REDEFINING THE AFRICAN WOMAN IN THE WORKS OF THIRD GENERATION NIGERIAN WRITERS

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FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
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ABSTRACT

The present contemporary third generation Nigerian narratives redefine the African woman by portraying the gendered experiences of Nigerian women in opposition to masculinist dominance and oppressive patriarchal norms. Third generation Nigerian writers employ a transgressive and nuanced stance in their addressing of the postcolonial Nigerian woman's quest for agency and self-definition within the challenging patriarchal spaces. These contemporary writers redress archetypal images of the silent and victimised African woman by reimagining her resilient and agentive role in dismantling the dominant patriarchal constructions in the nation and diaspora. Referring to the selected narratives of Sefi Atta, Tola Rotimi Abraham, Chinelo Okparanta, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Patience Ibrahim, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chika Unigwe, this dissertation explores how third generation Nigerian writers deconstruct stereotypical gendered constructions of the African woman. In the aim of filling a gap in the existing African literary scholarship, this research maps Nigerian daughterhood against the patriarchal nation, reads the Nigerian woman's sexual agency against the homophobia and religious orthodoxy, positions the Nigerian woman's quest for self-healing and agency against the masculinist discourse of terrorism, and addresses her quest for global citizenhood within the racialised and gendered topographies of the West. Feminist postcolonial theory is applied alongside womanism, lesbian feminism and Afropolitanism to reframe the African woman's gendered subjectivity and her quest for agency.

Keywords: African woman, Afropolitan womanhood, Gendered subjectivity, Third generation Nigerian literature, Women's sexual agency

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ABSTRAK

Naratif Nigeria generasi ketiga kontemporari kini mentakrifkan semula wanita Afrika dengan menggambarkan pengalaman jantina wanita Nigeria yang menentang dominasi maskulin dan norma patriarki yang menindas. Penulis Nigeria generasi ketiga menggunakan pendirian yang transgresif dan bernuansa dalam menangani usaha wanita Nigeria pascakolonial untuk agensi dan definisi diri dalam ruang patriarki yang mencabar. Penulis-penulis kontemporari ini membetulkan imej pola dasar wanita Afrika yang diam dan menjadi mangsa dengan membayangkan semula peranannya yang berdaya tahan dan agen dalam merungkai pembinaan patriarki yang dominan di dalam negara dan diaspora. Merujuk kepada naratif terpilih Sefi Atta, Tola Rotimi Abraham, Chinelo Okparanta, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Patience Ibrahim, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie dan Chika Unigwe, disertasi ini meneroka bagaimana penulis Nigeria generasi ketiga menghuraikan pembinaan stereotaip gender wanita Afrika. Dalam tujuan mengisi jurang dalam kesarjanaan sastera Afrika yang sedia ada, penyelidikan ini memetakan anak perempuan Nigeria terhadap patriarki negara, membaca agensi seksual wanita Nigeria menentang homofobia dan ortodoksi agama, meletakkan usaha wanita Nigeria untuk penyembuhan diri dan agensi menentang wacana keganasan maskulin, dan menangani usahanya untuk mendapatkan kerakyatan global dalam topografi Barat mengikut fokus bangsa dan jantina. Teori postkolonial feminis digunakan bersama womanisme, feminisme lesbian dan Afropolitanisme untuk merangka semula subjektiviti jantina wanita Afrika dan usahanya untuk agensi.

Kata Kunci: Wanita Afrika, Kewanitaan Afropolitan, Subjektiviti jantina, Kesusasteraan Nigeria generasi ketiga, Agensi seksual wanita

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. THIRD GENERATION NIGERIAN WRITERS

First generation of Nigerian literature is dominated by the works of male writers such as Amos Tutuola, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. In their fictional works, "women play a secondary role in the affairs of society and the principal female characters are portrayed as adjuncts to the main male characters" (Ngara 35). In other words, female characters are depicted as archetypes of passivity and vulnerability, which is a diminished and impaired picture of African womanhood. In contrast to first and second generations, the twenty-first century Nigerian literature that is categorised as "third generation" is dominated by women writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta, Chika Unigwe, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Unoma Azuah, Sade Adeniran, Lola Shoneyin, Abidemi Sanusi, Chinelo Okparanta, Tola Rotimi Abraham, Ayobami Adebayo, Sarah Ladipo Manyika, Oyinkan Braithwaite and Chibundu Onuzo. These writers are unabashedly feminist and/or womanist in their stance, and thus they deconstruct the stereotyped image of the Nigerian woman by redefining and revisioning her position and role in society. They portray spirited, determined and resilient female characters who are pitted against patriarchal oppression and male dominance. Besides, third generation Nigerian male writers are not male-oriented and patriarchal in their vision, and thus they also portray the African woman in an optimistic perspective. Corresponding to the narratives of women writers, the twenty-first century Nigerian male writers also challenge the dominant masculinist discourses of male superiority, hegemonic masculinity and male sexual violence against women. This ideological shift in the third generation

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Nigerian literature demonstrates the attempt of these writers to establish social justice, gender equality and human dignity.

In contrast to the previous generations, third generation Nigerian writers seem to address "pressing postcolonial concerns of the twenty-first century like ethnic conflict, rape, gender violence, the recruitment of child soldiers, and genocide" (Okuyade, "Continuity and Renewal" 7). Though third generation Nigerian authors address the socio-political concerns in their nation, they transcend the boundaries of the nation, and thus embrace a global and universal vision. In their project of addressing the postcolonial concerns, they employ a very powerful feminist and/or womanist perspective as a way of redefining the individual and society. One of the main reasons for the rise of women's writing in contemporary Nigerian literature is that the dominant fictional voice of the generation is female. The emergence of feminist postcolonialism and womanism, women's greater access to university education, and their entrance into administrative positions have paved the way for women to express their experience in a female-oriented perspective. It can be argued that this ideological rebel against stereotypical images of the African woman has been started by first generation Flora Nwapa and continued by second generation Buchi Emecheta and Ifeoma Okoye. Third generation Nigerian writers have energised and uplifted this female-oriented approach in literature by extending Nigerian womanhood beyond the nation. In addition, this new generation of writers has broadened the significance of gender relations from "the familial base" (Okuyade, "Continuity and Renewal" 10). As Okuyade notes, "although the gender drama is still set within the locus of the family, the writers explore national issues from this popular primordial base" ("Continuity and Renewal" 10). In the narratives of the twenty-first century Nigerian writers, female protagonists' quest for self-definition and agency is used as a standard of interrogating the socio-political and cultural

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context of the nation. Thus, socio-political and cultural concerns are explored as analogous to themes of masculinist dominance and female subordination. The portrayal of national traumas such as violence against women, masculinist militarism, genocidal war, sex-trafficking, rape culture and religious fundamentalism remaps the Nigerian nation as a place of violence and morbidity: as a site of "perennial political and humanitarian emergencies" (Adesokan 11). Therefore, it is apparent that third generation Nigerian writers are highly successful in their attempt to reconfigure the socio-political text of contemporary Nigeria. They do not romanticise or sentimentalise the nation, but depict the reality of the nation without evincing their emotional and cultural bond to its people and society.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This dissertation foregrounds the emerging femininities and the Nigerian woman's quest for agency and self-definition as portrayed in the contemporary, third-generation Nigerian fictional narratives. By focusing on the Nigerian woman's gendered subjectivity in relation to childhood and adolescent experiences, sexual awakening, war and militarised violence, and the immigrant and diasporic experiences, this research aims to examine how the writers reimagine and redefine African womanhood. In other words, it foregrounds how women decolonise their gendered bodies against the masculinist dominance and other forms of patriarchal discourses. By so doing, this research offers a more transgressive and nuanced interpretation to emerging female identities and voices in third generation Nigerian narratives. It addresses distinct and diverse feminine voices and narratives in the aim of deconstructing the monolithic and stereotypical definitions of African womanhood.

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1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the African woman's gendered subjectivity and her resistance against the normative patriarchal constructions of gender performativity
2. To focus on how the militarised female body becomes a site of resistance against the masculinist discourse of terrorism and its religious fundamentalism
3. To investigate the gendered and racialised subjectivity of the Afropolitan woman in her quest for global citizenhood

1.4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nigerian novel as a cultural product emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. The Nigerian authors of each generation have recreated the socio-cultural realities of the people, and in this creative process, they have specifically addressed the concerns relevant to their time and space. For instance, first generation Nigerian writers were emotionally bruised by colonialism and its invasive aspects, and thus prioritised "the urgency of contesting colonial myths to reclaim both the denied humanity of the African and the integrity of his denigrated culture" (Diala 124). While first generation Nigerian narratives contest colonialism, the works of second generation foreground the corrupt post-independent political situation addressing the concerns such as the emergence of political dictatorship, censorship, governmental mismanagement and rise of corruption in the country.

This review begins with an introduction to the literary and ideological shift in third generation Nigerian narratives. In the beginning of the review, it is explained how third generation Nigerian texts are representative of postcolonial African issues. Then, it focuses on how third generation Nigerian writers have used the coming-of-age story of the adolescent girl-child to represent the broader national and postcolonial concerns in the context of Africa. Based on the existing scholarship on

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Nigerian coming-of-age narratives, I demonstrate how this study fills an important gap by positioning Nigerian daughterhood against the masculinist nation as a way of exhibiting the adolescent girl's womanist tendencies. Next, this review focuses on how third generation Nigerian texts revision the socio-political context of Africa. Referring to third generation war narratives on women's subjectivity in the Biafran war, it discusses how this new generation of writers offers a feminist revisionism to the masculinist agenda of war. Based upon the Nigerian war novels on the Biafra, I extend my discussion to investigate the Boko Haram war narratives and their depiction of the subaltern female war victim's survival wisdom and resistance against the masculinist discourse of sexual terrorism and religious fundamentalism. Afterwards, my review focuses on how third generation Nigerian texts on women's sexual agency reframe the gender drama of the continent. I contend that the emergent lesbian subject and the Nigerian Muslim woman's sexual transgression as a radical ideological redefinition of African femininity. Transgressive sexualities are considered as un-African by some scholars, and this dissertation refuses and challenges those homogenising and monolithic interpretations of African women's sexuality. Finally, this review addresses the migrant African woman's subjectivity in the diaspora. However, my analysis goes beyond conventional diasporic readings and offers an Afropolitan and womanist perspective to the African woman's resilient quest for global citizenhood and autonomous Afro-diasporic personhood. By drawing African female characters from various national and global spaces, this dissertation strives to offer a more nuanced stance to the African woman's gendered experiences.

An ideological and stylistic shift in Nigerian literature is apparent in the beginning of the twenty-first century. As Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton point out, in the beginning of the twenty-first century, "there was a significant generic shift from

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poetry to the novel" (8), and the emerging novels of new Nigerian authors had gained considerable international acclaim. Third generation Nigerian writers have acquired "a creative identity markedly different from that of second generation writers" (Adesanmi and Dunton 7) due to their deviation from the principal anticolonial concerns of the previous two generations. Besides, the twenty-first century Nigerian writers are more focussed on the socio-political reality of Nigeria, and thus they address the urgent issues in the nation such as political despotism, corruption, poverty, militarised violence, oppression of women, sexual harassment in workplace, sexual slavery, drug trafficking, media censorship, and religious fundamentalism. While addressing the socio-political text of Nigeria, they extend their scope to include the pressing postcolonial concerns such as "transnationality, migration, exile, war, and cultural revitalization" (Okuyade, "Continuity and Renewal" 7). Due to this versatile and universal perspective in third generation Nigerian literature, Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton recognise "Nigeria as the most vibrant case study for third generation African writing" (14). In other words, Nigeria is representative of "a singular case of several hundred writers from the same country who subscribe to the third generation identity and are conscious of that collective image within the reins and dynamics of the broader national literary self-imagining" (Adesanmi and Dunton 15). In addition to the versatility of themes and universality of vision in contemporary Nigerian fiction, there is ""a gradual disappearance of indigenous African narrative techniques" (Okuyade, "Continuity and Renewal" 7) that can be found in the narratives of first and second generation writers.

I am inclined to pay attention to the emergence of feminist and womanist perspectives in the works of third generation Nigerian writers. In his article "Continuity and Renewal in the Endless Tales of a Continent: New Voices in the African Novel," Okuyade identifies the presence of a powerful feminist streak in the

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third generation Nigerian novel. As Okuyade argues, the emergence of womanist ideals has provided the platform for the writers to redefine and revision the gender drama in the continent. Third generation Nigerian writers have expanded the scope of gender relations by using the issues within family context to explore national concerns. In other words, these writers employ the growth process of their female characters to interrogate the national concerns. Therefore, "socio-political problems are explored as analogous to themes of patriarchal dominance" (Okuyade, "Continuity and Renewal" 11). In the same vein, Madelaine Hron argues that the figure of child, especially the girl-child in the third generation Nigerian coming-of-age narrative is reflective of Nigeria itself. In the same way as the nation, the child protagonist has to "negotiate his/her place in postcolonial society, one deeply marked by Western influence and globalization" (Hron 30). As Hron further clarifies, in third generation Nigerian narratives, "it becomes apparent that the child's quest for a sociocultural identity is inextricably linked to issues arising from postcolonialism and globalisation, often manifested in the context of repression, violence or exploitation" (29). Analogous to the standpoint of Okuyade and Hron, Felix Mutunga Ndaka examines how Nigerian daughters create productive tensions between their self-actualisation and patriarchal discourses as a part of "a project to chart new paths and possibilities of knowledge production and envision new and productive relationalities" (13). The adolescent female protagonists in third generation Nigerian coming-of-age narratives re-imagine national and private intimacies by challenging "male-centric national historiographies" (Ndaka 13). In other words, these young female protagonists articulate more inclusive ways of belonging to the nation and "re-imagine the roles and place of women in national figurations [and] expand the boundaries of civic engagement beyond the nation" (Ndaka 13–14).

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Thus, in their analysis of the female bildungsroman of third generation Nigerian writers, Okuyade, Hron and Ndaka identify how the girl-child's quest for self-definition is analogous with the socio-political text of the nation. Third generation Nigerian writers offer an ideological redefinition to African womanhood by interrogating "how the daughters rebel against the moral-ethical codes of their various societies in order to come to terms with the challenges of womaning and constructing identity for themselves" (Okuyade, "Continuity and Renewal" 10). Focusing on the complex and nuanced role of the child figure in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, Hron argues that the female protagonist's journey to adulthood is emblematic of "the struggles of young Nigeria as it negotiates Western and traditional norms, while also being overwhelmed by economic disparity, bad governance, pervasive corruption, or human rights violations" (31). In the same vein, Ndaka examines Enitan's plight in Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* as a portrayal of the Nigerian woman's attempt to imagine new national realities within the masculinist nation. According to Ndaka, Atta's narrative presents an adolescent girl's defiance against "the masculine investment in the domestication and subservience of women in post-independent Nigeria" (3). Enitan in Atta's text exemplifies women doing "the intellectual, emotional and physical labour of imagining new national realities" (Ndaka 11). By observing the bond that Enitan establishes with Grace Ameh and other dissident women, we can see "the formulation of an expanded model of resistance whereby their active performance of citizenship is contrasted to the militarised masculine violence and apathy that pervades the text" (Ndaka 12).

In addition, Sola Owonibi and Olufunmilayo Gaji identify the trope of the absent mother as a dominant feature in the works of third generation Nigerian narratives. Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will*

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Come, Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*, Tola Rotimi Abraham's *Black Sunday*, and Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* are only handful of third generation Nigerian narratives which present the trope of the absent mother. In these works, the absence of the mother "may manifest physically, emotionally and/or psychologically" (Owonibi and Gaji 112). While these mothers "may not necessarily be physically absent, they are emotionally absent in their spiritual connectivity with their daughters" (Nadaswaran 26). In Sefi Atta's novel *Everything Good Will Come*, the female protagonist, Enitan develops her personhood and identity without the emotional influence of her mother. Referring to Atta's narrative, Owonibi and Gaji assert that "Christian motifs provide deeper comprehension of the dynamics that influence the relationship of Enitan and Sheri against the backdrop of the trope of the absent mother" (112). However, this absence of "maternal ties does not render the female characters void but instead equips them with emotional fortitude to achieve their sense of empowerment" (Nadaswaran 26). For instance, Enitan and Sheri in Atta's text achieve their independence and womanist agency due to the lack of their mothers' spiritual presence in their lives. In this sense, it can be argued that the daughters in third generation Nigerian novels display resistance against the construction of traditional gendered identity based on the values and norms of their mothers. It is a reconstruction and rewriting of African womanhood by undoing the archetypal and conventional notions of gender performativity.

Based upon this background, my dissertation fills a gap in the existing scholarship by reading the Nigerian daughter's coming-of-age story against the masculinist nation and its ideological investment in subordinating women. The second chapter of this dissertation foregrounds how the Nigerian girl-child resists the masculinist nation's construction of passive femininity by formulating productive tensions between her female agency and patriarchal dominance as a part of a project

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to create new avenues of national belonging and female empowerment. Referring to Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* and Abraham's *Black Sunday*, I demonstrate how the female protagonists in these texts dislodge the masculinist configuration of the nation by offering an alternative female-centred ethos to build up the nation. They move their female protagonists out of the realm of the home and place them within the political arena of the nation. By so doing, the third generation Nigerian novel on the spiritual growth of the adolescent girl challenges male-centric and patriarchal national imaginary in the aim of articulating equitable and harmonious ways of belonging to the nation. Therefore, my analysis of the Nigerian daughter's quest for self-definition and autonomy within the masculinist national space and her political activism and civic engagement as depicted in these narratives reimagine African womanhood.

It is apparent that the third generation Nigerian novel is "a reconfiguration of national realities in which the feminine is neither essentialized and mythologized nor marginalized, but unapologetically central to the realist representation of recognizable social world" (Bryce 49–50). As Jane Bryce further clarifies, the realistic portrayal of socio-political universe, especially the woman's experience in war and militarised violence "constitutes a shifting of the ground of identity-construction in Nigerian fiction away from the fully-constituted masculine self, to a notion of selfhood as split or multiple" (50). It can be argued that instead of contesting or oppressing the definition of womanhood in preceding fictional narratives, third generation Nigerian writers "enter into a dialogue that allows them to redefine it, using the terms and techniques of preceding generations while calling into question their interpretation of the past" (Bryce 64). Referring to Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Bryce argues that the novelist takes us into "the heart of the malaise of contemporary Nigeria through a confrontation with the past" (63). It is understandable that third

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generation Nigerian writers revision the recent history of Nigeria in order to depict the ongoing presence of the past. According to Chigbo Arthur Anyaduba, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* offers "a feminist revisionism of an otherwise masculinist discourse of war in Nigerian writing" (87). Corresponding to the critical stance of Bryce and Anyaduba, Obioma Nnaemeka argues that female-oriented third generation Nigerian war narratives offer an insightful literary account on female subjectivity and agency in war that go beyond the depictions of gendered violence and take into account women's resilience and empowerment against the masculinist backdrop of terror. As Nnaemeka writes, war narratives constitute "an act of resistance, a struggle against forgetting" ("Gendered Spaces and War" 191). Therefore, "a full and balanced documentation of the war must take into account the agency, determination, resilience, ingenuity and creativity that prevailed in the enclave" (Nnaemeka, "Gendered Spaces and War" 175).

In this dissertation, the chapter on the African woman's gendered subjectivity in war and violence mainly explores women's gendered experiences during the Boko Haram insurgency. The painful and haunting legacy of militarised violence of the Biafran war is resurrected within the Boko Haram insurgency. In other words, the masculinist violence against women in Boko Haram and its religious fundamentalism echo the gendered violence in the Biafran war and its patriarchal discourse of nationalism. Referring to Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* and Patience Ibrahim's *A Gift from Darkness*, I argue that within the masculinist space of Boko Haram terrorism, the gendered and sexualised body of the Nigerian woman becomes the battleground for settling ethnic, religious and fundamentally patriarchal quarrels. Though the Biafran war narratives are widely discussed, the Boko Haram war narratives are not still subjected to in-depth critical discussion. This research fills a critical gap in the existing scholarship on third

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generation Nigerian war narratives by exploring how Nwaubani and Ibrahim's works give voice to the subaltern female war victim. I argue that the masculinist discourse of militarism and religious orthodoxy function together to formulate a militarised and religiously fundamentalist system to govern women's bodies. The portrayal of female protagonists' harrowing experiences under the Islamist militancy and their struggle for emancipation constitute these narratives as literary works of resistance.

In addition to the portrayal of the subaltern female war victim's subjectivity and agency, third generation Nigerian writers have taken a radical shift by addressing the situation of the marginalised sexual subjects such as lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender men and women. As Brenna Munro points out in her article "Locating 'Queer' in Contemporary Writing of Love and War in Nigeria," in the narratives of third generation Nigerian writers, "two subjects have been being written into new prominence and legibility: the child soldier and the gay or lesbian subject" (121). The works of Unoma Azuah, Chris Abani, Jude Dibia and Chinelo Okparanta have given a voice to the sexual minority in Nigeria. Focussing on the lesbian and gay subjectivity in the twenty-first century Nigerian fiction, Lindsey Green-Simms states that the context of Nigeria provides a useful gauge to measure the situation of the sexually marginalised subject in the rest of the continent. In many ways, "homophobia and various literary responses to it in Nigeria are quite typical of an overall trend in much of anglophone sub-Saharan Africa where anti-gay legislation and rhetoric is on the rise" (Green-Simms 141). The literary voices in contemporary Nigeria critique the dominant discourses of homophobia and explore "the everyday fears, desires, pleasures, and anxieties of those who experience same-sex attraction" (Green-Simms 141). Twenty-first century Nigerian narratives resist the dominant heteronormativity and tell "diverse stories about same-sex desire that are neither monothematic nor moralistic" (Green-Simms 142). The twenty-first century

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Nigerian narratives on same-sex desire strive to dismantle the dominant negative views on homosexuality expressed in Nollywood films. As Green-Simms argues, in Nollywood movies, "gay characters are portrayed as murderous and lecherous, often involved in other vices such as prostitution and witchcraft, and they are almost always a direct and clear threat to heterosexual marriages" (143). The agency of the subaltern sexually queer subject is erased and denied in these dominant patriarchal narratives. As Green-Simms further points out in her analysis, third generation Nigerian writers integrate homosexuality to "larger debates and discussions about women's struggles, sexism, imposed gender normativity, violence, corruption, religion, and immigration" (143).

