed with such daring and worthy qualities that make her a complete and total woman in all sense of the word, why had patriarchy not seen and acknowledged her and the qualitative roles she played in the culture and society before now? Schermer (2008, pp. 57,61) states that "gender is a complex human experience that informs rituals of sex, aggression, and social status...gender affects power and authority...." Moreso, Klein gives a detailed explanation as regards what might be the cause of lack of recognition of the roles of women in society and culture. He posits:

> ...men also use such groups to reclaim the power they feel that women have stolen from them. A component of male domination is, in fact, a compensation and revenge for the omnipotent power that men unconsciously attribute to the women and that derives from the so-called womb envy of the paranoid- schizoid position (Klein, 1977, p. 37).

When women issues come up in the literary world, some men authenticate this shift in the conventional cultural thinking which came up after World War II, towards the yearning "for women to return to family matters and allow men to embody the ideals of hard work and ambition" (Stover, 2013,

p. 3). Others claim that the tendency for them to assert authority and "power over women is inborn and is culturally determined" (Schermer, 2008, p. 58). I strongly think that this is erroneous because sex is classified anatomically, and there is no biologically coded device to measure the strength and power accorded to it. Nature structures it in such a way that everyday interaction brings about people's manifestations of their identity, power, struggles and necessity for a peaceful co-existence. No group, male or female, has excess power over the other, but patriarchal cultures play the politics of lifting man higher than woman. But Obioma in (*COTE*, p. 50) observes that "if everyone acknowledges God and obeys God's commands, there will be no basis for a confrontation between man and woman". This ideological stand affirms Adimora-Ezeigbo's persistent aesthetic and academic fascination with the subject of *complementarity*.

The theory of complementarity is Adimora-Ezeigbo's idea that women and men should learn to dialogue together, as well as stay or live together in peace and harmony. Adimora-Ezeigbo projects *complementarity* "as an idea that favours men and women's equality based on intellectual status and rights, which must promote what is described as existing gender [power balance] relationship" (Arndt, 2008, p. 42). Adimora-Ezeigbo's use of complementarity explains the nexus of her feminism, as she puts it in the "Preface" to her first story collection – *Rhythms of Life* (1992*)*:

> The need for men and women to forge a closer relationship based on mutual understanding and respect is the general idea holding these stories together. For E. M. Forster, as he wrote many years ago, it was 'connectedness': For me it is 'complementarity': the need for men and women to complement one another and build one another up the secret of peaceful living nestles in this idea. (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 1992, "Preface").

Through this yoking together of men and women, Adimora-Ezeigbo captures the original essence of creation as stated in the biblical Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them". This implies that patriarchy should let go of the oppression and marginalisation that have been associated with it for a long time. It also suggests the need for peace, so that men and women can show each other respect, honour, equality and compatibility. This, however, would provide an enabling atmosphere for children to grow up in peace and tranquility at home, school, the nation, and in the world at large.

The archetypal Mother-Figure's ardent trademark is hospitality and liberality to both her children and to others. Age and time do not erase this virtue from her; it is a quality in her character that lives forever. In *COTE*, Adimora-Ezeigbo authorially sustains the virtue of selfless sacrifice of the Mother-Figure in her children. We visualize Eaglewoman's daughters appreciate their old mother and aspire to do everything to compensate her for the love and care she showered on them when they were growing up, even as a widow. She worked assiduously, managing a bakery to be able to

sustain a family of seven. She did not present herself as the "most notable prostitute like Jagua Nana" (Ekwensi, 1961, p.38) nor did she surrender to promiscuous living of the nature that El Kalamawi projects in his book: "Woman continues to appear on the scene as a capricious vamp, a playful and beautiful slave, a she-devil imbued with cunning and capable of a thousand artifices...a seductive mistress captivating in her passion" (El Kalamawi, 1976, p. 303). These are all what patriarchal rituals of literary works often display. Eaglewoman serves as a good role model to her daughters and to her late husband's (Osai's) family and friends, especially Papa Joel who later acts as an oracle's voice and who mediates in the land dispute between Josiah Okwara's daughters and Umeaku's sons.