Corresponding to Lindsey Green-Simms's critical stance, Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi points out the lack of narratives dealing with women's same-sex desire in Nigeria since the narratives on sexually queer subject are overwhelmingly male. In his insightful article "The Promise of Lesbians in African Literary History," Osinubi identifies the publication of Chinelo Okparanta's lesbian novel *Under the Udala Trees* in 2015 as a significant achievement in the third generation Nigerian literature. Okparanta's text depicts the heteronormative masculinist norms in African political culture that deny homosexuality or propagate antagonism towards sexual minorities. Though the novel portrays how heterosexist attitudes shore up political authority, "its brilliance lies in replicating the dispersal and deployments of sexuality in pursuit of multiple forms of authority that are incorporated into the fabric of the everyday" (Osinubi 676). Okparanta strives to demonstrate how the subaltern lesbian subject and her desires are suppressed in the constitution of hegemonic masculinity and heterosexist social order. Contrasting Okparanta's narrative with the female-oriented works of Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta, Osinubi writes, "Nwapa and Emecheta often address marriage, motherhood, women's economic independence and their

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sexual desires, they especially reflect on women's sexual pleasures; however, they configure desire as heterosexual and do not figure same-sex within their novels" (680). Okparanta extends the feminist potentials of Nwapa and Emecheta by "stretching and accommodating other feminisms within the Anglo-Igbo novel" (Osinubi 680). In a similar critical stance, Cedric Courtois finds Okparanta's debut novel as a way of giving voice to gendered subaltern bodies in Nigeria. As Courtois foregrounds the idea that the subaltern lesbian can speak, and her voice is disruptive of the dogmatic codes of Nigerian patriarchy. As Cedric Courtois notes, the protagonist in *Under the Udala Trees* "can indeed be considered a subaltern because she's a woman, a lesbian, and an Igbo during the Nigerian civil war" (122). Through the character of Ijeoma, Okparanta gives "a voice to those who have always been ostracized, relegated to the margins, in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, and in Nigeria in particular" (Courtois 122). By empowering the subaltern lesbian subject, the novel "disrupts the patriarchal discourse on homosexuality and displaces the lesbian character from her initial place at the margins to the centre, thus destabilizing the male discourse" (Courtois 128).

Parallel to the critical stance of Osinubi and Courtois, Dobrota Pucherova argues that the emergent lesbian subject in third generation Nigerian literature is a radical redefinition of African feminist ideals. According to Pucherova, this radical epistemic shift in the twenty-first century Nigerian fiction exemplifies a move towards "feminist individualism" ("What Is African Woman" 105). In addition, Pucherova identifies Okparanta's debut novel *Under the Udala Trees* as "a pathbreaking text" that uses lesbian desire and sexuality as "a way to reimagine the entire society" ("What Is African Woman" 115). The lyricism of the novel emphasises "the human dimension over politics, showing the heroines' desires as emerging through their particular experiences of victimhood" (Pucherova, "What Is

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African Woman" 116). Okparanta's narrative characterises lesbian intimacy as fulfilling, selfless and devoted in juxtaposition to the possessiveness and jealousy of heterosexual marriage. Correspondingly, in the article "Pleasure in Queer African Studies: Screenshots of the Present," Brenna Munro points out the lyrical beauty of the passages in Okparanta's narrative that describe the hesitant happiness of the moments of lesbian love (662). Thus, it is apparent that the emergent lesbian voice in the third generation Nigerian literature chronicles "a formation of African women's subjectivity that has undergone a radical epistemic shift" (Pucherova, "What Is African Woman" 118). However, lesbian love in contemporary Nigerian fiction is not only a means of freedom and self-definition, but also "an imagination of socio-political change" (Pucherova, "What Is African Woman" 118). Its demand for the acceptance of sexual diversity denormativizes patriarchal discourse of heteronormativity.

While the emergent lesbian subject denormativizes gendered normativity, there is the rise of the fictional narratives dealing with sex and taboo in the twenty-first century Nigerian literature. Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2015) is such a controversial depiction of a sexual intimacy between a fifty-five year old Muslim widow and twenty-five year old street gang leader. According to Daniel Chukwuemeka, Ibrahim's text is a sensational narration that celebrates sexual liberation against the strict moral code of religion (146). The sexual relationship between Binta Zubairu and Hassan Reza is considered as taboo and unacceptable in predominantly Islamic Hausa community in northern Nigeria. In other words, religious orthodoxy shapes the cultural perception of sexual expression, and thus "sexual orientations that are not sanctioned by such religion are outlawed" (Chukwuemeka 147). However, the novel destabilises the moral code of patriarchal religion by portraying Binta Zubairu's radical sexual expression as a way of female

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emancipation. As Chukwuemeka further argues, in Ibrahim's novel, "the existential attitude of the two main characters, Binta Zubairu and Hassan Reza, towards their sexual affair is variously portrayed in the ways they react to the socio-cultural and traditional prescriptions and expectations typical of the predominant Muslim northern Nigeria" (150). Though it is culturally and religiously stigmatised, Binta Zubairu's uncontainable desire for bodily pleasure is a way of escaping from her religious imprisonment. Thus, the religiously and culturally unacceptable sexual affair between Binta Zubairu and Hassan Reza is "a leeway to a full expression of their humanity through the discovery of their past losses and their attempts, in the present, to fill the emotional void which those losses have created in them" (Chukwuemeka 155). In the same vein, Elizabeth Olaoye and Amanda Zink examine Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* as a text about the gendered embodiment of religion, trauma and shame. Their discussion seeks to investigate "the Muslim woman's body as both a place of memory and of unconscious resistance in Northern Nigeria" (40). In addition, Olaoye and Zink identify Ibrahim's text as a radical departure from the literary tradition in northern Nigeria due to its unreserved depiction of female sexual liberty. Examining Binta Zubairu's plight in terms of her body and agency, Olaoye and Zink argue that the woman's sexual desires cannot be fulfilled "within strict religious and cultural prescriptions" (46).

Similar to the critical stance of Olaoye and Zink, Sule Emmanuel Egya states that Binta Zubairu's affair with Hassan Reza is "a kind of self-discovery" (349) for the religiously entrapped woman. This womanist notion of self-discovery opens up "a new world of liberation: a liberation from her religion-backed self-imposed prison of ethical rules, but also from the ruthlessly puritanical society" (Egya 349). It is apparent that at the core of this self-discovery is the woman's sexuality, her individual choice to bind or unbind her desires. However, Binta Zubairu's sexual liberation is a

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controversial issue in "northern Nigeria where individual choices do not matter, where individuals are forcefully rendered subjects of religion" (Egya 349). As a devoted Muslim and a student at the adult Islamic school, Binta Zubairu is not expected to fornicate with a street rogue. The act of fornication in the text is portrayed as a form of releasing the woman's body from the prison of moral and ethical codes. Accordingly, the scholars observe the gendered body of the Nigerian woman as a site of resistance against the normative codes of female sexual performance and dogmatic notions of religious decency.

Drawing upon these scholarly discussions on the emergent lesbian subjectivity and the sexual emancipation of the Nigerian Muslim woman, this research offers a transgressive analysis to the Nigerian woman's sexual awakening by positioning her sexual liberation against patriarchal discourses of heteronormativity and religious orthodoxy. In the third chapter of this dissertation, I argue that patriarchal culture and religious dogma function as oppressive and hegemonic tools that colonise the female body and sexuality. As the sexually emancipated female protagonists in Okparanta and Ibrahim's novels traverse heterosexist and religiously dogmatic masculinist turf, they rediscover their sexual agency and spiritual liberation. Accordingly, in my discussion, I demonstrate sexual awakening and liberation of the Nigerian woman as a radical shift in Nigerian literature: as a way of dispelling the myth of the sexually subordinated African woman. In other words, I argue that the portrayal of women's sexual liberation is a literary effort to decolonise the gendered body of the African woman from the masculinist dominance and religious orthodoxy.

Moreover, the turn of the new millennium has marked another shift in Nigerian literature due to its increased focus on African diaspora and Afropolitan subjectivity. The term "Afropolitan" is a new terminology used to define "a class of

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African elites who are either born or brought up in the diaspora or those who have adopted citizenship of countries other than their original African homelands" (Mohammed 352). Afropolitans are transnational and transcultural and are "constantly struggling for the right identity for themselves because the multiplicity of their nationalities makes them citizens of more than one country while living in many other countries" (Mohammed 352). This emerging African generation of Afropolitans maintains a multicultural identity in allegiance to the global community. Third generation Nigerian narratives on Afropolitan subjectivity focus on the diasporic citizens from "a moneyed class and having the ability to travel overseas" (Pucherova, "Afropolitan Narratives" 409). As Pucherova explains, Afropolitanism does not represent the narratives of "modern day slavery, child soldiers and refugees" ("Afropolitan Narratives" 409). Afropolitan fiction is mainly produced by African writers who reside in western countries, and thus the setting of their narratives is cosmopolitan though it sometimes depicts the context in Africa. In other words, Afropolitan literature appeals to "Western audiences or to Africans living in the West precisely because they are easy to understand – no effort is required to decode their symbolic systems" (Pucherova, "Afropolitan Narratives" 409). Instead of embodying stereotypical notions of victimhood and self-pity, Afropolitans display resilient and spirited struggle against discrimination and marginalisation. As Razinat Talatu Mohammed writes, "Afropolitanism, although a minority discourse, is a vibrant and new concept in African literature that is poised to celebrate African identities and values in the face of challenging globalized values" (354).

The most prominent Afropolitan narratives by third generation Nigerian writers include Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*, Teju Cole's *Open City*, Segun Afolabi's *Goodbye Lucille*, Chris Abani's *The Virgin of Flames*, and Chika Unigwe's *Better Never than Late*. According to Maximilian

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Feldner, "the literature of the Nigerian diaspora typically depicts experiences of migration not as linear and one-directional, but as multidirectional movements oscillating between different places" (185). Adichie's *Americanah* and Atta's *A Bit of Difference* differ from other narratives of migration due to their portrayal of the Afropolitan woman's "successful process of migration during which [she is] able to build an existence in the new country without abandoning the possibility of returning to [her] place of origin" (Feldner 185). For instance, the protagonist in *Americanah*, Ifemelu, develops her Afropolitan identity on multiple levels, namely in her opinion about American culture, her accent, the way she wears her hair, and her integration into the life of the United States by embracing American values and norms. As a result of adopting the values of American culture, Ifemelu sees Nigeria as an outsider when she returns back to her home after thirteen years. Though America has given her a cosmopolitan's outlook, it is apparent that Ifemelu still has a strong bond to her homeland. In his discussion of Adichie's text, Maximilian Feldner identifies Ifemelu's plight as a prototypical example for the migrant subject's hybrid identity formation as a person who occupies multiple cultural and geographical spaces. Similar to Feldner's stance, Razinat Talatu Mohammed identifies *Americanah* as a text that "expounds the ideals of the theory of Afropolitanism" (355). The novel highlights "Ifemelu's inner struggles as an African immigrant in a racially conscious place like America" (Mohammed 355). Ifemelu lives a hybrid lifestyle in order to become an African of the world. However, as an Afropolitan, "the link that Ifemelu maintains with Nigeria pulls her to self-fulfilment in the end" (Mohammed 357). As an Afropolitan, Ifemelu realises the inadequacies in her dreamland, America, and this understanding is signified through her recourse to her roots in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Caroline Lyle expands the concept of Afropolitanism by pointing out the gendered and racialised subjectivity of female Afropolitans.

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According to Lyle, Ifemelu's sexual and racial identity in *Americanah* constructs a unique identity for her as an Afropolitan woman. The novel foregrounds the idea that "becoming a full subject is only possible when female racialised sexual experiences are consciously lived through and confronted, so that the voices of female Afropolitans can emerge" (Lyle 101). As Lyle notes, Ifemelu's process of self-alienation takes place precisely because of her "extreme marginalization and lack of agency as a black female lower-class immigrant who is forced to work illegally" (107). For instance, Ifemelu's sexual abuse through an unnamed tennis coach exemplifies the systematic discrimination against the black woman. The episode that depicts Ifemelu's vulnerability in front of the tennis coach is suggestive of the "power imbalance between the white American man and the black immigrant woman" (Lyle 108). Contrasting Ifemelu's immigrant experience with her lover, Obinze, Caroline Lyle argues that Obinze does not face "the sexual stigmatization and abuse Ifemelu encounters and does not have to adjust his Afropolitan identity sexually the way she has to" (110). Ifemelu's abuse taints her optimistic view of America and "prevents it from truly becoming her home" (Lyle 111). She willingly returns to Nigeria when she gets the news of Obinze's deportation, and thus reconnects herself with the homeland. Adichie's text subverts the stereotypical notions of the African woman as sexual victim and deviant by depicting Ifemelu's agency and resilience as an Afropolitan woman. As Lyle states, Ifemelu expands her Afropolitan female agency by reclaiming "pleasurable sexual experiences as well as romantic relationships for herself" (111). Analogous to Caroline Lyle's notion of Afropolitan female agency, Bernie Lombardi spotlights the gender-specific experiences of the Afropolitan woman. As Lombardi notes, Adichie's text "centralizes female migration in its attempt of challenging and redefining nationhood" (222). It can be argued that Ifemelu's return to Nigeria and her reunion with Obinze are suggestive of the black

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woman's "continued entrapment within the patriarchy of the nation, despite successful attempts at creating space for female voices" (Lombardi 222).

Focussing on Ifemelu's return to Nigeria, Lara El Mekkawi writes, "Ifemelu is rendered a hesitant local, unable to fully assimilate anywhere" (210). According to Mekkawi's view, after her return to Nigeria, Ifemelu is unable to fully fit in to the Lagosian life since her friends consider her as an "Americanah," a term that marks her cultural alienation. Her experience represents "the distinction between a cosmopolitan and an Afropolitan, for to be an African of the world is quite different from being a citizen of the world" (Mekkawi 210). To be a citizen of the world, an individual needs access to work, to vote, to enjoy similar privileges as others. As Mekkawi argues, "Ifemelu is indeed an African of the world, connecting with some, while remaining distant from others; sharing experiences while continuing to be alienated from full interaction" (210). For instance, Ifemelu's blogs can be considered as an expression of her Afropolitan agency. According to Mekkawi, Ifemelu's plight demonstrates the difficulties in the process of becoming an African of the world. To be Afropolitan "does not guarantee an ease in mobility, but instead carries varying complications for those who are open to the world, as we see in Ifemelu and Obinze's varying experiences" (Mekkawi 212). In the same vein, Dustin Crowley examines the journey of Ifemelu and Obinze as a portrayal of "a more varied and troubled sphere of globalization and migration" (139). Though the novel depicts the troubled sphere of migrant experience, Adichie's *Americanah* is a celebration of "a global mobility and cultural exchange at the heart of the Afropolitan ethos" (Crowley 134).

It can be argued that third generation Nigerian narratives on the diasporic subjectivity demonstrate Afropolitan female protagonists' quest for global citizenhood and Afro-diasporic agency. According to Eva Rask Knudsen and Ulla Rahbek, the Afropolitan displays "a mobility-induced anxiety about place and about

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self" (118). Whilst postcolonial anxiety arises due to a feeling of alienation and loss in-between homeland and host-land, "an Afropolitan anxiety is mobility induced in a different way" (Knudsen and Rahbek 118). Afropolitan anxiety does not result from a sense of loss or victimhood, but from being in transit, and multi-local, "while commuting across geographical locations, and feeling a sense of belonging to all or none of the places involved" (Knudsen and Rahbek 118). This experience of mobility between geographical locations creates a consciousness of anxiety about place. Besides, this anxiety is connected with a sense of hybridity as an African citizen of the world. Due to the mobility-induced anxiety, some Afropolitans tend to return to their homelands in the African continent as depicted in the plight of Ifemelu in Adichie's novel.

Based upon these existing critical readings of Afropolitan subjectivity, the final chapter of this dissertation focuses on the Nigerian woman's quest for global citizenhood and Afro-diasporic identity. Referring to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and Chika Unigwe's *Better Never Than Late* (2020), I explore the racialised and gendered subjectivity of the migrant Nigerian woman within the racist, sexist and classist topography of the West. My analysis demonstrates how the Afropolitan female protagonists dispel victimhood discourses attached to Africa and envisage transnational and empowered African femininity. In my analysis, Afropolitanism is extended by using feminist postcolonial and womanist ideals to show how the female African immigrant develops a sense of empowered Afro-diasporic personhood that is devoid of any form of victim identity or a historical legacy of victimhood. It is argued that becoming a fully realised Afropolitan woman is only probable when female racialised sexual existence in the global context is consciously lived through and challenged, so that the female Afropolitan can dispel her silence and subservient identity. It is a way of addressing the Afropolitan

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woman's quest for agency and self-perception against the challenging global anxieties, and thus it goes beyond the traditional postcolonial and diasporic concerns.

As a whole, this study fills some important gaps in the existing African literary scholarship by positioning Nigerian daughterhood against the masculinist nation and by addressing the sexual transgression of the same-sex-desiring woman and the sexual liberation of the Nigerian Muslim woman. It also examines the gendered subjectivity of the African woman in the context of militarised violence and sexual terrorism. The chapter on Boko Haram militancy and women's resistance against masculinist militarism and religious fundamentalism is an important contribution to the scholarship. The final analysis chapter on the Afropolitan woman's quest for global citizenhood demonstrates how the migrant African woman challenges and resists the racist, sexist and classist archetypes in the West. By drawing female characters from diverse socio-political, economic, cultural and religious spaces, this dissertation dismantles the monolithic and homogenising definitions of African womanhood. It offers a novel, transgressive and more nuanced perspective to the African woman's gendered experiences.

1.5. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This dissertation maps the Nigerian woman's gendered subjectivity in patriarchal culture and her resistance against various forms of masculinist discourses. It begins with an investigation of the adolescent Nigerian girl's gendered position against the masculinist nation and its ideological and cultural construction of passive femininity and male supremacy. It demonstrates how Nigerian women rebel against normative gendered codes and masculinist discourse of passive femininity and male supremacy. It is argued that the Nigerian girl-child's quest for self-definition and agency as depicted in the third generation coming-of-age narrative is a way of metaphorizing the plight of the postcolonial Nigeria and its citizens' attempt to

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formulate a new national culture of social justice and gender equality. By mapping Nigerian daughterhood against the masculinist nation and its investment in domesticating and subordinating women, the first chapter of this research foregrounds women's spiritual effort in dismantling the patriarchal nation. Moreover, this dissertation offers a more transgressive and in-depth reading on the African woman's sexual awakening. Contemporary scholarly readings on the trope of the African woman's sexual agency and freedom are mostly based on monolithic definitions that limit the inclusion of distinct and diverse voices on female sexuality into the scholarship. However, in this research, I validate the emergent subaltern lesbian subjectivity as an ideological and epistemic revisioning of feminist postcolonialism and womanism.

Furthermore, this research examines the subaltern female war victim's resistance against the masculinist agenda of terrorism as a womanist trait. It shows how the female Boko Haram victims battle with the dehumanisation resulting from the male agenda of war and terrorism. The Nigerian woman's survival wisdom in war and her quest for full humanity within the space of terror exhibit womanist tendencies. It is argued that the female protagonists' quest for survival further demonstrates the womanist notion that the trauma becomes a temporary aberration preceding spiritual growth, healing, and integration. In addition, the final chapter of this dissertation foregrounds the idea that a unique identity for the Afropolitan female subject can only be formulated by placing her femininity and female gender experiences within the racialised global context. By discussing the global issues such as racial Othering, discrimination of migrant African women, and economic and class discrimination of them, this dissertation adds a gendered perspective to the concept of Afropolitanism. Afropolitan womanhood is examined as a counter-hegemonic effort against the gendered and racialised politics of a masculinist socio-

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political oligarchy that intends to marginalise the African female immigrant. Therefore, as a whole, this research examines selected narratives from third generation in a gendered perspective as a way of exhibiting how this new generation of writers counters and responds to the stereotyped and impaired image of the African woman by foregrounding women's quest for self-definition, agency and empowerment. By redefining the Nigerian woman's gendered experiences in masculinist national and global spaces, third generation writers rewrite the postcolonial Nigeria itself in a female-oriented perspective.

1.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This dissertation is an attempt to redefine the postcolonial African woman by foregrounding emerging femininities in the works of third generation Nigerian writers. The narratives of this new generation of Nigerian writers address the female subject's experiences in the postcolonial context of contemporary Nigeria. Postcolonialism has to be resituated in relation to feminist ideals in order to conceptualise the gendered subjectivity of the postcolonial woman. In order to accomplish this demand, feminist postcolonial theory and its minority discourses as womanism have emerged. As Reina Lewis and Sara Mills write, feminist postcolonial theory has involved in a two-fold project: "to racialise mainstream feminist theory and to insert feminist concerns into conceptualisations of colonialism and postcolonialism" (3). It is pertinent to theorise this research on African womanhood in a feminist postcolonial stance since it is a study already situated within intersections of gender and race, and sexuality and class. Feminist postcolonial theory and womanism as a minority discourse of it interrogate the social, cultural, economic and political subjectivity of the postcolonial woman. It is important to realise that the racialised and sexualised bodies of third-world women are "mapped by a series of economic, religious and cultural powers" (Lewis and Mills

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13). Feminist postcolonial theorists contend that western feminism has "often made generalisations about 'third-world' women, assuming a homogeneity amongst very diverse groups of women" (Lewis and Mills 9). Due to the complexity and diversity of women's experiences in postcolonial Nigeria, it is ideal to theorise them in the light of feminist postcolonial and womanist concepts. An in-depth and nuanced analysis can be provided to the postcolonial Nigerian woman's quest for self-definition and agency against the masculinist national and global contexts by combining feminist postcolonial ideals with womanism.

Moreover, we have to understand that third generation Nigerian narratives do not tell a single story of African womanhood. This new generation of Nigerian writers depicts diverse, complex and distinct gendered experiences of women within the national and global settings. For example, the lesbian woman's gendered subjectivity as discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation has to be examined in the light of lesbian feminist concepts. Similarly, the gendered and racialised subjectivity of the immigrant Nigerian woman in the final chapter of this research cannot be discussed only in the light of feminist postcolonial and womanist ideals. It is important to extend feminist postcolonial theory by incorporating Afropolitan concepts in order to reframe the racialised gendered subjectivity of diasporic and migrant African women. Hence, these theoretical analogies of feminist postcolonial, womanist, lesbian feminist and Afropolitan concepts allow for a reimagination and revisioning of the African woman in a more transgressive and nuanced stance.

Feminist postcolonial theory stresses the need to acknowledge the postcolonial woman's racialised gender oppression. As Reina Lewis and Sara Mills explain that "concentrating on gender oppression alone would never make sense for Black women who always experienced sexual and racial oppression as linked and compounded by each other" (5). The politics of class and race are linked with

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patriarchal oppression in the postcolonial context, and there is "a such thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual" (Lewis and Mills 5). Feminist postcolonial theorists such as Adrienne Rich, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, bell hooks, Gayatri Spivak and Audre Lorde foreground the importance of positioning the postcolonial woman's gendered body within race and class dimensions. In her essay "Notes Towards a Politics of Location", Adrienne Rich criticises western feminism's authority in defining experiences of all women without considering about race, class and geographical location. She writes, "That only certain kinds of people can make theory; that the white-educated mind is capable of formulating everything; that white middle-class feminism can know for 'all women'; that only when a white mind formulates is the formulation to be taken seriously" ("Notes Towards a Politics of Location" 40). However, white middle-class feminism cannot offer a holistic theoretical perspective to address the postcolonial woman's racial-sexual oppression. As Adrienne Rich further argues, feminist postcolonialism and its minority discourses as black feminism and womanism cannot be marginalised and circumscribed as "simply a response to white feminist racism or an augmentation of white feminism" ("Notes Towards a Politics of Location" 41).

In a similar vein, in her article "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Chandra Talpade Mohanty stresses the importance of dismantling the ideological constructions in western feminism about the postcolonial woman. According to Mohanty the woman's sexuality is controlled by patriarchal violence such as rape, sexual assault, excision and infibulation that is "carried out with an astonishing consensus among men in the world" (54). Besides, male violence "must be theorised and interpreted *within* specific societies, both in order to understand it better, as well as in order to effectively organize to change it" (Mohanty 55). In western feminist discourse, the postcolonial woman is archetypically depicted

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as the veiled woman or chaste virgin, and as Mohanty argues these universal images are deceptive ideological constructions. In western feminism, the third-world woman's identity is constructed as "ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, [and] victimized" (Mohanty 53) in contrast to the western woman as "educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the 'freedom' to make their own decisions" (Mohanty 53). In other words, in Western feminist discourse on postcolonial women, they are constructed as "a homogenous 'powerless' group often located as implicit *victims* of particular cultural and socio-economic systems" (Mohanty 54). Such a binary analytic is misleading, and thus feminist postcolonial theory deconstructs the archetypical representations of the third-world woman. In short, Mohanty's feminist postcolonial stance critiques the process of homogenisation and systematisation of the oppression of women in the third world because such homogenisation fails to comprehend experiences of women who belong to different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes in their nations. In my discussion of emerging femininities in the narratives of third generation Nigerian writers, the feminist postcolonial concept of racialised gender oppression is significant in understanding the African woman's quest for rediscovering her agency. The socially disadvantaged and subaltern position of the lesbian woman, the religiously entrapped female subject and the militarised female body can be read in the light of racial-sexual and religious oppression. Racialisation of sexuality in the postcolonial context also paves the way to rethink masculinity and male dominance.

Additionally, the notion of the subaltern in feminist postcolonial theory is important in conceptualising the gendered subjectivity of the marginalised lesbian woman, the religiously entrapped woman, the female war victim and the female suicide bomber as discussed in this dissertation. The notion of subaltern agency

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characterises the postcolonial woman as an agent of reclaiming her autonomous personhood and voice instead of becoming a muted and passive victim of violent and forceful patriarchal institutions. In her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Spivak theorises the postcolonial woman's attempt to unshackle the burden of oppressive patriarchal culture and its imperialism in order to rediscover her independence and self-identity. According to Spivak, "the subaltern appears as a woman of some resource, but whose specific situation in British-colonised India results in her being, in some ways, silenced" (Barrett 359). Though the gendered subaltern speaks against oppression, the hegemonic ear of patriarchal imperialism is unable or reluctant to hear her voice. It seems that patriarchal oppression silences the voice of the subaltern woman. Spivak writes, there is "no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish" (104). Spivak's idea of the subaltern is extended by Shirin Deylami in her discussion of the female suicide bomber as a subaltern and marginalised figure in the male discourse of war whose voice is silenced within the process of deploying her as a weaponised body to settle masculinist arguments. According to Deylami, "the figure of the female suicide bomber works as an object of homoterritorial contestation between two different masculine ideals" (178). Working from the insights of Spivak, Deylami conceptualises the female suicide bomber as "a subaltern whose meaning is utilized to initiate competing narratives of power" (179).

In the third chapter of this dissertation, I observe the Nigerian lesbian woman as a subaltern in the context of masculinist discourse of heteronormativity. Spivak's concept of the subaltern can be read in analogy with lesbian feminist ideas of Adrienne Rich and Cheryl Clarke. Lesbian feminism is a resistance movement against compulsory heterosexuality and heteropatriarchal norms, and thus it

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emphasises the idea of woman-bonding and sisterhood as a logical effort of dismantling the patriarchal discourses of heteronormativity. In her essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," Adrienne Rich examines how compulsory heterosexuality prompts to perceive lesbian existence as a social deviance and abhorrence. According to Rich, enforced heterosexuality is a violent political institution that convinces women to perceive "marriage and sexual orientation toward men are inevitable – even if unsatisfying or oppressive – components of their lives" ("Compulsory Heterosexuality" 205). Rich criticises the gendered portrayals of women as natural sexual prey to men and masochistic messages in popular culture, pornography and media. It is argued that in heteropatriarchal culture, the enforced submission of women and sexual aggression in heterosexual pairing is sexually 'normal' whilst "sensuality between women, including erotic mutuality and respect, is 'queer', 'sick', and either pornographic in itself or not very exciting compared with the sexuality of whips and bondage" (Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality" 205). As Rich further clarifies, lesbian existence is historically and culturally submerged and devalued in order to acknowledge the notion that "for women heterosexuality may not be a 'preference' at all but something that has had to be imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by force" ("Compulsory Heterosexuality" 210). Lesbianism within heteropatriarchal context is an attempt to dislodge a taboo and a compulsory way of life. In other words, lesbian presence is "a direct and indirect attack on male right of access to women" (Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality" 210). Moreover, in her conceptualisation of lesbian identity, Rich focuses on how heteronormativity violently erases women's same-sex erotic sensuality and emotional bonding as a forceful effort of preserving heterosexual marriage.

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In the same vein, Cheryl Clarke defines, a woman's lesbian identity in "a male-supremacist, capitalist, misogynist, racist, homophobic, imperialist culture [...] is an act of resistance" (141). According to Clarke, lesbianism is a recognition of female liberation, and an awakening and reawakening of women's passion for each other (141). Woman-bonding and passion will "ultimately reverse the heterosexual imperialism of male culture" (Clarke 141). In a heteropatriarchal social environment, lesbianism is curbed and all women are passed as heterosexuals. In other words, the system of male-dominance is "buttressed by the subjugation of women through heterosexuality" (Clarke 143). Due to heteronormative predominance, even politically active lesbian women "may fear holding hands with their lovers as they traverse heterosexual turf" (Clarke 143). Clarke's idea can be linked to Patricia McFadden's notion that the suppression of female sexuality is maintained through "vigilant cultural surveillance," and has led to the silencing of "feminist sexual memory and instinct" (50). As Kopano Ratele explains, for instance, the reason behind patriarchy's intolerance of a sexually transgressive behaviour as lesbian love is because women's sexual preference of other women over men is "indicative of lack of control of men over women's bodies and lives" (407). In other words, "women who cannot be subjected to men's social power are dangerous to patriarchal power and masculinity" (Ratele 407). Referring to the Nigerian context, the novelist, Unoma Azuah argues that emerging works of lesbian identity bear testimony to "a radical questioning of the traditional heterosexual roles that are dictated to women by the dominant patriarchal society" (140). As Cheryl Clarke and Audre Lorde argue, in order to dismantle the traditional heterosexism, lesbian women must resist the prevailing culture's attempt to keep lesbians invisible and powerless. In her essay "I am Your Sister: Black Women Organising Across Sexualities", Audre Lorde foregrounds the importance of the sisterhood amongst lesbian women in order to

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challenge the hegemonic heteropatriarchal political institutions. As Lorde explains, "homophobia and heterosexism mean you allow yourself to be robbed of the sisterhood and strength of Black Lesbian women because you are afraid of being called Lesbian yourself" ("I am Your Sister" 61). As Clarke and Lorde argue Black lesbians and all women of colour should be involved in resistance against enforced heterosexuality and its perpetuation of heteronormativity and masculinist dominance.

In the same way as postcolonial lesbian feminist ideals develop as a minority discourse of feminist postcolonialism, womanist theory emerges as another alternative approach to define African women's gendered and racial experiences. Womanism is a philosophical effort to conceptualise the intersectionality of racism, sexism and classism in the process of identity formation of the African woman. It is a social changing ideology that focuses on "harmonizing and coordinating difference, ending all forms of oppression and dehumanization, and promoting well-being and commonweal for all people, regardless of identity, social address, or origins" (Phillips xxxv–xxxvi). However, there is the basic challenge of defining third generation Nigerian writers as black feminists or womanists or both. In an interview with Elena Rodriguez Murphy, Sefi Atta points out how the theoretical labels limit a writer's creativity: "Now, labels like feminist, I think I do not mind shrugging them off for a while if they limit me" (111). By the same token, in a conversation with Daria Tunca and Emmanuelle Del Calzo, Chika Unigwe claims that she prefers to introduce herself as a negofeminist: "Negofeminism can be understood as either no-egofeminism or negotiative feminism; it is a feminism which stays within the boundaries of social and cultural norms, but which also manipulates that space" (56). Though African writers are commonly unwilling to introduce themselves as feminists since feminism is un-African, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie admits herself as "a

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Happy African Feminist" (Adichie, "We Should All Be Feminists"). As Patricia Hill Collins notes, many African and African-American women "reject the term 'feminism' because of what they perceive as its association with whiteness" (13). Rather than entering into this debate on feminism and womanism, it is more meaningful to use each philosophical stance in an appropriate and rational way to define the African woman's experiences since all of these theories have their own limitations. In this dissertation, I draw a theoretical analogy between feminist postcolonialism, womanism, lesbian feminism and Afropolitanism as a way of offering an in-depth and comprehensive analysis to emerging female identities in the works of third generation Nigerian authors. In order to reframe the diverse and complex female subjectivities in third generation Nigerian texts, it is required to employ several theoretical perspectives. By so doing, a more transgressive and unified analysis can be formulated on emerging female identities.

In this research, the womanist ideals of Alice Walker and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi are relevant in comprehending the emotional and spiritual growth of the Nigerian girl-child in the third generation Nigerian coming-of-age novel. Walker's womanism highlights the importance of the spiritual presence of the mother figure in the adolescent girl's life. Nevertheless, the third generation Nigerian bildungsroman reframes this notion by presenting the independent growth of the adolescent girl without her mother's spiritual guidance. Walker's ideas of audacious and spirited womanhood offer a conceptual space to develop my argument on how Nigerian daughters dismantle patriarchal ideas of gender performativity. As Ogunyemi states, the girl-child inherits womanist consciousness after a traumatic event or as a result of experiencing "racism, rape, death in the family, or sudden responsibility" (28). This idea is deeply relevant in examining the plight of the young women in selected fictional works who are subjected to rape, militarised violence and death of family

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members. For example, the militarised body of the subaltern female war victim in the narratives of Patience Ibrahim and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani can be discussed in the light of Ogunyemi's idea of womanist metamorphosis. The subaltern female war victim's quest for survival as portrayed in the works of Nwaubani and Ibrahim demonstrates the womanist notion that the trauma becomes "a temporary aberration preceding spiritual growth, healing, and integration" (Ogunyemi 30). Also, the dynamism of "wholeness and self-healing" that we see in "the positive, integrative" endings of these war narratives demonstrate a womanist tendency.

In her acclaimed work *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Alice Walker introduces four definitions of the term "womanist". According to Walker's first definition, a womanist is "a black feminist or feminist of color" (xi). It seems that Walker uses the two terms "womanist" and "black feminist" as being almost interchangeable. Similar to Walker's stance, many African American women see "little difference between the two since both support a common agenda of black women's self-definition and self-determination" (Collins 10). As Barbara Omolade explains, "black feminism is sometimes referred to as womanism because both are concerned with struggles against sexism and racism by black women who are themselves part of the black community's efforts to achieve equity and liberty" (xx). Besides, Walker takes the term "womanist" from the Southern black folk expression of mothers to daughters "you acting womanish" (xi). She suggests that black women's folk history and culture foster "a womanist worldview accessible primarily and perhaps exclusively to black women" (Collins 10). "Womanish" girls display "outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior" (Walker xi). Womanish girls wanted to know "more and in greater depth than what was considered good for them" (Collins 10). The terms such as "outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful" are suggestive of rebellious and spirited womanhood of the daughter against

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the mother's authority as well as her defiance against the oppressive strictures of patriarchy that hinder realisation and empowerment. Through this conversation between the mother and daughter, Walker underscores the adolescent girl's audacity, agency and thoughtfulness, the characteristics that are essential in the woman's quest for self-definition. Walker's womanist ideal of the spiritual growth of the adolescent girl can be used to evaluate the Nigerian girl-child's gendered subjectivity in the third generation Nigerian coming-of-age narratives.

In her second definition, Walker states that a womanist is "a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually" (xi). In the second part of Walker's definition, she strives to expand womanist theory to include all individuals disregard of their sexual orientation and favours. This interpretation of a womanist as a woman who loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually, foregrounds a liberal ideology with regard to women's sexuality. It seems that Walker intends to develop a spiritual and organic idea that encompasses all individuals in community in order to celebrate women's culture. Interestingly, in Walker's view, sexual favour is not an ethically important issue in deciding whether or not an individual is "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (Walker xi). Moreover, Walker states that a womanist "appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength" (xi). This statement celebrates women's culture as a way of achieving harmony and unity in society. Womanism appears to provide "an avenue to foster stronger relationships between black women and black men, another very important issue for African American women regardless of political perspective" (Collins 11). According to Walker's definition, a womanist does not consider men as rivals of their movement for gender equality. Thus, womanism "seemingly supplies a way for black women to address gender oppression without attacking black men" (Collins 11).

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Additionally, Walker provides a universal and global perspective to womanist theory in her second definition where a black girl poses the question, "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" (xi). The mother's response of "the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented," both criticizes colour discrimination within society and strengthens the idea that though each individual has a colour, all of us coexist in the garden of humanity. Walker's universal notion of the existence of the coloured race can be related to the politics of gender and race in Afropolitanism. The Afropolitan woman's racialised gender subjectivity can be examined in the light of Walker's metaphorical interpretation of racial diversity as a flower garden. For instance, the Afropolitan woman strives to dismantle the hegemonic notions of racism and patriarchy in order to create her independent identity as a global citizen with African roots. It is apparent that Walker's liberal view of the coloured race "furnishes a vision where the women and men of different colors coexist like flowers in a garden yet retain their cultural distinctiveness and integrity" (Collins 11). In her third interpretation, Walker adds a spiritual shade to womanism by stating that a womanist "loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*" (xii). This figurative statement is a celebration of the spirited womanhood where a woman enjoys her life without adhering to the codes of behaviour that hinder her freedom. A womanist's adoration for music, dance, moon and the Spirit exemplifies the woman's emotional and spiritual bond with aspects of beauty and vitality. In my research, the idea of Walker's womanist spirituality is employed to analyse the adolescent girl's spiritual development into fully realised womanhood. Besides, the subaltern lesbian woman and religiously entrapped Northern Nigerian Muslim woman's journey towards self-realisation and emancipation is read in the light of

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womanist spirituality. In the works of third generation Nigerian writers, the woman's desire for struggle and activism is illustrative of her self-determination, resilience and courage, the characteristics of a womanist in Walker's sense. In other words, Walker's insight into the notion of womanist spirituality gives a theoretical space to maintain an in-depth discussion on the sexual liberation of the adolescent girl, the lesbian woman and the religiously entrapped Muslim woman. Walker's definition of womanism culminates in her fourth interpretation where she states, "womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender" (xii). This concluding statement strives to establish the notion that white women are "feminist" while black women are "womanist". Rather than rejecting feminism or contesting with it, Walker points out that the difference between womanism and feminism is slight as the variance between purple and lavender.

As an ethical and ideological system, womanism is "always in the making – it is not a closed fixed system of ideas but one that continually evolves through its rejection of all forms of oppression and commitment to social justice" (Collins 11). Walker's womanist concepts advocate for a more egalitarian and harmonious bond between men and women since her theory aims to eradicate all forms of discrimination against human beings. Walker's womanism has opened up a new way of theorising women's experience, social change, the confrontation against patriarchal strictures, and the quest for emancipation. Yet womanist theory must be traced to two additional theorists, namely, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Clenora Hudson-Weems. In 1985, Ogunyemi had published her article "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English." According to Ogunyemi, the womanist vision is "racially conscious in its underscoring of the positive aspects of black life" (25). While the white woman writer's feminist protest is directed towards sexism, "the black woman writer must deal with it as one among

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many evils; she battles also with the dehumanization resulting from racism and poverty" (Ogunyemi 25). Womanist writers are not limited to "issues defined by their femaleness but attempt to tackle questions raised by their humanity" (Ogunyemi 25). It seems that womanist sexual politics are complex than white feminism since it addresses sexism along with racial discrimination and inequitable division of power and wealth between races and the sexes. In addition, Ogunyemi states that "the intelligent black woman writer, conscious of black impotence in the context of white patriarchal culture, empowers the black man" (25). Hence, a womanist aims to achieve a unity amongst black men and women in their struggle against the shared oppression of racism and poverty. It is important to "knit the world's black family together to achieve black, not just female, transcendence" (Ogunyemi 26).

Additionally, Ogunyemi points out the inadequacy of white feminism as a theory to address the experience of black women. While white feminists write from a position of social privilege and power, they mainly concentrate on patriarchy, "analyzing it, attacking it, detecting its tenacles in the most unlikely places" (Ogunyemi 26). Patriarchy within black society is a domestic affair "without the wide reverberations it has in white patriarchy where the issue is real world power" (Ogunyemi 26). The ultimate difference between the feminist and the womanist is the way that they understand patriarchal culture and its oppressive structures. Sexism is only one aspect of womanism since it makes awareness of sexual oppression along with "the impact of racism, neocolonialism, nationalism, economic instability, and psychological disorientation on black lives" (Ogunyemi 28). Similar to womanism, Afropolitanism also celebrates African identity in a global context. As Ogunyemi notes, "Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom" (28). Thus, the

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racialised gendered subjectivity of the Afropolitan woman can be evaluated in a more transgressive manner by referring to womanism alongside Afropolitanism.

As Ogunyemi explains, the adolescent girl inherits womanist agency and consciousness after "a traumatic event such as menarche or after an epiphany or as a result of the experience of racism, rape, death in the family, or sudden responsibility" (28). The adolescent girl copes with her experience, and thus she develops her self-definition. In womanist novels, writers depict the young girl's epiphanic realisation of her situation as a victim of patriarchal oppression. As Ogunyemi argues, "the black woman is not as powerless in the black world as the white woman is in the white world; the black woman less protected than her white counterpart, has to grow independent" (29). This demonstrates the notion that the black woman is more audacious, resilient and spirited than the white woman in her quest for agency and self-definition. Also, womanist philosophy is "for black unity where every black person has a modicum of power and so can be a 'brother' or a 'sister' or a 'father' or a 'mother' to the other" (Ogunyemi 28). As a philosophy, womanism promotes "dynamism of wholeness and self-healing that one sees in the positive, integrative endings of womanist novels" (Ogunyemi 28). Also, womanism is "the force that binds many black female novels in English together" (Ogunyemi 34). Third generation Nigerian narratives can be read in a womanist stance due to their portrayal of female achievement in an affirmative and positive spirit. The selected texts of Sefi Atta and Tola Rotimi Abraham represent women's civic engagement and social activism that pave the way for an affirmative future for them. In their creative process of writing, third generation Nigerian writers deal with "the ethics of surviving rather than with the aesthetics of living" (Ogunyemi 34). Therefore, womanism with its affirmative spirit, wholesome ideals and its religious grounding in black togetherness, is the African woman's "gospel of hope" (Ogunyemi 35).

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The notion and terminology of womanist theory is further extended by Clenora Hudson-Weems whose theoretical work *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* was published in 1993. In theoretical field, Ogunyemi's standpoint is known as "African womanism" whilst Hudson-Weems's perspective is identified itself as "Africana womanism". According to Hudson-Weems, some academics have uncritically adopted Western feminism or white feminism to define the African woman's experience. The major pitfall in using Western feminism to define the African woman's situation is that most Africana women "in general do not identify with [Western feminism] in its entirety and thus cannot see themselves as feminists" (Hudson-Weems 17). Parallel to Ogunyemi's standpoint, Hudson-Weems argues that the Africana woman is "oppressed not simply because of her sex but ostensibly because of her race and, for the majority, essentially because of their class" (12). Hudson-Weems's womanist idea of racialised gendered subjectivity of the African woman can be tethered to the situation of the Afropolitan woman in the racialised, gendered and class-conscious American and European contexts. An Afropolitan womanist stance can be formulated by positioning the Afropolitan woman's quest for global citizenhood within a conceptual intersection between womanism and Afropolitanism. This intersectional womanist and Afropolitan approach allows to redefine the Nigerian woman's racialised gendered subjectivity in a more nuanced and transgressive manner in the final chapter of this dissertation. Womanism is a unique conceptual space to empower African women by eradicating sexism, racism, classism and other forms of oppressive structures. Hudson-Weems's Africana womanism "identifies the participation and the role of Africana women in the struggle but does not suggest that female subjugation is the most critical issue they face in their struggle for parity" (40). In her struggle for liberation from racial and sexual oppression, the Africana womanist perceives herself as the companion to the

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Africana man, and "works diligently toward continuing their established union in the struggle against racial oppression" (Hudson-Weems 41). By drawing a conceptual analogy between womanism and Afropolitanism, an insightful vision can be developed on the various forms of oppression African women defy as they navigate their journey for independent womanhood within Western metropolises. In addition, the idea of female solidarity in womanist theory can be extended to an Afropolitan womanist ideal of a global sisterhood – a way of dismantling the racial constructions by thinking beyond national origins and xenophobic notions.

Afropolitanism is used as a theoretical parameter in the final chapter of this dissertation that deals with the Afropolitan woman's quest for self-definition and identity. Taiye Selasi's short essay "Bye-Bye Babar" has put forward the definition of the term "Afropolitan" in 2005. Later, Achille Mbembe has added a theoretical insight into the concept of Afropolitan and repositioned "Africa as a philosophical locus of passage and mobility" (Gehrmann 1). In addition, Chielozona Eze has developed Afropolitan idea to foreground inner mobility of Africans rather than geographical movement. According to Simon Gikandi Afropolitanism is an attempt to "overcome the malady of Afro-pessimism – the belief that the continent and its populace is hopelessly imprisoned in its past, trapped in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment, and held hostage to corrupt institutions" (9). In this sense, Afropolitanism can be read as "the description of a new phenomenology of Africanness – a way of being African in the world" (Gikandi 9). Put in a nutshell, "Afropolitanism can be said to be cosmopolitanism with African roots" (Gehrmann 1).