The Mother-Figure's eagerness to embrace learning and acquire knowledge is one of the hidden virtues that inform her huge achievements. Adimora-Ezeigbo uses Jung's archetypes to illuminate patterns that exist across various workings by females across generations. For instance, in *COTE*, Nnene, Ogonna and Amara organise a workshop or symposium to train the entire young women from the extended families - the Association of Wives on the following areas: (i) the preparation of different dishes – vegetable soup, coconut rice. As they put it, "the Association of Wives... [would] watch a demonstration of how to cook coconut rice with smoked fish. Ogbonna will show them the proper way to cook vegetable to preserve their flavour and nutritional values" (*COTE*, pp. 99-100). (ii) To enlighten the women on the significance of maintaining a healthy mind and a healthy body which would make them remain contented with their youthful look. However, Nnene, the second daughter of Eaglewoman, equally, intimates the young women gathering in their house that they should not allow the educational gulf between her and them to create a barrier to their relationship. She emphasises that the invitation could be regarded as a credible motive to their eccentric disposition. The whole idea is for them to stay connected to their roots; to remain in touch with their beginning; and to keep the channel of their communication open for as long as necessary with the extended families. "After all, they all will, ultimately, return to Umuga to rejoin the ancestors" (*COTE*, p.106).

Eaglewoman's children equally encourage the women to maintain positive feelings, emotions and good relationships with others. They should resist the temptation of engaging in quarrels with people, as it would fissure their relationships with others. They counsel the womenfolk not to harbour negative emotions like envy, hatred, fear, anger and bitterness as this attitude would keep them away from deadly diseases. They embolden women to rise above the problems of life by not allowing themselves to be weighed down. They should believe in themselves and should not allow anyone to erode their confidence to remain healthy and contented (COTE, p.112). Nnene motivates the women to think extensively on issues that make them happy. She stimulates the womenfolk to always go to their husbands each day to have fun and replenish their joys: "Each of you has a husband, not so? ...Do

you take time off to talk with him, play with him?... It is good to have fun with your man at the end of day or whenever it suits both of you. And be sure not to allow him to grab all the pleasure. Demand that he leaves some for you" (COTE, pp. 112-113).

The Umuga Association of Wives is astonished and shocked at the revelation that the new woman can now talk about her sexuality without being afraid of societal and cultural condemnation. One of the women demands to know from Nnene the extent to which she is serious with her exposition: "Are you teasing us or what? Do you mean all you say?" (*COTE*, pp.113-114). It is at this point that Nnene expatiates more by stressing that womenfolk should not be ashamed to express their emotions about their sexual lives and satisfactions since time and season are changing. The novelist advocates that the female archetypes should position themselves adequately to understand and imbibe what Showalter (1996, p. 102) describes as "the female subculture" in their relationships between women, as mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and friends; in sexuality, reproduction and in values about the body; and in rites of initiation and passage, purification ceremonies, myths and taboos. This is in consonance with Rosaldo's viewpoints:

> The very symbolic and social conceptions that appear to set women apart and to circumscribe their activities may be used by the women as a basis for female solidarity and worth. When men live apart from women, they in fact cannot control them, and unwittingly they may provide them with the symbols and social resources on which to build a society of their own (Rosaldo, 1974, p. 39).

This suggests that women should feel free to engage themselves in productive projects that showcase not only their emotional prowess, but also active participation in politics, economic, social and moral interests to enhance their self-actualisation. Nnene warns the women that if they fail to demand from their spouses their conjugal rights, they might go to other men to do so, and this could cost them their marriages, besides being a cultural taboo.