In her short essay "Bye-Bye Babar," Taiye Selasi focusses on the term "Afropolitan" in an emotional perspective that brings forth the complexities in the lives of these global citizens with African roots. Observing the crowd in a London

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nightclub called Medicine Bar, Selasi describes Afropolitans as a group with multiple identities: "this one lives in London but was raised in Toronto and born in Accra; that one works in Lagos but grew up in Houston, Texas". A place called 'home' for them is many things: "where their parents are from; where they go for vacation; where they went to school; where they see old friends; where they live (or live this year)" (Selasi, "Bye-Bye Babar"). Afropolitans consider themselves as global citizens rather than holding a fixed identity for a geographical location. As Selasi further explains: "You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, […] others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos". Due to this cultural mix and hybridity, Selasi defines Afropolitans as Africans of the world. Referring to Selasi's Afropolitanism, Razinat Talatu Mohammed writes, "these new waves of young Africans have jettisoned their geographical and racial inhibitions and are taking the world in a sweep because they think as universal entities rather than as black or white" (352). Afropolitans, according to Selasi, "must form an identity along at least three dimensions: national, racial, cultural–with subtle tensions in between." However, Caroline Lyle argues that Selasi's conceptualisation ignores sexism, "the ongoing stigmatization of black sexuality in Western societies" (103). In the final chapter of this dissertation, I extend Afropolitan ideas to include the migrant African woman's racialised and gendered subjectivity. This can be done by reading Afropolitan theory within feminist postcolonial ideas of bell hooks. I employ bell hooks' essay "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" to conceptualise the racial and sexual Othering in western societies. As bell hooks argues, the racialised and sexualised Other becomes an object of gaze and commodity in white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. The commodification of racial and sexual Otherness has been "so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying

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than normal ways of doing and feeling" ("Eating the Other" 366). Furthermore, hooks' ideas on the black woman's hair as a race metaphor are important in discussing the Afropolitan woman's quest for global citizenhood and agency. Within white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the black woman's act of straightening her hair represents "an imitation of the dominant white group's appearance and often indicates internalized racism, self-hatred and/or low self-esteem" ("Straightening Our Hair"). The migrant African woman's quest for Afropolitan agency can be evaluated by merging hooks' conception of the racial Other's struggle for emancipation with Afropolitan notion of dispelling any form of victim identity attached to Africa or Africanness.

Similar to hooks' feminist postcolonial ideas against racial stereotypes, the Afropolitan theorist, Achille Mbembe states that Afropolitan identity transcends race since white South Africans, Asian diasporic Africans and other migrants to Africa are also part of Afropolitanism, "as long as they identify with, and do not essentialise Africa" (Gehrmann 5). Mbembe's Afropolitanism is a critical movement that challenges nationalism and nativism in order to liberate Africans from victim identity, and to embrace worldliness. Mbembe defines Afropolitan consciousness as the ability to embrace "strangeness, foreignness, and remoteness, the ability to recognise one's face in that of a foreigner and make the most of the traces of remoteness in closeness, to domesticate the unfamiliar, to work with what seem to be opposites" (60). This broad-mindedness in Mbembe's theory overlaps with Selasi's pluralistic and cosmopolitan definition of Afropolitan identity. Mbembe provides Afropolitanism the same sense of insight that Selasi does but in a more nuanced and holistic manner. As he further explains, Afropolitanism is "an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world. It is a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity" (60). This does not mean that Afropolitans are unaware

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of social vices and injustice in the African continent. Afropolitans too have their own struggles and dilemmas, "but being African outside of Africa is not an existential conundrum for them" (Hodapp 4).

Moreover, Mbembe defines Afropolitan culture as a transnational community in which people "can express themselves in more than one language" (60). In the same vein, Selasi too considers that Afropolitans are multilingual: "in addition to English and a Romantic or two, [they] understand some indigenous tongue and speak a few urban vernaculars" ("Bye-Bye Babar"). Mbembe highlights the cosmopolitan aspect of Afropolitanism by giving examples of metropolises that can be considered as Afropolitan. As a conclusive remark in his essay, Mbembe states, "but the center of Afropolitanism par excellence is, nowadays, Johannesburg in South Africa" (61). Johannesburg feeds on "multiple racial legacies, a vibrant economy, a liberal democracy, and a culture of consumerism that partakes directly of the flows of globalization" (Mbembe 61). Both Mbembe and Selasi's Afropolitan concepts create an ethic of tolerance that paves the way to re-imagine African culture and identity in a novel way. By relating Mbembe and Selasi's cosmopolitan, modern and pluralistic ideas to Afropolitan womanhood, we can formulate a new feminist dimension about the emerging migrant female subjectivity. The Afropolitan woman's creative cultural aesthetic of identity formation in western metropolises transforms her from regionality to universality.

As Mbembe has positioned Selasi's concept of Afropolitanism within the academic discourse by adding a philosophical depth to it, other scholars such as Chielozona Eze and Susanne Gehrmann have examined the various spatial connotations associated with Afropolitan identity. As Chielozona Eze writes in his essay "We, Afropolitans," "one cannot understand Afropolitanism without understanding cosmopolitanism, whose idea it replicates in an intellectual mimetic

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gesture" (114). Eze argues that Afropolitan identity cannot be gained until a person exceeds mental barriers such as racism, nationalism and nativism. Opposed to Selasi's stance, Eze contends that the Afropolitan subject's mobility "does not have to be exclusively between Africa and the West" ("We, Afropolitans" 115). It can be "between one African city and another, or even within an African city" (Eze, "We, Afropolitans" 115). Afropolitans move around the world, and thus they are able to encounter people from different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds. The spatial mobility of Afropolitans is suggestive of inner or psychic mobility of them. In other words, "one does not need to have crossed geographical boundaries to be Afropolitan; one only needs to cross the psychic boundaries erected by nativism, autochthony, heritage and other mythologies of authenticity" (Eze 116–117). The idea of psychic mobility demonstrates the validity of dismantling the culturally constructed barriers in order to achieve unity amongst human beings. Interestingly, Eze notes, "we are not trees that are condemned to a place. Our roots are in our hearts; we take them wherever we go, and remain committed to openness, which is the premise of our humanistic stance" ("We, Afropolitans" 117). Afropolitan identity formation results not because of moving from one city to another, but because of the emotional and spiritual capability of "occupying several cultural spaces and relations from which we define who we are" (Eze, "We, Afropolitans" 117).

Accordingly, the conceptual ideas of Selasi, Mbembe and Eze are used in the final chapter of this thesis to define the Afropolitan woman's quest for agency and self-definition. The last chapter merges Afropolitanism with the ideals of feminist postcolonialism and womanism in order to demonstrate how the Afropolitan woman confronts the effects of global maladies such as racialised sexism, colourism, and classism. The Afropolitan female protagonists in third generation Nigerian narratives formulate a racialised sexual identity in their quest for empowered womanhood.

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Analogising racism to sexism is essential in comprehending the various forms of oppression that the African woman battles as she navigates an intersecting femininity, blackness, and class division in the context of African diaspora. A theoretical combination of Afropolitanism and womanism opens an avenue to interrogate and counter racial and sexist notions in the western society against the African migrant woman. Furthermore, the idea of female solidarity in womanist theory inspires a transnational sisterhood amongst Afropolitan women. By examining the trope of transnational sisterhood in the selected narratives of Adichie and Unigwe, the final chapter of this dissertation underscores Afropolitan women's mutual struggle and resilience in their quest for autonomy and independence in their host-lands. The discussion on Afropolitan womanhood provides opportunities for redefining the racialised gendered subjectivity of the migrant African woman and her stratagems to overcome its oppressive aspects. By positioning the last chapter of the dissertation in the intersection of womanism and Afropolitanism, this research fills a gap in existing discussion on Afropolitan subjectivity. In other words, I argue that female-oriented Nigerian narratives on migration depict the African woman's global citizenhood and her agency in dismantling patriarchal oppression and its hegemony of racism and sexism. The Afropolitan woman who is educated, cosmopolitan and modern in her temperament, has more agency and power than the traditional African woman whose voice is muted and silenced by patriarchy. The Afropolitan woman's battle against oppression is global and universal rather than regional and culture-specific. Thus, the final chapter of this research acknowledges the aspirations of educated and cosmopolitan African migrant women who are variously domiciled in western metropolises, and who are engaged in a spirited and resilient quest for reclaiming their identity and personhood as global African citizens with dignity and self-respect.

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In conclusion, it is important to note that womanist and feminist postcolonial concepts are merged in the analysis of the selected coming-of-age novels in the first analysis chapter. The adolescent Nigerian girl's quest for agency and autonomous womanhood is viewed as a womanist tendency. Walker and Ogunyemi's womanist concepts are vital in the discussion of the spiritual growth and emancipation of the adolescent girl. The second analysis chapter which investigates the African woman's sexual awakening and transgressive sexualities melds feminist postcolonial concepts with lesbian feminist ideals. The feminist postcolonial concept of the subaltern is used alongside lesbian feminist ideas to demonstrate how the sexually oppressed Nigerian woman decolonises her gendered body from masculinist dominance and strict religious norms against women's sexual freedom. The third analysis chapter on the African woman's resilience and resistance against the masculinist agenda of war and sexual terrorism uses feminist postcolonial and womanist concepts. Using feminist postcolonial concepts, it analyses how the sexualised body of the Nigerian woman becomes a battleground for settling masculinist arguments. The subaltern female war victim's battle against the dehumanisation resulting from the masculinist discourse of war is examined as a womanist tendency. Merging the womanist concepts of Walker and Ogunyemi with feminist postcolonial ideas of Gayatri Spivak, the chapter argues that the subaltern female war victim's quest for survival is a reflection of the womanist notion that the trauma becomes a temporary aberration preceding spiritual growth, emotional healing, and integration. In addition, in the final analysis chapter on the Afropolitan woman's quest for global citizenhood examines the racialised, gendered and classed experiences of the migrant African woman in the light of feminist postcolonial, womanist and Afropolitan concepts. Feminist postcolonial concepts of bell hooks on race and gender are used to elaborate how the racialised Other is constructed within Western countries. Afropolitan and womanist

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concepts are employed to demonstrate how the migrant African woman dispels the dominant white supremacist myths of racism, sexism and classism. Afropolitanism and womanism subvert victimhood discourses attached to Africanness, and therefore, a conceptual correspondence between these two theories allows us to formulate an empowered Afro-diasporic female personhood.

1.7. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The first analysis chapter entitled "Empowered African Daughters" reads the adolescent Nigerian girl's quest for self-definition and agency against the masculinist nation. Referring to Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* (2005) and Tola Rotimi Abraham's *Black Sunday* (2020), it is argued that the patriarchal nation and its normative gendered codes invest in the domestication and subservience of the Nigerian daughter. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the Nigerian girl-child metamorphoses from her passive femininity to empowered womanhood as the aftermath of her traumatic gendered experiences. It is further argued that Atta and Abraham's coming-of-age narratives dismantle the patriarchal configuration of the nation by offering an alternative female-centred ethos to build up the nation. The third generation coming-of-age novel moves the female protagonist from the domestic sphere and positions them within the civic and political space of the nation as a way of resisting the male-centric national imaginary of Nigeria.

The second analysis chapter entitled "The African Woman's Sexual Awakening" examines the Nigerian woman's sexual awakening and transgressive sexualities against the heterosexist and religiously normative culture. Referring to Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) and Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2015), this chapter demonstrates how the lesbian woman and sexually liberated Muslim woman destabilise the stereotypical image of the

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sexually subordinated African woman. In this chapter, I examine how the masculinist dominance and religious orthodoxy function as oppressive and hegemonic tools to colonise the female body, sexuality and desire. As the sexually liberated female protagonists in these two narratives traverse heterosexist and religiously fundamentalist patriarchal turf, they rediscover their sexual autonomy and spiritual liberation. It is examined that the rise of the Nigerian narratives on women's sexual agency as a radical epistemic shift in African feminism: a literary effort to decolonise the gendered body of the African woman from masculinist imperialism and oppressive religious rules.

The third analysis chapter entitled "The African Woman in War and Violence" examines the Nigerian woman's resilience and resistance against the masculinist discourse of war and sexual terrorism. It positions women's struggle for survival during war against the combative ideological masculinity and its gendered atrocities. I argue that within the masculinist space of Boko Haram terrorism, the gendered and sexualised body of the Nigerian woman becomes the battleground for settling religious and fundamentally patriarchal quarrels. Referring to Patience Ibrahim's A *Gift from Darkness* (2016) and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* (2018), I demonstrate how masculinist militarism and religious extremism function together to formulate a patriarchal religious hegemony, a dominant system to govern women's bodies and minds. This chapter explains how the subaltern female war victim battles with the dehumanisation resulting from the male agenda of war. The Nigerian woman's survival wisdom in war and her quest for full humanity within the space of terror exhibit womanist tendencies.

The final analysis chapter entitled "The African Woman's Quest for Global Citizenhood" deals with the racialised and gendered subjectivity of the migrant Nigerian woman. Referring to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and

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Chika Unigwe's *Better Never Than Late* (2020), this chapter addresses the Afropolitan woman's quest for the fully realised Afro-diasporic personhood. By discussing the global issues such as racial Othering, discrimination of migrant African women, and economic and class discrimination of them, this chapter adds a gendered perspective to the concept of Afropolitanism. Afropolitan womanhood is observed as a counter-hegemonic effort against the gendered and racialised politics of a masculinist socio-political oligarchy that intends to marginalise the African female immigrant.

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CHAPTER 2: THE EMPOWERED AFRICAN DAUGHTERS

The Third Generation Nigerian Coming-of-Age Novel: Sefi Atta and Tola Rotimi Abraham

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The tales of growth and self-realisation remain as a popular aspect in the folkloric culture of Nigerian literature. African oral narratives have employed the trope of the orphan child as a narrative technique, and these oral narratives have thematised the emotional and psychological development of the foundling. Such oral narratives recount "the vicissitudes of growing up outside the comfort zone of the nuclear family of birth and its extensions" (Okuyade, "Traversing Geography" 359). The present contemporary Nigerian coming-of-age narratives do not depict a utopian or romantic vision about the protagonist's reconciliation with society. Rather they offer a microcosmic portrait of the larger socio-political and economic realities in Nigeria and the protagonist's incessant emotional and spiritual struggle with society in his or her identity formation as an independent individual.

This chapter examines the adolescent Nigerian girl's spiritual quest for agency and self-definition against the backdrop of the masculinist nation. The third generation Nigerian coming-of-age narrative demonstrates how the adolescent girl challenges and resists the oppressive patriarchal constructions of passive femininity and female subordination. The third generation Nigerian writer represents that the societal and cultural construction of passive femininity takes place during the childhood and adolescence of these young female protagonists. The masculinist nation invests in the domestication and subservience of the postcolonial Nigerian woman. In addition, this ideological construction of passive femininity is not just limited to the domestication of the woman since it imposes physical and sexual

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violence upon the female body. Thus, the third generation Nigerian novel on the growth of the adolescent girl poignantly captures how the male-supremacist culture attempts to silence the woman by imposing masculinist sexual violence and physical abuse on her. In other words, it can be asserted that the cultural and ideological construction of passive femininity and masculinist supremacy propagates women's susceptibility to sexual exploitation and patriarchy's justification of violence against women. As the aftermath of being subjected to sexual violence, physical abuse and oppression, the adolescent girl inherits a sense of womanist agency. The subservient gendered position of the female subject within the Nigerian social imaginary prompts her to develop a spirit of resilience and resistance. The adolescent girl metamorphoses from her passive femininity to empowered womanhood as the aftermath of her inward realisation of her marginal and virtually invisible position within the patriarchal nation.

In addition, in my attempt of mapping the Nigerian daughter's gendered position within the masculinist nation, I argue that the third generation Nigerian coming-of-age narrative deploys the image of the girl-child and her quest for agency as master metaphors to delineate the larger socio-political and cultural concerns of the nation. In the twenty-first century Nigerian coming-of-age novels, the gendered image of the adolescent girl is positioned against the backdrop of the patriarchal nation in the aim of drawing an analogy between the resilient quest of the female protagonist for her liberation and the postcolonial Nigeria's struggle to formulate a democratic and egalitarian national culture. The adolescent Nigerian girl's plight for self-realisation and freedom is a way of metaphorizing the postcolonial Nigeria's social reality and the nation's struggle to liberate from its national dilemmas such as military despotism, corrupt governance, gender oppression and cultural conservatism. By portraying women's political activism and their involvement in

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configuring new national realities, the third generation Nigerian bildungsroman reimagines Nigerian daughterhood within the postcolonial nation. Besides, the adolescent Nigerian girl's spiritual struggle to revision her position within the masculinist nation demonstrates the pressing postcolonial issues such as neoliberal economic struggle, the colonial inheritance of gendered constructions, globalisation, Western cultural influence, exile and racism. In these twenty-first century Nigerian coming-of-age narratives, the adolescent girl's womanist attributes such as self-determination, courage, social activism, civic engagement and commitment to survival of entire society are juxtaposed with the masculinist nation's patriarchal norms such as male dominance, sexual abuse of women and denial of women's effort to participate in the construction of the nation and its values.

To supplement my discussion on Nigerian daughterhood against the masculinist nation, Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* (2005) is read alongside Tola Rotimi Abraham's *Black Sunday* (2020). Atta and Abraham's novels depict their adolescent female protagonists' self-assertive quest for autonomous womanhood, and both of them position the adolescent Nigerian girl against the patriarchal nation. Spanning the politically unrest period of 1971 to 1995 in Nigeria, a context characterised by civil war and tyrannical military regimes, Atta's narrative depicts Enitan and Sheri's quest for self-realisation and agency. Enitan's mother, Arinola strives to construct a passive feminine identity for her daughter by morally and religiously indoctrinating her according to the conservative patriarchal values in the Nigerian society. Enitan begins to resist her mother's conservatism after meeting Sheri, the neighbouring girl who is audacious and outspoken. However, Sheri gets raped during a picnic in front of Enitan, and it deeply traumatises both of them in the rest of their lives. Atta demonstrates that the adolescent girl's attempt to transgress the socially constructed passive femininity is tragically and violently submerged by

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patriarchy. By witnessing Sheri's rape, Enitan inwardly realises the gendered vulnerability of the woman within the masculinist nation. The trauma of sexual abuse metamorphoses Enitan and Sheri from their naïve childhood to empowered womanhood. After a long separation, Enitan and Sheri again meet in Lagos as adults – Enitan as a lawyer and Sheri as the winner of Miss Nigeria pageant. Both of them once again encounter the morbidity of the masculinist nation and its patriarchal political culture through their affairs with men. Enitan's affair with Mike Obi ends abruptly when she discovers him to be a womaniser. In the same way, Sheri challenges her fiancé, Brigadier Ibrahim when she realises his attempt of domesticating her as a traditional Muslim woman. Enitan's marriage with Niyi ends with her realisation of his limited grammar of love and political engagement. When her father gets imprisoned as a political prisoner under the tyrannical regime, Enitan fights for his liberation despite her husband's warnings. At the end of the narrative, Enitan becomes a womanist activist metaphorizing the worth of physical and emotional labour of the Nigerian woman in confronting the masculinist nation in order to carve out womanist spaces of civic engagement. Similarly, Sheri also involves in charity work as a successful businesswoman, and thus, Atta's text demonstrates womanist dimensions against the patriarchal nation and its gendered prejudices.

Similar to Atta's Enitan and Sheri, Abraham also positions Bibike and Ariyike, the twin sisters in her debut novel, within the burgeoning cityscape of Lagos. The twin sisters enjoy a comfortable life in Lagos until their mother loses her job due to the political unrest in Nigeria in 1998 and their father loses the family home as the result of becoming a victim of a scam. Later, it is revealed that the scam is schemed by their charismatic family priest, Pastor David Shamonka. After the collapse of their parents' marriage and the subsequent abandonment of the children, Bibike and

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Ariyike have to navigate their lives amidst economic difficulties and sexual threats from men. Abraham portrays the lives of the two sisters within the patriarchal cityscape as a gendered challenge for them since both of them have to undergo the trauma of sexual abuse. Bibike is sexually abused by her friend's father, Alhaji Sule whilst Ariyike is seduced during an audition by Dexter, the programme manager of a Christian-themed radio show. When Ariyike loses her job at the radio station, Pastor David seduces her in the promise of offering her a better life in the future. Abraham's portrayal of the gendered vulnerability of the twin sisters within the male-supremacist culture of Nigeria exemplifies how the female body is objectified within patriarchy. Ariyike's decision to marry Pastor David can be interpreted as an act of resistance against the masculinist culture since she exposes the morally corrupt character of her husband to the public and dismantles the authority of his church. At the end of the narrative, Ariyike abandons her marriage in favour of social activism, and her sister, Bibike also joins with her. In Abraham's text, the reader can notice how the Nigerian woman deploys revenge as a way of resisting and dismantling the religious masculinity represented through the hypocritical religious ministers such as Pastor David.

Hence, it is apparent that both Atta and Abraham depict the Nigerian woman's spiritual growth and her attempt of renegotiating and redefining the values of their nation and its political culture. In their process of achieving womanist agency, these Nigerian daughters create productive tensions between their spirit of resistance and masculinist cultural norms. By so doing, they strive to dismantle the hegemonic patriarchal institutions in order to forge new national realities and social justice. They resist the masculinist nation's ideological and political effort to domesticate, subordinate and marginalise them within the matrimonial and national contexts. All of these female protagonists start their struggle for autonomy within the domestic

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context of their homes, and subsequently they extend it to the national context through their civic engagement and political activism. Hence, Atta and Abraham's texts dislodge the masculinist configuration of the nation by offering an alternative female-centred ethos to build up the nation. They move their female protagonists out of the realm of the home and place them within the political arena of the nation. The third generation Nigerian coming-of-age novel with its resilient and empowered womanists offers a compelling counter narrative against patriarchal power and dominance. In their re-imagination of a more inclusive national reality, the twenty-first century Nigerian authors foreground the Nigerian woman's physical and emotional labour in nation building. Using feminist postcolonial and womanist concepts, this chapter analyses the Nigerian daughterhood against male discourses in the nation. The Nigerian daughter's womanist quest for her self-definition and agency is viewed as a way of envisaging gender justice and equality.

2.2. FEMININITY AS A CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION

The cultural construction of gender and gender performativity is a more nuanced and historicised idea. Masculinity and femininity are not biologically determined, but it is socially and culturally constructed and ideologized. In a conservative and male-supremacist cultural context, the female subject learns to position her physical and emotional self in a constrained and limited fashion by moving within patriarchal national spaces in a way which is pointedly more restricted and reserved than men. Within the masculinist nation and national culture, the female subject develops a sense of physical and spiritual restrictedness that may inhibit her active involvement in political and civic spaces of the nation. The masculinist culture in Nigeria is permeated with negative attitude towards femininity, and thus the female subject is mostly positioned within the domestic realm rather than within the national political context. In addition, femininity is rooted in the

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ideology of domesticity since the home becomes the locus of constructing submissive female identity for the Nigerian girl-child. Atta and Abraham's narratives demonstrate how the adolescent Nigerian girl resists the cultural construction of passive femininity in their process of spiritual growth into the independent womanhood. Reading the adolescent Nigerian girl against the masculinist nation is a way of comprehending the postcolonial Nigerian woman's gendered subjectivity within the burgeoning nation. The deep-seated gendered prescriptions in Nigeria privilege men and circumscribe women's freedom, her creative prerogatives and energies. The normative construction of submissive femininity is a means of colonising the female body by patriarchal culture. The image of the adolescent Nigerian girl in third generation Nigerian coming-of-age narratives can be defined as a master metaphor for the female subject's resistance against patriarchal nationalism and its construction of passive femininity. Her quest for agency which begins in adolescence and culminates in adulthood is a signifier of the womanist metamorphosis from oppressed childhood to empowered womanhood.

Atta and Abraham portray how femininity and female sexual identity are culturally designed and transmitted from mothers to daughters. The adolescent Nigerian girl's sexuality and gender performativity are forms of the socially assigned behaviour that are communicated through patriarchal social institutions. Atta and Abraham strive do demonstrate "the masculine investment in the domestication and subservience of women in post-independent Nigeria" (Ndaka 3). The notion of the respectable and 'proper' womanhood is deeply associated with the woman's culturally accepted sexual performance. Within the masculinist nation, any rebellious and nonconformist feminine behaviour is socially stigmatised and sometimes violently destabilised. However, third generation Nigerian coming-of-age narratives "interrogate how the daughters rebel against the moral-ethical codes of

their various societies in order to come to terms with the challenges of womaning and constructing identity for themselves" (Okuyade, "Continuity and Renewal" 10). The female protagonists in the narratives of Atta and Abraham resist the cultural construction of passive femininity, and this spirit of resistance is apparent in their refusal of their mothers' social conventionality. In other words, we can see how Atta and Abraham dispel the stereotyped image of the 'silent' African woman by demonstrating their female protagonists' quest for self-definition and agency against the challenging patriarchal discourses in the nation.

The adolescent female protagonists in the narratives of Atta and Abraham metamorphose from their subservience to agency as they increase their "awareness of the patriarchal restrictions that govern all aspect of women's lives" (Mtenje 68). In Atta's novel, Enitan's mother, Arinola who is a devout and fanatical adherent of Catholicism, morally indoctrinates her daughter. Arinola teaches her daughter to cook, to confine herself within the home sphere, and to avoid any companionship with wayward friends. Her mother's lessons about women's sexuality creates a sense of fear and anxiety in Enitan's mind: "Sex was a filthy act, she said, and I must always wash myself afterward. Tears filled my eyes. The prospect of dying young seemed better now" (Atta 18). Enitan's mother strives to mould her daughter's spiritual universe according to the traditional and conservative norms of gender performativity in the Nigerian context. Enitan's interior monologue in the beginning of the narrative exemplifies how the Nigerian adolescent girl's gendered socialisation is constructed by the societal norms of femininity: "From the beginning I believed whatever I was told, downright lies even, about how best to behave, although I have my own inclinations" (Atta 2). Within the masculinist culture, the woman's individual inclinations are unnoticed and unrecognised, and thus she has to accept the cultural production of gender identity and performance. It can be posited that

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femininity of these adolescent girls is Othered by the masculinist national culture which encourages women to confine themselves to domesticity. As Mtenje argues, the notions of respectability and unrespectability in relation to the Nigerian woman are "closely tied to enactments of the body and how sexualities are performed" (67). Thus, the gendered socialisation of the adolescent Nigerian girl within the patriarchal nation encourages her to view her gendered body as a site of shame and to express regret for her femininity and female sexuality.

Similar to Enitan's mother, Bibike and Ariyike's mother in Abraham's novel begins to morally inculcate them according to the religious norms of New Church, a religious institution established by Pastor David Shamonka. Their mother endeavours to condition them to comprehend femaleness as a negation of freedom by highlighting the actions that they are not permitted to perform as adolescent girls. For example, the mother speaks to Bibike and Ariyike about "the dangers of worldly music, that it [is] the devil's mascot, leading young girls to bad things, like boys and drugs, and how [they have] to be better examples for [their] brothers" (Abraham 26). Also, Ariyike is punished at the school for wearing "eye makeup, short skirts," and smoking a pack of cigarettes (Abraham 28). The acknowledgement of the socially designed 'proper' womanhood as an emblem of decency and moral decorum negates women's sexual freedom and emotional liberty to express their individual inclinations. The adolescent female protagonists' parallel experiences in moral indoctrination demonstrate how patriarchal religion, societal conservatism and masculinist nationalism operate in partnership in stigmatising the female body and sexuality as a site of disgrace, humiliation and negation. It seems that the tradition and religion in Nigeria underpins patriarchy whilst patriarchal ideology supports in preserving the traditionally and religiously constructed gendered norms. Within the

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postcolonial Nigeria's masculinist nation, the female subject is demanded to conceive femininity as a burden, complication and uncertainty.

Furthermore, the third generation Nigerian writer demonstrates how "daughters can re-negotiate the gendered norms of sexualities as imparted to them by their mothers, via the influence of girls' close female peers" (Mtenje 74). The sisterhood between Enitan and Sheri is suggestive of how adolescent Nigerian girls develop female solidarity against the patriarchal nation's construction of passive femininity. In other words, woman-bonding provides them the spiritual strength to resist the oppressive patriarchal ideas and to reinvent their independent female identity. As the aftermath of developing sexual awareness through sisterhood, these adolescent protagonists begin to question the gendered prejudices and normative constructions of the female body. According to Obioma Nnaemeka, "women appropriate and refashion oppressive spaces through friendship, sisterhood, and solidarity and in the process reinvent themselves" (19). Enitan's meeting with Sheri is "of great significance, as it marks her transition to an entirely new stage of life" (Kehinde and Mbipom 68). In their first meeting, Sheri's bold dress style prompts Enitan to rethink about her mother's strict moral codes on female behaviour and decency: "She wore a pink skirt and her white top ended just above her navel. With her short afro, her face looked like a sunflower. I noticed she wore pink lipstick" (Atta 9). Based on her mother's fanatical religious norms, Enitan muses: "Didn't anyone tell her she couldn't wear high heels? Lipstick? Any of that? […] She was the spoiled one. Sharp mouth and all" (Atta 12). Though Enitan is critical of Sheri's audacity and her choice of unconventional clothes, it can be argued that Sheri's nonconformity unconsciously contests Enitan's socially assigned conventionality. Also, Sheri's favour of juju music and her act of dancing with her grandmother are in stark opposition with the societal norm of 'proper' womanhood. According to Mtenje, juju

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dancing clearly contains sexual undertones, and thus it implies "a sexualised bodily freedom of expression that should not be associated with either good girl children, or with elderly women" (76). Enitan begins to discard the imaginative constructions of 'proper' womanhood due to her exposure to a more liberal and free lifestyle represented through Sheri's mannerism.

Enitan's solidarity with audacious Sheri prompts her to rethink about her restricted and conditioned lifestyle at the home. Their conversations about female sexuality inspire Enitan to dispel her mother's ideology about sexualised femininity as an offensive and taboo issue. For instance, Sheri encourages Enitan to explore the physiology of her genitalia: "I dragged my panties down, placed the mirror between my legs. It looked like a big, fat slug" (Atta 28). Enitan's observation of her sexual organs is symbolic of her identification with her female sexuality through her own perspective rather than through the culturally constructed views of her mother. Sheri proffers an alternative idea about sexual freedom that tempts Enitan to think beyond the gendered restrictions imposed upon the female body. The adolescent girl's gendered socialisation takes place when she rejects the cultural taboo of female sexuality as a disgrace due to the awareness gained through her conversations with female friends. Enitan's spiritual transformation is signified through her acceptance of the romance novel that Sheri gives her to read. After accepting the novel, her one thought is to return home before the mother arrives: "I'd disobeyed her too much. If she found out, I would be punished for life" (Atta 31). Enitan realises that any form of sexual transgression, even reading a novel about sexuality, is culturally unacceptable. Enitan's process of emotional growth begins when she emancipates from her mother's authority and attempts to search for her individuality and freedom: "In my bedroom, I read the first page of Sheri's book, then the last. It describes a man and woman kissing and how their hearts beat faster" (Atta 31). It is apparent that

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Enitan's solidarity with Sheri "sparks her interest in her own sexuality and her desire to learn about the workings of sex and sexual relationships" (Mtenje 79). Atta's portrayal of Enitan and Sheri's adolescence is a transgressive positioning of the Nigerian daughter against the traditional patriarchal values of female decency and decorum. The adolescence of Enitan and Sheri emblematises a moment of the Nigerian daughter's spiritual maturation devoid of her mother's supervision. Against the estranged relationship between Enitan and her mother, Enitan and Sheri's relationship captures a womanist paradigm that is characterised by its emotional unity, caring for each other and audacity to transgress the normativity.

The development of sisterhood between Enitan and Sheri allows them to transcend the boundaries of the gendered limitations imposed upon the Nigerian daughter and to question the national masculinities that attempt to domesticate women. When Enitan expresses her childhood expectation of becoming "something like president" once she grows up, Sheri points out the impossibility of fulfilling such a hope within the patriarchal political context of Nigeria: "Women are not presidents […] Our men won't stand for it. Who will cook for your husband?" (Atta 25). Though Enitan is unaware of the masculinist nationalism, Sheri's explanation educates Enitan about the subservient gendered position of the Nigerian woman in the nation's political culture. It demonstrates that the Nigerian daughter is valued on the basis of her procreative production of the nation and wifehood rather than her educational, intellectual and leadership aptitudes. As Felix Ndaka notes, "Sheri appears to be aware of how the ideology of domesticity figures a woman's wholesome existence as dependant on getting married, producing children and caring for their family" (3). Though Enitan as a child does not comprehend the gendered othering and exclusion of women from the political sphere of the nation, she realises this oppressive paradigm as she spiritually grows up as an adolescent girl. Later, she

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contemplates, Nigerian women have been raised to believe that their greatest days will be: "the birth of [their] first child, [their] wedding and graduation days in that order" (Atta 97). As she grows up into adolescence, Enitan realises that domesticating national masculinities demarcate the Nigerian female subject's role within the realm of the home and in marriage. According to bell hooks, "male supremacist ideology encourages women to believe [they] are valueless and obtain value only by relating to or bonding with men" ("Sisterhood" 127). Though patriarchy teaches that women's relationships with one another diminish, it is understandable that female solidarity enriches their experience. Enitan and Sheri practise a realistic and convincing for of female solidarity that improves both of their awareness of challenging the oppressive patriarchal strictures.

Similar to Enitan and Sheri's relationship, Ariyike and Bibike in Abraham's novel also metamorphose from the passive objects to the voiced subjects as they realise how the gendered nation subordinates the female subject. Abraham configures the gendered position of the orphaned Nigerian daughter within the masculinist nation by portraying Bibike and Ariyike's vulnerability after their parents have permanently abandoned them. As the orphaned adolescent girls, Bibike and Ariyike are represented within the patriarchal nation as objects of sexual advance and male desire. As they navigate the streets of "failing city" (Abraham 12) as the abandoned children, they have to resist the masculinist effort in taking sexual advantage from them. For instance, when Ariyike sells sachet water on the streets of Lagos, she continuously encounters sexual advances of men. When she is dressed in jeans, men in cars stretch out "their hands to smack [her] butt" (Abraham 167). Sometimes the young men who buy sachet water wait until the bus is driving off: "They do this so you can run after them. They love to watch breasts bounce" (Abraham 94). In another incident, when Ariyike works in a beauty supply store in Lagos, a rich man

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who visits the store tries to offer thirty thousand naira for each sister in the intention of having sex with them at the same time: "See, my wife is traveling. I don't want to be alone. I have never been with the twins at the same time" (Abraham 169). Though Ariyike rejects his invitation, the situation demonstrates that the male-supremacist ideology promulgates the sexualised subordination of the female subject. By observing the gendered experiences of Bibike and Ariyike, it can be argued that the culturally assigned feminine virtues as passivity, subservience and obedience exist in articulation with the masculinist sexual oppression of women. Sexual threats and advances in patriarchal culture are a violent erasure of women's freedom and individuality. The Nigerian daughter's personal development and spiritual maturation take place against the burgeoning nation which is freighted with masculinist values. The gendered limitations imposed upon the Nigerian woman is a way of indirectly propagating sexual violence and abuse against women. Accordingly, it is apparent that the socially assigned femininity has to be renegotiated in order to reclaim female agency and autonomy.

2.3. THE TRAUMA OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND WOMANIST METAMORPHOSIS

As discussed above, femininity is a performative cultural construct, and thus it is publicly performed and displayed by the female subject's conformity to the socially sanctioned gendered norms. Before addressing the trauma of sexual abuse, it is important to illustrate how the normative constructions of womanhood relegate women into an inferior and subservient position by perpetuating masculinist violence against them. The masculinist nation eulogises passive, domesticated and obedient womanhood as a feminine virtue, and therefore the adolescent girl is prompted to construct her femininity according to these received ideas. However, the gendered restrictions placed upon the woman create a space for men to sexually objectify and

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abuse her. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty posits, sexual violence against women "circumscribes and elucidates their social position to a certain extent, defining women as archetypal victims" and men as perpetrators of violence and sexual dominance (54–55). In the third generation Nigerian coming-of-age novel, the adolescent girl's restricted gendered position is juxtaposed against the issue of female agency and resistance. Third generation writers "question the myths swallowed and fed by their mothers under oppressive Nigerian patriarchal strictures" (Nadaswaran 21). Atta and Abraham's narratives depict how the adolescent Nigerian girl resists the patriarchal nation's oppressive sexual forces. They demonstrate how the postcolonial Nigerian daughter is imprisoned within the repressive societal demands, the colonial constructions of femininity and gendered norms of patriarchy. In a womanist stance, the adolescent Nigerian girl's assertiveness, audacity and resilience stand as requirements in dismantling the gendered shackles of the masculinist nation. In Atta and Abraham's texts, the adolescent female protagonists are subjected to the masculinist sexual abuse, and their traumatic experiences metamorphose them from their subservience to agency. The trauma of sexual abuse strengthens their spiritual fortitude to battle against patriarchy and to improve their awareness and consciousness about the gendered prejudices in their nation. Interestingly, these writers establish a nexus between the gendered oppression in the realm of family and the state dictatorship and its abusive political culture. As Shalini Nadaswaran points out, through these adolescent Nigerian protagonists' quest for agency, third generation Nigerian writers "unmask the socio-cultural strictures of Nigerian society and create new spaces for young Nigerian women to inhabit" (22). The Nigerian daughter's womanist metamorphosis within the troubling geography of the masculinist culture is a way of metaphorizing the woman's physical and spiritual

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labour in subverting patriarchy and envisioning an egalitarian society with social justice and gender equality.

Atta depicts the adolescent Nigerian girl's womanist transformation through Sheri and Enitan's traumatic sexual experiences and their aftermaths. As Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi explains, "the young girl inherits womanism after a traumatic event […] or after an epiphany or as a result of the experience of racism, rape, death in the family or sudden responsibility" (28). Enitan and Sheri's presence at the beach picnic in Ikoyi Park becomes a traumatic life event for both of them since Sheri gets raped by three boys and Enitan witnesses the incident. During the picnic, Sheri dances with Damola and the other two boys and smokes hemp cigarettes, the acts that are viewed as socially unacceptable feminine attributes in a patriarchal and conservative social context. Sheri's culturally transgressive and audacious feminine temperament prompts men to interpret her as a loose and sexually available woman. The adolescent girl's socially transgressive behaviour is violently submerged by the uncontrollable male sexual desire and misogyny: "Sheri was lying on the seat. Her knees were spread apart. The boy in the cap was pinning her arms down. The portly boy was on top of her. His hands were clamped over her mouth" (Atta 58). It is apparent that the nonconformist young girl is regulated by the norms of female behaviour which are designed and defined by the masculinist culture. Female sexuality becomes a force of conditioning the female subject's emotional universe to accept masculinist violence and stigmatise herself as a victim: "Bad girls got raped. We all knew! Loose girls, forward girls, raw, advanced girls. Laughing with boys, following them around, thinking she was one of them" (Atta 60). Besides, physical violence against women such as rape and sexual assault is employed by men to silence women, and therefore such violence is carried out with "an astonishing consensus among men in the world" (Mohanty 54). Sheri's audacious adolescent

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behaviour and men's sexual aggression represent the notion that the culturally assigned feminine virtues as sartorial 'decency', obedience and female backwardness within men's social sphere are in sake of regulating men's unwanted sexual gaze and masculinist impulse to infringe violence on the female body. The images of Sheri's ravaged female body with "blood on her pubic hairs [and] thick spit running down her legs" (Atta 58) become a haunting memory for both Sheri and Enitan during their initiation into womanhood.

However, both Enitan and Sheri learn to resist the trauma of sexual violence by challenging patriarchy's attempt to silence them. It is important to understand that the trauma of rape and sexual assault propels women to dismantle the socially constructed norms of passive femininity and victim identity by developing a sense of agency. The transformative potential of Sheri's emotional wounds can be seen in her ability to utilise the trauma as a catalyst for self-realisation and empowerment. Even though her attempt to abort the unwanted pregnancy due to the rape has ended in her barrenness, Sheri's achievements such as winning the Miss Nigeria title after the graduation signify her womanist assertion. Later, Sheri rebels against her fiancé, Brigadier Ibrahim when he attempts to control her freedom by domesticating her as a subservient mistress. When Brigadier Ibrahim tries to abuse her physically in the aim of subverting her attempt of independence, she does not remain silent and passive. She brutally beats him with a pot of okra stew: "The Civil War hadn't prepared him for her. She beat him for every person who had crossed her path in life" (Atta 165). As a woman traumatised due to the rape, loss of her parents and economic marginalisation, Sheri's womanist assertion culminates with a violent physical rebuttal against male authority. Sheri's womanist character can be seen in her act of starting a food catering business and developing it into a large industry. She buys a car one year of starting her self-employment, and later she engages in civic and

charitable activities by opening an orphanage for homeless children. Sheri reveals Enitan that all of these achievements in her life make her fulfilled: "I'm a today-tomorrow woman. I can't look back. I have my business, plenty of children around me" (Atta 300). It is understandable that the young girl develops her sense of resistance against patriarchal violence as the aftermath of a traumatic life event. Her spirit of resistance dismantles the conservative feminine traits of victimhood, and thus "it is in learning to cope within this experience that the female character develops a sense of agency and personhood" (Nadaswaran 24). Hence, in a womanist perspective, sexual abuse does not leave the female subject doomed and bereaved forever, but progressively metamorphoses her from subservience to agency.

Moreover, the adolescent girl's traumatic sexual experiences and her womanist transformation encourage her to challenge the spatial and sexual hegemony of men. In Abraham's narrative, Ariyike chooses to convert the site of her sexual exploitation into a locus of confrontation through a well-planned revenge plot. After the parents have abandoned the family, Ariyike and Bibike have to struggle hard to survive since they are obliged to look after their two younger brothers. Ariyike's first traumatic sexual experience occurs when she is seduced by Dexter, the programme manager of Chill FM, during her audition for the position of a presenter in "the Christian-themed radio show" (Abraham 161). To gain her economic independence, Ariyike is forced to have sex with Dexter, and it typifies how the economic vulnerability flings the female subject into a subservient position as an object of male desire. When the radio station is closed down forever, Pastor David takes the advantage from Ariyike's economic vulnerability. He takes her to a luxury hotel in Lagos and seduces her in the promise of offering her a new occupation: "I stayed until morning that day, like he asked. I stayed because I was hoping to negotiate a better life for myself" (Abraham 179). During the act of seduction, Ariyike

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feels a sense of loss, and she decides to take revenge from Pastor David by marrying him. It can be argued that Ariyike's sudden decision to marry Pastor David is an act of revenge instilled by the traumatic sexual experiences. Sometimes it is through scheming and revenge that the female subject can secure her agency and personhood within the masculinist nation. It is apparent that the female body is objectified and instrumentalised within the masculinist culture, and those men in power explicitly and implicitly encourage women to commodify their sexuality in order to earn their livelihood. Besides, Pastor David's use of his religious institution and its fame as a shield to cover up his sexual exploitation of women is representative of political and religious masculinities in the patriarchal nation.

In Ariyike's case, marriage becomes a means of subverting the spatial and sexual dominance of Pastor David. After the seduction, instead of embracing victim identity and remaining silent, Ariyike chooses to transform her trauma to vengeance: "I was marrying Pastor David as part of a well-planned revenge plot. I was going to get the money he stole from my family, and more than that, I was going to get dignity and prestige" (Abraham 273). Her process of womanist metamorphosis into self-actualisation involves drastic actions since she unmasks the morally degenerating and hypocritical character of her husband. After the marriage, Ariyike discovers that Pastor David uses his New Church as a shield to defend his sexual exploitation of young female devotees as herself. The predicament of Alex, a young female devotee who is raped by her husband and his friends, awakens Ariyike's consciousness about justice: "I want to focus on her recovery, on therapy and treatment. But what about justice? What about all the other girls?" (Abraham 262). Her effort to heal Alex's trauma of sexual exploitation is suggestive of her empathy and wilful entrance into the space of the victim's helplessness. Alex's situation which reminds Ariyike about her own traumatic sexual experiences, provides emotional fortitude for her to

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dismantle masculinist dominance. Also, she realises that her own resistance and healing involve in developing compassion for those women who have undergone traumatic sexual experiences. Fuelled by the distress of parental abandonment, the memory of economic vulnerability and the trauma of sexual exploitation, Ariyike leaves her husband and his ethically decomposing religious institution in favour of a womanist spiritual culture: "What they lost was the belief in an omniscient, omnipotent female spirit. Now look at this: all of us are condemned to serving these male gods and their rapacious servants" (Abraham 266). As Abraham suggests in the novel, for Ariyike to achieve healing and liberation, her vengeance should be fulfilled. Moreover, her hope to embrace an omnipotent female spirit is reminiscent of Alice Walker's definition of a womanist as an individual who "loves the Spirit" (xii).