By exploring this stark reality of the Mother-Figure's personal experience, Adimora-Ezeigbo conforms to Elaine Showalter's Third Phase division of women's history – the 'Female Phase' (1920 – present) (Showalter, 1996, p. 106). Showalter solicits women writers to concentrate on explaining the female experience in art and literature. The implication of this solicitation is that female writers should turn to their own lives for themes to write about. It also means that the meticulous expression that shows a new frankness of their sexuality emerged since the female folks can now deliberate publicly personal issues bordering on their lives and families to any extent. The point is that feminist writers and critics have been looking at the presentation of women in male texts, in an attempt to project the 'misogyny' – (that is, the negative attitudes towards them) depicted there. In recent times, some feminist critics (Emecheta, 2000; Arndt, 2008; Chiluwa, 2014; & Adichie, 2017) have adopted what Showalter (1996, p. 100)

calls *la gynocritique: 'gynocritics'*, a literary perspective that is more self-contained and investigational, with influences to other approaches of new feminist enquiry. This equally designates the essential features of women's experience, which is contrary to what early women writers (Feminine Phase 1840-1880) did by describing women from a male perspective.

The Mother-Figure archetype might take all risks to ensure that her children or others are delivered from any impending danger. In *COTE*, Adimora-Ezeigbo captures a moving incident which happened during the Nigerian civil war. We read that when enemy planes swooped down like lightning raiding, strafing and bombing the airstrip in the Airport construction unit in Umuga, Eaglewoman's mother [Azigba] and grandmother [Ejimnaka] came in search of Ogonna to get her away from the site and to take her home to prevent her dying untimely. "...You will no longer work in this camp Mama said in a determined voice..." (*COTE*, pp. 258-260). The point the novelist seems to be making is that these women risked their lives for the sake of their innocent child. The cord of love that makes the Mother-Figure archetype to consider others first before herself is what Alarcos-M.Pillar (2010, p. 9) captures as "... the evolution of universal image of women...." It means that sacrificial services and hospitality are singular traits in the Mother Figure archetype which times and locations have not tampered with. As Jung (2010, p. 67) reminds us:

> ...certainly the courage and capacity for self-sacrifice of such women is admirable, and only the blind could fail to see the good that has come out of all these efforts...(the) woman is doing something that is injurious to her feminine nature. She is doing something that would scarcely be possible for a man to do....

Quite compellingly, this Jungian proclamation is best illustrated in *COTE*. We hear the claims of Eaglewoman as she interacts with her daughters: "... A woman's innermost core is a symbol of love. We are told that God is love. Therefore, God and woman share this trait, this nature" (*COTE,* p. 42).

4. Conclusion

The study reveals that the Mother-Figure archetype is an eternal universal subject that is associated with love and fruitfulness. This is confirmed in Jung's (2010, p. 125) observation that the Mother-Figure archetype "can be attached to a rock, a tree, a spring, a field, a deep well or to various shaped flowers like the rose or lotus". She epitomes love and encourages all classes of people she meets daily in her family, community, and nation, in particular, and even those she meets in the world at large. The Mother-Figure archetype works hard and makes selfless sacrifices to achieve development and progress for humanity. She does not have a predilection to fear, timidity, aggression and violence, as she was always painted in the past.

Also, the study shows that Adimora-Ezeigbo's fiction serves as a socio-cultural compass of the ideology of *complementarity* which aims to reconcile men and women within given cultural boundaries to work in harmony and in

love. Adimora-Ezeigbo seems to suggest that the relationship of the workforce at the beginning might not be perfect, but with time the male gender group would "open themselves up to the necessary transformations" (Arndt, 2008, p. 43). The novelist also uses the *complementarity* approach to illustrate the lasting relationship that exists between the Mother-Figure archetype and other characters in the texts as well as in real life. In the character delineations in the selected texts, the adult narrative, and the story for children, Adimora-Ezeigbo has fortified the Mother-Figure archetype with education, boldness and intelligence. The intellectual fortification of the women has made her to rebel against patriarchal structures that had kept her in servitude in times past.

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