It is evident that Ariyike's womanist transformation from subservience to agency has a spiritual dimension. According to Layli Phillips, "womanism openly acknowledges a spiritual/transcendental realm with which human life, livingkind, and the material world are all intertwined" (xxvi). For womanists, this spiritual and transcendental realm is "actual and palpable, and the relationship between it and humans is neither abstract and nor insignificant to politics" (Phillips xxvi). Ariyike's womanist assertion and social activism are rooted in the conviction that "spiritual intercession and consideration of the transcendental or metaphysical dimension of life enhance and even undergird political action" (Phillips xxvi). In other words, her inner voice is evocative of the climax of her metamorphosis from subservience to agency, and from the institutionalised patriarchal religion to female-oriented spirituality. Ariyike's confrontation against Pastor David and his male-supremacist ideology culminates on Mother's Day Sunday morning when Alex brutally attacks him: "Pastor David is on the floor in his office, kicking his legs around. His hands are wrapped around a bleeding penis" (Abraham 272). Alex's violent act of penis-

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phallus castration is a metaphor for a fierce confrontation against the phallogocentric sexual exploitation of women. Ariyike leaves her married life in order to commit her life to rebel against sexual oppression in the masculinist nation. She decides to fight for the rights of women who struggle under the yoke of male sexual oppression and violence. Accordingly, in a womanist perspective, it can be argued that the trauma of sexual abuse propels the female subject to utilise her physical and spiritual labour to challenge the oppressive patriarchal strictures. Rather than embracing a victim identity, these young female protagonists dispel the myths of subservient womanhood by voicing against the masculinist nation.

2.4. VOICING THE NIGERIAN DAUGHTER AGAINST THE MASCULINIST NATION

The adolescent Nigerian girl's resistance against the gendered prejudices in the masculinist nation begins in an early stage in her life. Her emancipatory quest within the disturbing socio-political geography of Nigeria metaphorizes the postcolonial nation's attempt to create a democratic national culture amidst the trauma of military dictatorship, corrupt administration, and human rights violations. The third generation Nigerian writer depicts the adolescent girl's spiritual transformation from 'silence' to agency against the morally and ethically decomposing postcolonial cityscape. According to Jane Bryce, the prioritisation of the young female protagonist's quest for self-definition and autonomy against the backdrop of the masculinist cityscape is "a challenging reconfiguration of national realities in which the feminine is neither essentialized and mythologized nor marginalized, but unapologetically central to the realist representation of a recognizable social world" (49–50). The adolescent female protagonists in Atta and Abraham's novels strive to create their identity and personhood as independent and empowered urban subjects, and their "quest for a sociocultural identity is inextricably

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linked to issues arising from postcolonialism and globalisation, often manifested in the context of repression, violence or exploitation" (Hron 29). The plight of these female protagonists against the milieu of the burgeoning postcolonial city captures a sense of Lagos cityness and celebrates agentive and plural urban lives of young Nigerian women. Atta and Abraham present the Lagos cityness in a female-oriented stance by foregrounding how female characters imagine new ways of survival in the postcolonial city. Instead of being powerless and vulnerable in the face of economic, social and political hardships, these female protagonists are emotionally and spiritually metamorphosed into resilient womanists who battle against the adversities of city life. In both of these narratives, we can see two parallel depictions of woman-bonding taking place against the fragmented and bizarre cityscape: Enitan and Sheri in Atta's text, and Ariyike and Bibike in Abraham's narrative.

In a cityscape, human beings themselves become the important infrastructure. According to AbdouMaliq Simone's conceptualisation of cityness, people themselves, "situations, and bodies bear the responsibility for articulating different locations, resources, and stories into viable opportunities for everyday survival" (124). The adolescent female protagonists in these two narratives create productive tensions between their self-assertive womanhood and masculinist oppression as they struggle with the cityscape for their survival. They develop a sense of resilience and self-determination as they learn to rebel against the gendered challenges in the nation's patriarchal circumstances. For instance, Ariyike and Bibike in Abraham's text struggle against the hardships in the Lagosian city life after their parents abandon them with two younger brothers. The twin sisters sell sachet water on Lagos streets to earn their livelihood: "We had to walk as far as the tollgate and wait until there was serious traffic to make good sales" (Abraham 77). The two sisters undertake the battle of survival in unison by doing meagre jobs such as cleaning the hospital and

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working in a beauty salon. They gradually learn to reclaim their agency as young women, and their spiritual fortitude exemplifies the importance of female solidarity to challenge the oppressive patriarchal strictures. In addition, their economic vulnerability provides a chance for men to sexually exploit them. Within the troubling cityscape, the female body becomes a commodity and sex object to fulfil the sexual urge of men. When Aminat's father, Alhaji Sule seduces Bibike, her disappointment is marked with reference to the city: "I was a parentless teenage girl living with my grandmother in the slums of Lagos" (Abraham 91). She thinks about Aminat's tragic predicament under the guardianship of a lustful father, and her feeling is defined in relation to the city: "Her Lagos was just as sad as mine" (Abraham 89). Bibike's sense of distress signifies the postcolonial nation's inability to address the rights and dignity of the marginalised female subject, and this national failure is suggestive of postcolonial disillusionment. Similar to Bibike and Ariyike's situation, Sheri in Atta's narrative is flung into poverty due to the death of her father and grandmother, Alhaja. Sheri's affair with Brigadier Ibrahim is a choice that she has made due to her economic susceptibility: "When my father died who remembered me? Chief Bakare done die, God Bless his family. We didn't even know where our next meal was coming from, and no one cared" (Atta 96). Though these young women are submerged by male dominance due to their economic susceptibility, they gradually learn to deal with the gendered challenges by developing their sense of resilience and fortitude.

It seems that the gendered prejudices in the masculinist culture create an uncertain and hesitant existence for the female subject. As we read the story of the adolescent girl's quest for empowerment in Atta and Abraham's novels, it is apparent that the cosmopolitan Lagos is essentially patriarchal and ethically decomposing in its values. The exploitation of the gendered body of the postcolonial Nigerian female

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subject takes place "against the backdrop of a former colonial city that in nearly fifty years of independence has been not only badly run but administered in a despotic and bizarre manner" (Simone 126). In other words, the political, civic and economic spaces of the nation are governed by patriarchal values, and therefore the adolescent Nigerian girl has to envision alternative futures for herself. Atta and Abraham demonstrate the womanist futures of their protagonists by foregrounding their political activism, civic engagement and economic industriousness. The plural and politically positive vision of these young female protagonists can be seen as a womanist characteristic due to their commitment to "survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female" (Walker xi). Enitan's activism against the political despotism in the nation and Ariyike's activism against the masculinist religious hegemony of New Church are representative of women's effort to heal the nation. Enitan's womanist consciousness can be seen in her decision to join with a group of women activists in order to liberate her father and other dissidents who are unjustly imprisoned. She gives a daring statement to Grace Ameh's magazine despite her mother's warning: "Be careful […] This kind of thing is not a woman's place. Not in this country" (Atta 215). In the article "Sunny Taiwo's daughter speaks out", Enitan's confrontational voice, "My father is not a criminal" (Atta 233), is positioned against the press censorship and other draconic laws of the military government. In the union between Enitan and Grace Ameh, the reader sees a womanist woman-bonding against the masculinist political standards. Grace Ameh motivates Enitan to dispel the silence and voice against injustice: "you have a voice, which is what I always try to tell people. Use your voice to bring about change" (Atta 251). It can be posited that in the union amongst Enitan, Grace Ameh and other activist women, "we sense a formulation of an expanded model of resistance whereby their active

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performance of citizenship is contrasted to the militarised masculine violence and apathy that pervades the text" (Ndaka 12).

Additionally, Enitan and Grace Ameh's imprisonment in a state prison cell as a charge for organising an event in support of journalists in detention can be interpreted as a scandalous attempt of the masculinist military rule to suppress female activists' voice against social injustice. According to Onyebuchi Orabueze, Enitan's detention in a cell with physically and spiritually dying group of women prisoners is symbolic of the Nigerian woman's gendered imprisonment under "the burdens of obnoxious native laws and customs that are flagrantly use to violate her rights" (256–257). In other words, the state prison cell with its sickening ambiance and the dying women prisoners is a bizarre Nigerian reality metaphorizing the militarised masculinist nation's social injustice and devaluation of women. One of the female prisoners in the cell who is named as "Mother of Prisons" is detained without a trial for six years for killing a man who has attempted to rape her. Another female detainee who suffers from a cancer is slowly dying in a corner without a proper medical treatment. All of these disturbing images of death and anarchy that are suggestive of the national dystopia and postcolonial disillusionment are positioned against women's political activism. The silence of male characters such as Niyi, Uncle Fatai and Debayo in the face of oppression demonstrates the idea that "the worst prisoner is not the one at home or in state prison, but the one whose prison is in the mind, that is, one who keeps silent when another is being oppressed or a state is in anarchy" (Orabueze 285).

Similar to Enitan's social activism, Ariyike in Abraham's novel demonstrates women's agency in challenging political and religious masculinities in the nation. In a male-domineering socio-political context, institutionalised religion becomes a means of exploiting women and violating their rights. After the marriage, Ariyike

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realises that her husband, Pastor David involves in trafficking young female devotees. He involves in introducing young girls to the politically powerful men as pleasure objects. When Ariyike can no longer tolerate this injustice, she bolts out of her husband's patriarchal church and exposes his hypocrisy to the public. Her emancipatory utterance signifies her self-definition. She escapes from Pastor David's authority, and thus regains her personhood and identity: "I am not a nobody and you are not God. You are not the one writing my story" (Abraham 269). She leaves the masculinist religious realm of her husband and decides to dedicate her life for the victimised women. For instance, she expresses compassion for Alex, the young girl who has gone mad due to sexual exploitation: "I have my eye on Alex, and she is looking up at me with bright, hopeful eyes. She is shivering and afraid. I move closer to her, wrap my arms around her, and hug her over and over" (Abraham 276). The tone of healing at the end of Abraham's narrative envisions a womanist ideal of empathy and commitment for survival of entire society. Hence, Ariyike's denial of masculinist religious hierarchy and standing for women's rights and freedom reminds Alice Walker's idea that a womanist "loves other women […], appreciates and prefers women's culture, [and] women's emotional flexibility" (xi). Accordingly, both Enitan and Ariyike's political activism and civic engagement demonstrate how the empowered women transcend the patriarchal national boundaries in order to carve out their womanist spheres of political and cultural liberty. Enitan and Ariyike can be defined as womanist activists who leave the domestic sphere of patriarchal oppression to claim the public space of politics.

Furthermore, the Nigerian woman's industriousness and charity engagement deconstruct hegemonic masculinity. Sheri's character in Atta's work represents the womanist traits such as self-determination, industriousness, economic independence and charity engagement. After leaving the tormenting relationship with Brigadier

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Ibrahim, Sheri starts a food catering business and expands it into a large business within few years: "Within a year of starting her business, she was able to buy herself one of those second-hand cars people called 'fairly used' and after two years, she was able to rent a place of her own" (Atta 203). Her courage and resilience exemplify how the empowered Nigerian woman transgresses the masculinist values and gendered economic barriers. Sheri's fully realised womanhood is positioned against the masculinist cityscape that negates and challenges female agency: "Her birth mother and motherhood taken away from her, and she wasn't thinking of taking her clothes off and walking naked on the streets. She was stronger than any strong person I knew" (Atta 301). Moreover, Sheri's womanist community engagement can be seen in her philanthropic act of opening an orphanage for homeless children. It can be posited that womanist philanthropy and charity engagement are political acts since they prioritise women's physical and spiritual labour in transforming the masculinist national ideologies and envisioning more egalitarian and humane national ethos. Interestingly, Sheri's charity work is in favour of the homeless children, a socially marginalised community, and thus it proves how womanist philanthropy can deconstruct the hegemonic patriarchal and capitalist standards by emphasising women's social commitment, empathy and pluralistic vision. By deconstructing patriarchal nationalism, these empowered Nigerian daughters express their womanist sense to "reimagine and realise meaningful and fulfilling human relationships" (Ndaka 13). The voice of the empowered Nigerian daughter can shape the nation and its socio-political discourses.

When women involve in a self-assertive quest for independence, male authority and hegemonic masculinity is in crisis. The characters of Niyi and Brigadier Ibrahim in Atta's narrative and Pastor David in Abraham's text demonstrate "the masculine investment in the domestication and subservience of women in post-

independent Nigeria" (Ndaka 3). The subservient gendered position of the Nigerian woman within the masculinist national imaginary is apparent in Niyi's attempt to domesticate Enitan, Brigadier Ibrahim's physical violence to subvert Sheri's economic independence and Pastor David's masculinist religious authority to suppress Ariyike's voice. Niyi's expectation to see the image of a traditional housewife in Enitan is suggestive of his failed effort to resurrect the masculinist fantasy of the domesticated and subservient wife: "You are not a domesticated woman. You just don't have that…that loving quality" (Atta 206). Though Niyi is an educated husband, he is not willing to abandon the traits of hegemonic masculinity. As Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie explains, "not even the most politically progressive men are completely free from patriarchal attitudes and feelings of male superiority" (113–114). Therefore, "it is up to women to combat their social disabilities; to fight for their own fundamental and democratic rights, without waiting for the happy day when men will willingly share power and privilege with them – a day that will never come" (Ogundipe-Leslie 114). Enitan walks out of her self-negating marital servitude when she discovers her husband's "limited/limiting grammar of love and civic engagement" (Ndaka 9). When Enitan's father is imprisoned for political activism, Niyi keeps warning Enitan against her political involvement rather than supporting his wife. According to Felix Ndaka, Niyi's failure "to see the world beyond the home, to envision relationalities that go beyond matrimonial and familial intimacies represents him as part of a group of masculinities that are responsible for various forms of violence either through commission or omission" (12). Finally, Enitan utilises all means available to her to affirm individuality and autonomy. The womanist propensities that she has developed as an adolescent girl culminate in her confrontational act of leaving her marriage in the sake of her independent womanhood: "I would be called to give account of my time

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here on earth. What a pity if I said I cooked and cleaned. What a pity if I couldn't give account of a little sin" (Atta 295).

Similar to Niyi's attempt to domesticate Enitan, Brigadier Ibrahim strives to reinvent the image of a conventional Muslim woman in Sheri by recommending her to cover her head and to mostly remain within the domestic realm attending the household chores as cooking. When he discovers that Sheri is going to open a food catering business, he threats her physically asking her to foreclose the business. His scheme to discourage Sheri's effort to reclaim her economic independence is indicative of the affluent military man's desire to make her an appendage to him: "The man is jealous of me. […] He is jealous of my success. With all he has. He wants me to have nothing except what he gives me. He says he will take it all back. I said take it! All of it! I did not come to this place naked" (Atta 166). Sheri's relationship with Brigadier Ibrahim captures "a relational paradigm that is defined by its dependence, transactionality and materialism" (Ndaka 4). In the light of feminist postcolonial ideas of gender and class, the affluent military man's effort to subordinate Sheri is suggestive of the woman's "susceptibility to exploitative commodification and accessorisation in patriarchal and capitalist contexts" (Ndaka 4). In other words, the married military man's treatment of Sheri as a mistress and household servant serves as a representation of the link between national militarised masculinities, male dominance and the woman's culturally assigned role as an appendage to man. However, when the female subject self-realises her gendered subordination and rebels against male authority, the ideology of hegemonic masculinity is challenged and shaken.

Abraham portrays how the political and religious masculinity of Pastor David is challenged when Ariyike questions him regarding the sexual exploitation within his church. Pastor David attempts to cover up his involvement in sexually abusing

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Alex, a young female devotee, claiming that the girl is possessed by lustful demons: "What she needs is a deliverance minister. The girl is possessed with many sexual demons. They have driven her crazy" (Abraham 268). However, Ariyike reminds him that she is not blind to the reality, and her challenging words frighten him. In the face of his wife's defiant words, his religious patriarchy finally strives to mute her through traditional religious rules: "I think you are forgetting you are a nobody. You have nowhere to go, you are a nobody, you have nothing […] I am your lord, and you will obey me like Scripture commands" (Abraham 268–269). After uttering these authoritative words, Pastor David grabs Ariyike by the nape of her neck, pulling her up on her feet: "His grip around my neck, like a steel necklace" (Abraham 269). It is understandable that the institutionalised religion in patriarchy is deployed as an instrument to oppress women. It is apparent that the postcolonial Nigeria is freighted with patriarchal ideas, and therefore the power has always been in men's hands. As Molara Ogundipe Leslie argues, "the ideology that men are naturally superior to women in essence and in all areas, affects the modern-day organisation of societal structures" (112). Though the masculinist national values suppress women's voice, the empowered Nigerian daughter's agency against the hegemonic masculinity projects "the woman as a survivor of the hardest conditions, vicissitudes and hurdles which characterise post-independence existence, and the wearisome atmosphere in contemporary Nigeria" (Kehinde and Mbipom 67).

Additionally, in Atta and Abraham's narratives, the female protagonists leave their oppressive and self-negating marital lives in the aim of reclaiming their freedom. These empowered female protagonists' engagement and inhabiting of "the nation in ways that engender inclusivity, equity, justice, accountability and collective responsibility positions them at a point of conflict with hegemonic masculinities' exercise of power" (Ndaka 13). Both Enitan and Ariyike articulate more inclusive

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and sustaining ways of re-imagining the position of the Nigerian woman in the postcolonial nation. For instance, in the end of Abraham's novel Ariyike decides to dedicate her life for the wellbeing of victimised women. It is suggestive of her self-development beyond her husband's oppressive religious and patriarchal domain. In the same vein, Atta's text concludes with Enitan's leaving of her matrimonial home in the hope of leading an independent and socially engaging life. In Enitan's case, in order to overcome the trauma of witnessing Sheri's rape, and to heal the memory of her mother's isolation and death, and to confront societal conservatism and the state tyranny, she needs to end her self-abnegating marriage. The text closes with the images of rebirth and revival, and this optimistic denouement of the narrative is symbolic of Enitan's fully realised womanhood: "Everything good will come to me […] Nothing could take my joy away from me. The sun sent her blessings. My sweat baptized me" (Atta 329). The idea of revival and beginning is "an interesting concept explored by the Nigerian writer, creating new spaces for changes in these female characters' lives despite their challenges" (Nadaswaran 31). In other words, the emancipatory quest of the girl-child that begins during her adolescence culminates in her adulthood. The fulfilment of the Nigerian daughter's process of individuation within the troubling masculinist geography of the nation envisions her womanist future.

2.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has foregrounded the gendered subjectivity of the adolescent Nigerian daughter and her creation of productive tensions between female agency and the patriarchal constructions of female subordination. As pointed out in the chapter, the emotional and spiritual growth of the Nigerian daughter serves as a representative site of the larger socio-political, economic, religious, and cultural concerns of the Nigerian nation. In other words, the Nigerian girl-child's womanist

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quest for agency and self-definition transcends the private sphere of patriarchal home and embodies the broader national themes such as the woman's political activism and her attempt to carve out a unique sense of national belonging. The coming-of-age story of the adolescent Nigerian girl in these twenty-first century fictional works deconstructs the normative prescriptions of female gender performativity in the hope of redefining African womanhood and recommending alternative womanist futures for Nigerian/African women. In Atta and Abraham's texts, the female protagonists' re-imagination of national and personal relationships is a resistance against the phallocentric social imaginary of the nation. In a broader sense, it can be articulated that the Nigerian daughter's reclaiming of her agency and autonomy is a way of envisioning egalitarian socio-political futures for men and women in Nigeria and Africa.

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CHAPTER 3: THE AFRICAN WOMAN'S SEXUAL AWAKENING

Third Generation Nigerian Narratives on Female Sexual Awakening and Liberation: Chinelo Okparanta and Abubakar Adam Ibrahim

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The emerging third generation Nigerian narratives raise intriguing questions about the politics of gender and sexuality by addressing the African woman's transgression of the culturally constructed bounds of her body and sexuality. Patriarchal structures of power in African societies explicitly or implicitly demand women to experience their sexual pleasure in circumscribed and culturally constructed ways. The dominating power men exercise over women and their sexuality inspires the female subject to resist and challenge hegemonic patriarchal politics of the female body, sexuality and desire. In the resistance struggle, the power of the sexually subordinated African woman to assert her agency and autonomy formulates a discourse about female sexual transgression and liberation. A growing body of Nigerian fictional narratives on female sexual transgression has only begun to emerge during the twenty-first century. These emerging Nigerian narratives on female sexual awakening reimagine the African woman's gendered subjectivity by challenging the prescriptive and normative patriarchal ideas in Nigerian society. In this chapter, Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) and Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2015) challenge hegemonic masculinist politics of sexuality by depicting how the lesbian woman and a northern Nigerian Muslim woman transgress their marginal situatedness in their quest for sexual emancipation. It is important to emphasise, at this point, woman-to-woman sexual relationships and the Muslim woman's sexual unconventionality are viewed as un-African and a cultural inroad to Western values. It can be argued that the subordinated subaltern

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lesbian woman's position has been hidden from Nigeria's patriarchal national culture whilst the northern Nigerian Muslim woman's sexual transgression is easily stigmatised as a religious and cultural nonconformity. In her novel, Okparanta addresses lesbianism as an aspect of women's sexual transgression whilst Ibrahim's text deals with an adulterous sexual affair of a Nigerian Muslim woman as a way of deconstructing the dominant patriarchal discourses of female sexual subordination. By portraying two different forms of female sexual liberation, these two debut novels redefine the African woman's gendered subjectivity. Whilst Okparanta gives agency to the subaltern lesbian woman, Ibrahim strives to liberate the religiously imprisoned Muslim woman by decolonising her religiously and morally stigmatised body. These two narratives can be regarded as radical redefinitions of the ideals of African feminism/womanism due to their portrayal of the African woman's sexual awakening and transgression as an expression of her assertive, independent and confrontational personhood.

In this chapter, I will be foregrounding the argument that the rise of third generation fictional works on the Nigerian woman's sexual transgression and liberation is a literary effort to decolonise the gendered body of the African woman from patriarchal imperialism and oppressive religious rules. This reimagination and re-visioning of the African woman's sexual and erotic universe in the recent Nigerian fiction can be regarded as an ideological and epistemic shift in African feminist/womanist ideals. To supplement the discussion on the Nigerian woman's sexual awakening and transgression, Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) is read alongside Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2015). Both of these narratives demonstrate the Nigerian woman's sexual self-determination and agency in her quest for confronting phallocentric values and conventions. Okparanta and Ibrahim reframe the gendered body and sexual subjectivity of the

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Nigerian woman in response to changes and challenges in the national and postcolonial contexts. Third generation Nigerian writers' move towards the theme of African women's sexual liberation can be viewed as an effort to deconstruct the dominant masculinist norms of female sexuality. As we can see in their narratives, these writers consider women's sexual transgression as a free choice of each individual woman. For instance, as Okparanta and Ibrahim depict in their works, patriarchy and religion function as oppressive and hegemonic tools that colonise the female body, sexuality and desire. A male-supremacist and conservative cultural context that has deployed the female body and sexuality to prop up patriarchal traditions tends to view the sexually transgressed female subjectivity as a cultural deviance and eccentricity that needs to be ideologically or violently submerged. As the sexually liberated female protagonists in these two narratives traverse heterosexist and religiously fundamentalist patriarchal turf, they rediscover their sexual autonomy and emotional freedom. Therefore, in this chapter, I will be demonstrating how the Nigerian woman's gendered body becomes the site on which oppressive patriarchal ideas and religious conventions on sexuality have been staged. Besides, this chapter foregrounds the idea that emerging portrayals of sexual transgression in third generation Nigerian fictional works such as same-sex love, adultery and other forms of sexual nonconformity is an aesthetic and epistemic attempt to reimagine the African woman's sexual subjectivity. In order to conceptualise the African woman's sexual awakening and agency, I will be employing the theoretical parameters of feminist postcolonialism alongside lesbian feminism. It is important to mention that the female body and sexuality have become the central focus in the recent Nigerian narratives, and thus the use of feminist postcolonial and lesbian feminist ideals in this discussion is a way of reimagining the African woman's sexual subjectivity.

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Chinelo Okparanta's debut novel *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) is a celebration of lesbian love and sexuality against the backdrop of heteronormative masculinist culture in Nigeria. In 2014, Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, had criminalised same-sex relationships by passing a law which recommends fourteen years of imprisonment for lesbian women and gay men. In the northern Islamic states of Nigeria, the punishment is death by stoning. As Okparanta mentions in the author's note to the novel, her lesbian protagonist's quest for sexual liberation in a homophobic and religiously fundamentalist social context gives "Nigeria's marginalised LGBTQ citizens a more powerful voice, and a place in our nation's history". It can be posited that Okparanta depicts Ijeoma's lesbian desire and sexuality as a way of deconstructing the phallocentric values and conventionalities in the postcolonial Nigeria. The most interesting aspect of the text is that the writer's positioning of Ijeoma's lesbian desires against the trauma of Biafran war and her mother's religious fanaticism. Ijeoma's mother religiously indoctrinates her daughter when she discovers her first lesbian relationship with a war orphan, Amina. Though Ijeoma's lesbian intimacy with Amina ends abruptly due to her mother's moral and religious intervening, later she achieves her sexual fulfilment with Ndidi, a schoolteacher in her village. However, Ijeoma becomes a victim of compulsory heterosexuality when the mother arranges her marriage to Chibundu. Whereas Ijeoma's marriage to Chibundu is unfulfilling and characterised with violence and jealousy, her lesbian intimacy with Ndidi is described as "selfless giving, in juxtaposition to the selfishness of heterosexual sex" (Pucherova, "What Is African Woman" 117). The optimistic ending of the novel is signified by Ijeoma's abandonment of her marriage and her union with Ndidi in the aim of seeking her sexual liberation through lesbian love. Hence, Okparanta's work powerfully illustrates that the subaltern lesbian subject can achieve her sexual emancipation

through self-determination and her confrontation against the deeply ingrained heterosexist ideas in patriarchal culture and religion.

Whilst Okparanta's text destabilises heteronormative patriarchal ideas in Nigerian society, Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2015) gives a voice to the sexually imprisoned northern Nigerian Muslim woman. Ibrahim's narrative is radical in its effort to deconstruct the conservative religious norms and cultural beliefs about the female body and sexuality in Hausa community. The text traces the middle-aged Muslim widow, Hajiya Binta Zubairu's quest for sexual emancipation through her affair with twenty-five year old hemp dealer, Hassan Reza. Ibrahim contrasts Binta Zubairu's newfound sexual fulfilment and liberation with her sexually unfulfilling marital life with her late husband. As a consequence of confronting the strict religious dogma of female sexual morality and decency in Islamic Hausa community, Binta Zubairu is disgraced and stigmatised by the women at the adult Islamic school in the village. However, she discovers "a new world of liberation: a liberation from her religion-backed self-imposed prison of ethical rules" (Egya 349) through her sexual affair with Hassan Reza. The denouement of the novel is tragic because Binta Zubairu's son, Munkaila is inadvertently killed by her lover, Hassan Reza in latter's attempt to escape from Munkaila's attack. Later, Hassan Reza is also murdered by the thugs of the senator, Buba Maikudi due to his failure to fulfil an underworld mission that the senator has assigned him. Through this tragedy, there emerges Binta Zubairu's resisting and revolting spirit against the strict religious establishment of her society that dictates women's bodies and sexuality. It is apparent that both Okparanta and Ibrahim suggest that the female body and sexuality are the locus of the clash between patriarchal cultural disgraces and emancipatory ideals of human sexual and emotional freedom. In other words, it can be argued that there is a radical literary and epistemological shift in third generation Nigerian narratives in

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its definition of female liberation through its foregrounding of the female body, sexuality and sexual pleasure.

3.2. PATRIARCHAL RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE FEMALE BODY AND SEXUALITY

The notion of female sexual pleasure and eroticism is something unacknowledged or unmentionable in the religiously conservative and traditional social contexts of Africa. As Patricia McFadden writes, due to the masculinist construction of the female body and sexual desire, "for the majority of black women, the connection between power and pleasure is not often recognised, and remains a largely unembraced and undefended heritage" (50). It can be argued that women's sexual desires and erotic fantasies are systematically and institutionally repressed by oppressive patriarchal norms and religious ideologies in African societies. This suppression of the female body and female sexual desire is maintained through "vigilant cultural surveillance," and has led to the silencing of "feminist sexual memory and instinct" (McFadden 50). Shaming and stigmatisation of the female body is a fundamental aspect of the masculinist religious forces that are deployed to police women's sexual transgression and agency. In other words, "a fundamental premise of patriarchal power and impunity is the denial and suppression of women's naming and controlling their bodies for their own joy and nurturing" (McFadden 56). Besides, patriarchal religious and cultural stigmatisation of the female body and sexuality becomes a force that restricts women's exploration of the full potential of their sexuality. Hegemonic patriarchal discourses of sexuality design women's sexual universe and personhood in a restrictive manner where the majority of African women's erotic desires and potentialities remain unknown to them through their lifetime. As Kopano Ratele explains, for instance, the reason behind patriarchy's intolerance of a sexually transgressive behaviour as lesbian love is because women's

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sexual preference of other women over men is "indicative of lack of control of men over women's bodies and lives" (407). In other words, "women who cannot be subjected to men's social power are dangerous to patriarchal power and masculinity" (Ratele 407). It is apparent that dominant masculinist discourses do not allow women to 'own' their bodies and sexuality since patriarchy expects sexual subservience and compliance from women.

Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* and Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* demonstrate how the dominant patriarchal culture ideologically constructs the female body and sexuality. Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* narrates the coming-of-age story of Ijeoma and her lesbian intimacies with Amina and Ndidi. Due to her sexual attraction to women, Ijeoma is subject to moral and religious discipline from the heteronormative patriarchal culture. Having learned of Ijeoma's lesbian sexual affair with Amina, Ijeoma's mother morally indoctrinates her using Biblical teachings. Her mother considers that Ijeoma is possessed by "a demon" and therefore, she has to "begin working on cleansing [her] soul" (Okparanta 65). When Ijeoma questions the anti-homosexual teachings in the Bible, her mother strictly emphasises the importance of passive acceptance of religious dogma instead of questioning it: "The fact that the Bible says it's bad is all the reason you need" (Okparanta 75). According to Patricia McFadden, this brutal and yet routine socialisation of the female subject explains "our tendency to comply with the taboos and strictures associated with women's sexual realities in patriarchal societies" (56). It can be argued that this patriarchal religious notion of purging the 'unclean' female body and cleansing the 'impure' female soul is a way of cultivating a sense of shame and guilt in the woman's mind about her body and sexuality. Both Ijeoma and her mother refer to the lesbian intimacy as "that other thing" (Okparanta 74), and thus her mother commands Ijeoma to "ask God for the forgiveness of all [her] sins, but

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especially for that one particular sin in her" as she retorts that "no child of [hers] will carry those sick, sick desires" (Okparanta 86). Women who love women or who refuse to define themselves in relation to men are culturally Othered and marginalised. Ijeoma's mother's conservative definition of lesbianism as bizarre and amoral is suggestive of the reconstruction of gendered Othering of lesbians as sinful and decadent women. As Adrienne Rich argues in her essay "The Meaning of Our Love for Women Is What We Have Constantly to Expand," "for a long time, the lesbian has been a personification of feminine evil" (225). As Adrienne Rich further explains, "heterosexual, patriarchal culture has driven lesbians into secrecy and guilt, often to self-hatred and suicide" ("The Meaning of Our Love" 225). Due to her mother's constant moralising of female sexuality and inclusion of religious indictments against homoerotic intimacy, Ijeoma is tormented by a deep sense of guilt and shame: "I felt an overwhelming sense of guilt. I wanted to ask God to help me turn my thoughts away from Amina, to turn me instead onto the path of righteousness" (Okparanta 72). One very important point to underline from Ijeoma's sense of guilt is how hegemonic patriarchal moral strictures associate women's sexual nonconformity and lesbian desire with shame and guilt as a way of pathologising and reproving it. In other words, it can be argued that patriarchal religion becomes an instrument for normativising and moralising the female body and sexual desire.

Okparanta's narrative establishes a thematic nexus amongst patriarchal religious conservatism, ethnic chauvinism and heterosexual tyranny against the subaltern lesbian woman. It is important to note that in Nigeria's masculinist nationalism, female sexual liberation is often positioned against male ethnic chauvinism and religious orthodoxy. In the text, Ijeoma's coming-of-age is positioned against the ethnically chauvinistic and traumatic backdrop of Biafran war and the sudden death of her father during an air bombardment of their house. Also,

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the anti-homosexual ideas of Ijeoma's mother are merged with ethnic chauvinism propagated by the masculinist agenda of the war. Once her mother discovers that Ijeoma's lesbian lover, Amina, is a Hausa girl, she invokes the haunting memory of Biafran war with its associated male chauvinistic notions of racism. Being an Igbo, Ijeoma's expression of love towards a Hausa girl is an abomination, and thus her mother lectures her using the Biblical ideology in Leviticus 9: "thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed" (Okparanta 76). Her mother links heterosexual, patriarchal religious sentiments with ethnic chauvinism in her utterance: "Besides, how can people be fruitful and multiply if they carry on in that way […] You're Igbo. That girl is Hausa. Even if she were to be a boy, don't you see that Igbo and Hausa would mean the mingling of seeds" (Okparanta 76). According to Cheryl Clarke, "the woman who takes a woman lover lives dangerously in patriarchy. And woe betide her even more if she chooses as her lover a woman who is not of her race" (148). Ijeoma's mother recalls the horror of Biafran war saying, "Are you forgetting what they did to us during the war? Have you forgotten what they did to Biafra? Have you forgotten that it was her people who killed your father?" (Okparanta 76). Those deeply rooted ethnic hostilities in the Nigerian nationalist imagination are merged with heterosexist tyranny against lesbian women. For example, Okparanta depicts how an angry mob attacks a lesbian gathering in a church building and kills one of Ijeoma's friends by burning her alive: "We had hardly walked two yards when we saw, in the backyard of the church, a flame of orange and blue. A stack of burning logs […] Adanna in the midst of the logs, burning and burning and burning to ashes right before our eyes" (Okparanta 209). The trope of ethnic violence in Biafran war is thematically linked with heterosexist brutality and male dominance in order to critique the ethnic and religious chauvinism in postcolonial Nigeria. Okparanta locates the gendered subjectivity of the subaltern same-sex-desiring woman within

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the Nigerian social context of religious conservatism and patriarchal traditionalism. By relating the haunting memories of Biafra with the homophobic violence and religious fundamentalism in the present Nigeria, Okparanta "seeks to initiate a conversation in a space transected by multiple normativising discourses, yet still leaves open the possibility for transformation in the face of an indeterminate future" (Manzo 156).

Whilst Okparanta's work addresses heteronormative patriarchal oppression against the subaltern lesbian woman in Nigeria, Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* demonstrates how the deeply embedded patriarchal religious legacy of northern Nigeria dictates the Muslim woman's body and sexuality. Ibrahim's work can be considered as a metaphorical interrogation of the clash between the systematic suppression of the northern Nigerian Muslim woman's sexual desires and her struggle to liberate her body and sexuality from these religious and cultural norms. The novel depicts how Binta Zubairu, a middle-aged Muslim widow, discovers her sexual freedom through her affair with Hassan Reza, a marijuana dealer and notorious rogue in the area. Though the fulfilment of erotic desires opens an avenue of liberation and agency for Binta Zubairu, her individual choice to 'own' her body and sexuality is subjected to social criticism and disgrace "as she lives in northern Nigeria where individual choices do not matter, where individuals are forcefully rendered subjects of religion" (Egya 349). Binta Zubairu's religious education at madrasa, the religious dress code of hijab and her reading of Qur'an and Az Zahabi's *The Major Sins* symbolise her overburdened religious lifestyle that acts as a prelude to her sense of guilt and shame after her sexual intimacy with Hassan Reza. After her first sexual encounter with the rogue, she lights incense sticks and have frequent baths as a means of enshrouding "the objectionable smell of fornication" (Ibrahim 54). Once Ustaz Nura discovers Binta Zubairu's rendezvous with Hassan Reza, he

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highlights the value of moral decency of "the good Muslim woman" against the wayward character of "the sleazy hemp dealer," and relates sexual freedom to "the honey-coated lance of Shaytan" (Ibrahim 277). It can be posited that patriarchal religious tradition suppresses women's sexual and erotic inclinations by viewing the female body as a harbinger of sin, moral depravity and a source of distraction from religious decorum. This patriarchal notion is further evident in Ustaz Nura's praising of Allah and His Noble Prophet and his "appeal for refuge from the accursed Shaytan whose obnoxious handiwork seemed to be manifesting in [Binta Zubairu's] garden like a plague of weevils" (Ibrahim 276). In all patriarchal societies, women and girls are taught that their bodies are "volatile harbingers of disease and immorality," and therefore in Binta Zubairu's situation, "the redemption of the pathologised female body is seen to come through […] priests who experience holiness and godliness through [women's disciplined bodies]" (McFadden 56). Hence, Binta Zubairu's newfound sexual freedom with Hassan Reza and her sense of guilt occurred due to her faith in religion create the notion that the Muslim woman's body becomes a site "of conflicting ideologies" (Olaoye and Zink 42). Accordingly, it seems that "the instrumentalisation of sexuality through the nib of statutory, customary and religious law is closely related to women's oppression and gender constructions" (Tamale, "Researching and Theorising Sexualities" 16).

Additionally, Ibrahim's narrative portrays how the northern Nigerian Muslim woman's attempt to break out of patriarchal and religious norms of sexuality is subjected to the harsh criticism and shaming within the ruthlessly puritanical social matrix. Binta Zubairu is caught in the quandary of either accepting the status her society has imprisoned her to or resisting and negotiating her own sexual liberation and self-actualisation. For instance, the women at the adult Islamic school stigmatise Binta Zubairu as a sinner and shameless woman: "The sin of some people is enough

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to provoke Allah's wrath and He will smite the earth overnight […] Imagine all these shameless sugar mummies running after young boys, taking them to hotels and doing *iskanci* with them" (Ibrahim 249). Although Binta Zubairu, as a result of transgressing the moral dogma of female sexuality in religion, faces disgrace, "what is of utmost importance to her is that she can now enjoy sex, having being brought up with the belief that a woman is not supposed to enjoy it" (Egya 349). She has to carry the moral brunt of fornication since her religiously fundamentalist culture is unable to accept her transgression. When the women at the adult Islamic school call her "a fornicator," Binta Zubairu confronts them by walking away from the space of religiosity: "She picked up her bag and walked out with as much dignity as she could muster, her pace measured, her shoulders held straight, defiant even" (Ibrahim 268). The humiliation exhibited by the fellow women at the adult Islamic school in the village demonstrates how the sexually liberated and nonconformist female body becomes a site of both religious condemnation and an invitation for other women to express their disgust and resentment when this body moves around in the prejudiced spaces of religiosity and puritanical traditionalism. The social stigmatisation creates a sense of guilt in Binta Zubairu's psyche when she compares her newly awakened sexuality to a corpse flower that waits thirty years to bloom: "like that flower, after all those years waiting, when I bloom, it doesn't feel right" (Ibrahim 191). Her comparison of a woman's sexual emancipation within a puritanical and patriarchal culture to a smelly corpse flower symbolises "the construction of women's sexuality as 'bad', 'filthy' and 'morally corrupting'" (McFadden 53). It can be asserted that those religious and patriarchal cultural constructions of the female body and sexuality are "aggressively invoked whenever women seek to make independent choices [and] when they transgress cultural and social boundaries defended in the name of 'tradition'" (McFadden 53).

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What makes Okparanta's and Ibrahim's narratives significant in their exploration of the female body and sexuality is that their depiction of patriarchy's deployment of marriage as a means of subordinating the Nigerian woman and repressing her sexual agency and freedom. Okparanta depicts how the same-sex-desiring woman becomes a victim of compulsory reproductive heteronormative marriage whilst Ibrahim explores how the religiously entrapped northern Nigerian Muslim woman becomes a passive victim of the cultural discourse of arranged marriage. In Okparanta's text, Ijeoma cannot unite with her lesbian lover, Amina because the masculinist culture buttressed by religious fundamentalism advocates the notion that "a woman without a man is hardly a woman at all" (Okparanta 181). Ijeoma's mother insists her to marry Chibundu due to her belief that a sexual union between two women is fruitless. Her mother's utterance "every man needs a wife, and every woman needs a husband" (Okparanta 212) is suggestive of the politics of futurity associated with compulsory reproductive heteronormativity. Within heteronormative patriarchal culture "women have been convinced that marriage and sexual orientation toward men are inevitable – even if unsatisfying or oppressive – components of their lives" (Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality" 205). The tyrannical heteronormative society does not allow a sexual bond between Ijeoma and Amina because if united, they have to face the threat of being harassed or killed. As Kerry Manzo explains, Okparanta's work demonstrates how "public sexual knowledge works to construct private identity via multiple dominant discourses" (158). Besides, it can be contended that the fundamental aim of enforcing heterosexual marriage upon the same-sex-desiring woman is to 'correct' her sexual orientation and to subordinate her body and sexual desires to male commands. By placing Ijeoma and Amina's first encounter and separation under the udala trees, Okparanta "provocatively interrogates prescriptive notions of femininity"

(Pucherova, "What Is African Woman" 116). In Igbo culture, it is believed that the souls of good children wait in the branches of udala trees to born. Udala tree conventionally symbolises female fertility and "reproductive heteronormativity" (Manzo 162). Though the sensual intimacy that develops between Ijeoma and Amina cannot 'procreate' in the conservative patriarchal and religious perspective, the udala tree signifies the spiritual liberation that the characters achieve through embracing their true identity. In other words, Okparanta symbolically deconstructs the notion of traditional female fertility by demonstrating how the lesbian woman can gain her spiritual fertility by transgressing oppressive patriarchal norms and by truly acknowledging the fullness of individual sexuality and desire. As Adrienne Rich interestingly argues, "if we think of heterosexuality as *the* natural emotional and sensual inclination for women, [lives of lesbian women] are seen as deviant, as pathological, or as emotionally or sensually deprived" ("Compulsory Heterosexuality" 212). Therefore, having internalised the disgrace and religious criticism attached to lesbian love, Ijeoma and Amina both marry men since "a woman and a woman cannot be. That's not the way it's done" (Okparanta 223).

Ijeoma's marriage to Chibundu, arranged by her mother, turns out to be a passive acceptance of compulsory reproductive heterosexuality. The novel depicts Ijeoma's wedding as a fulfilment of a patriarchal custom rather than entering into a mutual human bond: "An awkward proposal, a lacklustre acceptance, a wedding ceremony, a wedding prayer, a wedding kiss" (Okparanta 233). In comparison to Ijeoma's fulfilling and satisfying lesbian intimacies with Amina and Ndidi, her relationship with Chibundu is characterised with male domination, physical abuse and distress. Repeatedly raped by her husband, Ijeoma is overwhelmed by the "feeling of being trapped in [her] body" (Okparanta 243). Though Ijeoma gives birth to a daughter as a way of fulfilling a traditional marital obligation, she eventually

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realises her marriage is empty and unhappy: “It seemed to me that there were no two married people more empty-feeling, no two married people more estranged from each other than the two of us” (Okparanta 258). Chibundu’s male authority is manifested in his demand for a male child who can continue his name: "You haven't tried enough. If you put your mind to it, I know you can love me the way a woman is supposed to love her husband. You will try harder. And if all else fails, I really do want my son. You really must keep in mind that you are my wife” (Okparanta 285). It is ostensible that heteronormative masculinist discourse represented by compulsory reproductive heterosexuality is ideologically constructed as “more ‘normal’ than sensuality between women” (Rich “Compulsory Heterosexuality” 204). It can be argued that heterosexuality is sanctioned to reaffirm male dominance and to assert control over the female body. According to Kopano Ratele, the main reason for forcefully imposing heteronormativity upon same-sex-desiring women is that “such women’s sexual preference of other women over men is indicative of lack of control of men over women’s bodies and lives” (407). Chibundu’s demand for a male child represents how the forcefully imposed heterosexual marriage does not entail sensual joy, love or mutual respect for each partner. The repetitive and performative reconstruction of socially dominant codes of masculinity in heterosexual marriage forces men to view women’s bodies as ‘vessels’ to be filled with cultural expectations and traditional obligations. Ijeoma’s physical and spiritual imprisonment within an oppressive marriage demonstrates how “the system of patriarchal domination is buttressed by the subjugation of women through heterosexuality” (Clarke 143). Further, Okparanta’s narrative shows how lesbian relationships are selfless, caring and devoted in contrast to selfishness, tyranny and masculinist possessiveness of heterosexual unions. The homophobic patriarchal context of Nigeria devalues and stigmatises lesbian love as “taboo […] anathema, unmentionable, not even deserving

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a name" (Okparanta 125) whilst it legitimises heteronormative order and its oppression against women. Thus, both Ijeoma and Amina's acceptance of heterosexual marriage denotes how the punitive power of disgrace and shame is deployed to re-insert same-sex-desiring women back into their culturally and religiously allotted position within heteronormative patriarchal discourse of marriage.

Whereas Okparanta's work demonstrates how heteronormative marriage oppresses the lesbian woman, Ibrahim's novel explores the northern Nigerian Muslim woman's sexual and spiritual enslavement within the patriarchal discourse of arranged marriage. As Jane Bennett notes, in the puritanical cultural context of northern Nigeria, "where provinces are governed by sharia law, ideas about gender equality are largely structured through popular and religious ideas about the separation of women's and men's spheres of political and sexual power" (83). In Ibrahim's work, Binta Zubairu's marriage is orchestrated by her father since he worries about young men's gaze on [his daughter's] "melons in public places" (Ibrahim 25). Ibrahim sharply contrasts Binta Zubairu's newfound sexual fulfilment with her sexually and emotionally unfulfilling married life with her late husband. At the age of sixteen, she is married off to Zubairu, "the stranger she had spent most her life with" (Ibrahim 26). Before her marriage, Dijen Tsamiya, the marriage counsellor of Kibiya town, reminds her the importance of female sexual subservience in marriage: "Don't look your husband in the eyes like that, especially when you are doing it [having sex]. Don't look at him down there. And don't let him look at you there, either, if you don't want to have impious offspring" (Ibrahim 49). Dijen Tsamiya's advice to Binta Zubairu is suggestive of the mystification of sexual pleasure and eroticism in the context of hegemonic patriarchal culture that associates the female body and sexuality with disgrace, guilt and sin. This deep-seated misogyny

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evokes how sexual pleasure and fulfilment are not equally expected for both women and men within the puritanical cultural matrix since sensual pleasure is an area exclusively 'owned' by men. The marital life with Zubairu enslaves her within the strict moral code of religious rules, and thus, sex with him is unfulfilling: "Zubairu was a practical man and fancied their intimacy as an exercise of conjugal frugality. It was something to be dispensed with promptly, without silly ceremonies" (Ibrahim 52). However, Binta Zubairu "wanted it to be different. She had always wanted it to be different" (Ibrahim 51). As Patricia McFadden interestingly points out, "women are encouraged to conceal what they know about their bodies, to express shame about their bodies, to apologise for their bodies, and to lose touch with what Alice Walker has called 'the secret of joy'" (56). Hence, Binta Zubairu's frustrating sexual life with her late husband becomes a powerful metaphor for her sexual and spiritual imprisonment by "the snares of societal instrument of sexual repression such as ethical expectations that are rooted in moral prescriptions" (Chukwuemeka 152).

Thus far, I have argued that Okparanta's and Ibrahim's narratives depict the context of Nigerian society that is overwhelmed by normativising patriarchal and religious discourses. The dominant patriarchal and religious ideologies about sexuality and gender performance work to construct the Nigerian woman's body and her personal universe. Additionally, I argued that women are trained by patriarchal religious and cultural discourses to suppress their bodily and spiritual freedom because their society experiences moral decency, holiness and godliness through their bodies. As portrayed in Okparanta's and Ibrahim's works, the sexually transgressive female subjectivities such as lesbian love and the northern Nigerian Muslim woman's sexual liberation are pathologised, culturally stigmatised or violently submerged. The Nigerian woman's sexual awakening and liberation take place against the cultural backdrop of religious conservatism and masculinist traditionalism. In the next

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section of this chapter, I will be discussing how the Nigerian woman develops her sense of bodily freedom and sexual agency that will ultimately liberate her from the restraints of patriarchal servitude. Moreover, this focus on individualistic sexual freedom and agency can be considered as a radical literary and epistemic shift in third generation Nigerian literature because it deviates from the idea of collective consciousness in African feminist/womanist ideals. In this regard, emerging narratives on women's sexual subjectivity in Nigeria are more radical in their perspective, and thus can be viewed as literary affronts against conventional African feminist discourses that still attempt to remain 'silent' in the face of emergent lesbian subjectivity and the Nigerian Muslim woman's sexual awakening and transgression.

3.3. THE NIGERIAN WOMAN'S SEXUAL AWAKENING AND EMANCIPATION

Third generation Nigerian narratives radically redefine the African woman's sexuality, and this literary trend signifies an epistemic shift from "the previous, careful, qualified, reserved engagement with feminism by first-wave African feminists" (Pucherova, "What Is African Woman" 119). Literary efforts to define the term sexuality "often end in frustration, and become in themselves exercises about writers' own orientations, prioritisations and passions" (Tamale "Introduction" 2). Nevertheless, it is apparent that sexuality cannot be discussed without analysing the notions of pleasure and eroticism. Most African scholars and academic feminists shied away from the controversial and 'taboo' areas of sexuality and eroticism. Because of this hesitancy of addressing the diversity and complexity of sexuality, they have overlooked lesbian and gay intimacies in African literature, simply labelling them as 'un-African'. As Kopano Ratele contends, such arguments that say certain types of sexualities are un-African sound "absurd and baseless" because "there cannot be anything essentially different about Africans that distinguishes them from

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non-Africans" (417). In other words, it can be asserted that African men and women are not naturally different in the sexual feelings they have for others, "the hostilities towards homosexualities and bisexualities can only mean that such sexualities disturb the dominant shape of African masculinity and hence the need to suppress them" (Ratele 417). Though the topic of sexuality and pleasure is wrapped in cultural stigma and taboo, it is important to unearth the human dimension of sexuality in order to discover how it is linked with female agency, self-actualisation and emotional freedom. As Patricia McFadden argues, "For many African women, even the suggestion that sexual pleasure and eroticism have political implications elicits alarm, and it is seldom recognised that sexual pleasure is fundamental to our right to a safe and wholesome lifestyle" (50). McFadden's conceptualisation underscores the idea that there is a nexus between sexuality and individual agency. The recognition of this connection between sexual pleasure and female agency lies at "the heart of female freedom and power, and when it is harnessed and 'deployed', it has the capacity to infuse every woman's personal experience of living and being with a liberating political force" (McFadden 51).

In African contexts, female sexual pleasure is still overshadowed by "vulnerability, risk, loss, violence and suffering" (Munro 661). In traditional patriarchal contexts of Africa, women's gendered bodies are "kept, maintained, and contained through terror, violence, and spray of semen" (Clarke 143). It is advantageous for male supremacist culture to colonise women's bodies and sexuality in order to "alienate [them from their] own life processes as it was profitable for the European to enslave the African and destroy all memory of a prior freedom and self-determination" (Clarke 143). In heterosexist and patriarchal cultures in Africa, same-sex female desires are often stigmatised, attacked and erased from social life. According to Kopano Ratele, the key reason for such denunciation, assaults and

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vilification is "not simply to exorcise society of same-sex desires. It is part of societal forces aimed at controlling all female sexuality and at subordinating female bodies and desires to men's commands" (404). However, the lesbian woman has decolonised her body and sexuality by rejecting "a life of servitude implicit in […] heterosexual relationships and has accepted the potential of mutuality in a lesbian relationship – roles notwithstanding" (Clarke 141). Thus, "thinking, imagining, and creating queer African pleasure itself, then, enacts a form of decolonisation" (Munro 664). Referring to Okparanta's novel, Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi points out, same-sex desire in the context of Africa is "no longer an external invention without local provenance nor is it previously unthinkable in African literature" (684). Though first and second generation Nigerian writers such as Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta address women's sexual subjectivity, they configure women's sexual desire as "heterosexual and do not figure same-sex within their novels" (Osinubi 680). Nevertheless, Okparanta "extends the feminist potentials of these writers by stretching and accommodating other feminisms within the Anglo-Igbo novel" (Osinubi 680). The sexually transgressive representations of the subaltern lesbian woman's erotic desires decolonise the stigmatised lesbian bodies and deconstruct the ideological constructions against same-sex love and sexual pleasure.

As Cheryl Clarke posits, a woman to be a lesbian in a male-supremacist, misogynist, racist and homophobic culture is "an act of resistance" (141). The same-sex-desiring woman challenges "the heterosexual imperialism of male culture" (Clarke 141). In Okparanta's text, the emergence of the subaltern lesbian woman's sexual desires within the cultural matrix of heteronormative patriarchy is a way of resisting hegemonic discourses of homophobia. Ijeoma yearns for sexual fulfilment and happiness in a social context that permits her very little of it. When Ijeoma is eleven, Nigeria is in a political turmoil due to Biafran war. In a period of intense

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political violence and unrest, Ijeoma discovers her sexual pleasure and love with a Hausa war orphan, Amina. However, her sexual intimacy with Amina is discovered in the very first night they make love, and thus the situation is marked as a moment of hesitant lesbian happiness against the backdrop of heteronormativity. When Ijeoma and Amina first meet, their physical and spiritual bond is revealed in a lyrical manner:

> That evening, Amina and I peeled the yams together, rinsed them together, our fingers brushing against each other's in the bowl […] After we had washed the dishes and cleaned the kitchen, I filled the bucket at the tap outside my hovel. We rinsed ourselves off together on the cement slab. The crickets sang their usual night songs, and the mosquitos perched on us, and the fireflies glowed green, like luminous droplets of grass (Okparanta 106–107).

The lesbian intimacy allows Ijeoma and Amina to transgress the bounded and restricted spheres of patriarchal sexual politics and to enter into a space of sexual fulfilment and liberation. It is noticeable that the sensual beauty of the moment is positioned against the feelings of hesitancy and alarm occurred due to the overwhelming presence of dogmatic moral codes. As Brenna Munro notes, "Okparanta produces a poetic of scarcity, in which pleasure is all the more important because it is so briefly glimpsed, like the fireflies that light up and then disappear" (663). According to Audre Lorde, "the fear that [women] cannot grow beyond whatever distortions [they] may find within [themselves keep them] docile and loyal and obedient, externally defined, and leads [them] to accept many facets of [their] oppression as women" ("Uses of the Erotic" 58). Ijeoma and Amina grow beyond the narrow religious and patriarchal limitations imposed upon their bodies, and thus they learn to 'own' and possess their body and sexuality. Their same-sex love is positioned against their particular experiences of victimhood. Ijeoma can indeed be

considered "a subaltern because she is a woman, a lesbian, and an Igbo during the Nigerian civil war" (Courtois 122). In this regard, it can be asserted that Okparanta's voicing of the subaltern lesbian woman's sexual desire and agency against the heteronormative patriarchal context is a way of reimagining the entire society. The scenes that portray lesbian sexual intimacy radically deconstruct the heteronormative patriarchal prejudices against same-sex love and pleasure:

> She continued along, leaving a trail of kisses on her way down to my belly. She travelled farther, beyond the belly, farther than we had ever gone. I moaned and surrendered myself to her. I did not until then know that a mouth could make me feel that way when placed in that part of the body where I had never imagined a mouth to belong (Okparanta 124).

Okparanta depicts queer lesbian sexual pleasure with erotic and sensual images of sexual consummation. The use of erotic imagery is a mode of destabilising the oppressive patriarchal moral orthodoxies on female sexuality. In other words, lesbian sexual passion "will ultimately reverse the heterosexual imperialism of male culture" (Clarke 141). If we observe Ijeoma and Amina's erotically satisfying lesbian experience in the light of Audre Lorde's notion of the power of the erotic, it can be asserted that "the erotic is a measure between the beginning of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire" ("Uses of the Erotic" 54).

In addition, Ijeoma's lesbian relationship with Ndidi, a young schoolteacher in her village, demonstrates a sense of freedom and emancipation that feeds her "deep instincts and makes [her] long for a wilderness that cannot be caged or marked in any way, and that propels [her] to search relentlessly for the wonder which [she encompasses]" (McFadden 58). Whereas Ijeoma's relationship with Amina is marked by "trauma and prohibition, the relationship with Ndidi anchors reparative

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re-education and affection" (Osinubi 680). The queer lesbian intimacy with Ndidi allows Ijeoma to expand her erotic knowledge that empowers her, and this understanding of sexual freedom becomes "a lens through which [she scrutinizes] all aspects of [her] existence, forcing [her] to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within [her life]" (Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic" 57). The lesbian intimacy with Ndidi allows Ijeoma to unlearn the religiously sanctioned moral codes against lesbianism, and thus she enters into an empowering space of sexual pleasure:

> She took my hand in her and brought it to her waistline. In one swift motion, she unzipped her skirt at the side zipper. The skirt loosened, and she brought my hand inside. She wore no undergarments, not even a slip […] I moved to her front, knelt before her. I pressed her wet flesh firmly with the tips of my fingers, then my fingers found themselves inside, enveloped by her warmth […] I moved fingers slowly in and out (Okparanta 200).

The moment of queer lesbian sexual pleasure binds Ijeoma and Ndidi together. Being a lesbian in a heterosexist patriarchal context is "both the breaking of a taboo and the rejection of a compulsory way of life" (Rich "Compulsory Heterosexuality" 221). The lesbian body and sexuality directly and indirectly attack on masculinist right to conquer and colonise the female body. Ijeoma and Ndidi's lesbian experience defines the erotic in female terms by emphasising the emotional and spiritual dimension of the sexual act. The lesbian mutual masturbation that Ijeoma and Ndidi enjoy in secrecy is evocative of the development of their trust, friendship and understanding of each other's queer sentiments. Okparanta's narration of the erotic consummation of lesbian love between Ijeoma and Ndidi foregrounds "the physical passion of woman for woman which is central to lesbian existence, the erotic sensuality which has been, precisely, the most violently erased fact of female experience" (Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality" 223). Okparanta portrays lesbian woman-bonding

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and its erotic passion as a source of energy, "a potential springhead of female power, curtailed and contained under the institution of heterosexuality" (Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality" 226). However, the lesbian woman's reclamation of her self-definition and her attempt to decolonise her body by expressing same-sex erotic desire is "the greatest fear at the heart of a particular form of patriarchal heterosexual masculinity: that women can live happily without men's erection" (Ratele 401). Accordingly, the lesbian woman's resistance against the institutionalised heterosexuality is an effort to decolonise her body and sexuality from the oppressive strictures of patriarchy.

Whereas Okparanta's novel decolonises the subaltern lesbian body, Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* attempts to liberate the northern Nigerian Muslim woman's body and sexuality from the grip of inflexible religious and moral codes. The first sentence of Ibrahim's narrative figuratively demonstrates how Binta Zubairu's "long-abandoned womanhood" (Ibrahim 26) is awakened by Hassan Reza: "Hajiya Binta Zubairu was finally born at fifty-five when a dark-lipped rogue with short, spiky hair, like a field of minuscule anthill, scaled her fence and landed, boots and all, in the puddle that was her heart" (Ibrahim 9). Her affair with Hassan Reza, the hemp dealer and rogue, opens up a world of sexual liberation: "a liberation from her religion-backed self-imposed prison of ethical rules [and] also from the ruthlessly puritanical society" (Egya 349). Ibrahim uses the images of fecundity and beauty in the portrayal of Binta Zubairu's first sexual encounter with Hassan Reza:

> 'Would you like to . . . have some water or something. I mean, I'm all alone, here . . . for now.' She was looking down at the damp bed of petunias Hadiza had so lovingly planted to add colour to the yard that hosted little birds at sunrise. That was the precise moment, Binta would reflect later, that the petals

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> of her life, like a bud that had endured half a century of nights, began to unfurl (Ibrahim 45).

Binta Zubairu's newfound sexual fulfilment is something that revitalizes her body and mind, and therefore, the petunia blossoms in the garden are symbolic of the bodily and spiritual healing that comes with expressing her erotic desires. The images of the blossoming petunias along with the birds surrounding them at sunrise create a picture of lushness, which figuratively alludes to the unrestrained expression of natural sexual feelings. When Binta Zubairu begins to realise "the power of the erotic" within herself, she begins to "give up, of necessity, being satisfied with suffering and self-negation, and with the numbness which so often seems like [the] only alternative in [her] society" (Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic" 58). After experiencing sexual satisfaction with Hassan Reza, Binta Zubairu learns to 'own' her body and sexuality, and thus she transforms her docility and silence to agency and self-fulfilment. Binta Zubairu's newfound sexual liberty and emotional freedom are in sharp contrast to her self-abnegating and sexually unfulfilling marital life with her late husband. In opposition to her erotically dissatisfying marriage, Binta Zubairu's sensual experience with Hassan Reza is ecstatic as "she is allowed to explore her body's desires" (Egya 349). Her sexual liberation from the prison of religious rules and cultural conventions is signified through the attainment of her orgasm: "she moaned. With his tongue, he unlocked something deep within her" (Ibrahim 57). As Audre Lorde argues, "recognising the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world, rather than merely settling for a shift of characters in the same weary drama" ("Uses of the Erotic" 59). Though Binta Zubairu's sexual expression is branded as a 'taboo' in the context of her religious environment, she transgresses the religious norm by releasing the caged desires in order to discover her emotional freedom and sexual emancipation.

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Moreover, Ibrahim's text deconstructs the trope of the 'good' Muslim woman, the idealised version of passive and sexually subordinated femininity constructed by patriarchal religion and culture. This so-called essence of 'goodness' is associated with the woman's sexual purity and her obedience to male authority. As Sule Emmanuel Egya notes, "unless northern Nigerian writers, males and females, begin to deconstruct anti-human religious and cultural conventions, especially in the radical manner Ibrahim has done with this novel, northern Nigerian literature will continue to suffer self-limitation" (349–350). The detailed portrayal of the sexual intimacy between Binta Zubairu and Hassan Reza functions as a deconstructive narrative technique that challenges the constructed religious and cultural narratives that restrict female sexual autonomy. The cultural nonconformity and transgressive nature of Binta Zubairu's sexual relationship with Hassan Reza is further evidenced in their act of watching a porn movie together in which "blonde women desperately slurping over manhoods as if ducking the milk of life" (Ibrahim 115). Their passionate and erotic love-makings at Shagali Hotel under the smoke of Hassan Reza's marijuana cigarettes destabilise the idealised version of the 'good' Muslim woman: "Eager to get it over with, he slid into her from behind, thrusting lethargically at first. But the noises she made, moaning with fervour, awakened his desire and he thrust with more gusto, his crotch slapping against her rear. It took him forever to come" (Ibrahim 218). As Patricia McFadden points out, this sense of sexual freedom makes women long for a wildness within, and these sexually emancipated women "have girded themselves both with the political courage to shake off the shackles of patriarchal servitude, and the emotional will to discover new horizons of feeling and being" (58). In the light of McFadden's theorising of sexual agency, Binta Zubairu's newfound sexual pleasure and bodily freedom is a recipe for self-actualisation and autonomy. Her political courage can be seen in her act of

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disregarding Ustaz Nura's religious lessons on women's sexual purity and the fellow women's moral criticism of her sexual transgression. Due to her discovery of the power of the erotic, she longs for pleasure rather than maintaining a hypocritical religious code of sexual purity: "It mattered to her that at the twilight of her sexual life, her desires had finally been unleashed" (Ibrahim 284).

In addition, it can be argued that Okparanta's and Ibrahim's narratives strive to redefine the entire Nigerian society by resisting patriarchal discourses and envisioning optimistic futures for sexually transgressive subjects. Those emerging narratives on sexual subjectivity of the Nigerian woman are radical in their standpoint because they dismantle the deeply-rooted prejudices and masculinist ideologies about the female body and sexual pleasure. In Okparanta's narrative, the optimistic future for the subaltern lesbian protagonist is signified through her realisation of the unhappiness of her marriage and her decision to leave her husband. Towards the end of the text, Ijeoma sees an udala tree in her dream, and her daughter Chidinma is "dangling from the udala tree, a wiry rope leading to the wiry noose that [is] tied around [her] neck" (Okparanta 311). She wakes and realises that she and her daughter are "both choking under the weight of something larger than [themselves], something heavy and weighty, the weight of tradition and superstition and of all our legends" (Okparanta 312). As the aftermath of this sudden manifestation of the truth, Ijeoma leaves her husband and returns to her lesbian lover, Ndidi. Ijeoma's act of leaving her husband in search of her lesbian lover offers a radical vision about autonomous womanhood. As Dobrota Pucherova argues, this radical vision exhibits "a formation of African women's subjectivity that has undergone a radical epistemic shift" ("What Is African Woman" 118). This radical envisioning of a hopeful future for the same-sex-desiring woman is further evidenced in Ijeoma's act of spending the rest of her life with her lesbian lover, which is similar to a marriage: "We have now

shared decades together, and though there can be no marriage between us […] we feel ourselves every bit a couple" (Okparanta 320). Describing their relationship as a form of marriage, the novel "radically proposes that lesbian love, in its focus on giving pleasure rather than taking it, can be an ethical model for a new society" (Pucherova, "What Is African Woman" 117). Its quest for self-actualisation outside of conventional gendered roles as wifehood and motherhood, and its focus on love and sexual pleasure devoid of reproductive sex demonstrate a departure from the traditional African feminist/womanist ideals.

Besides, Okparanta's text on the liberation of the lesbian subject creates a national allegory in relation to the lesbian existence and political homophobia in the Nigerian context. Ijeoma's emancipatory plight stands against the misogyny of male-dominated culture. Towards the end of the narrative, Okparanta attempts to bring Ijeoma's story into contemporary Nigerian context by stating that "on January 7, 2014, Nigeria's president Goodluck Jonathan signed into law a bill criminalizing same-sex relationships, and the support of such relationships, making these offenses punishable by up to fourteen years in prison" (Author's Note). The masculinist and homophobic violence against lesbians in contemporary Nigeria is depicted in the Epilogue of the narrative as way of allegorizing the lesbian woman's quest for self-definition against the backdrop of the masculinist nation and its patriarchal nationalism. The Epilogue depicts a scene where a lesbian couple is stripped naked by a violent mob and beaten "them all over until they [are] black and blue" (Okparanta 318). The brutality of this homophobic act signifies the irrationality and deeply ingrained misogyny within the masculinist geographies of the nation. However, Okparanta's text functions as a critique and literary affront against heteronormative patriarchal violence against same-sex-desiring women. The denouement of the narrative optimistically envisions the image of a utopian town

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"where love is allowed to be love, between men and women, and men and men, and women and women, just as between Yoruba and Igbo and Hausa and Fulani" (Okparanta 321). By imagining a utopian Nigerian society where gendered and racial Otherness is tolerated, Okparanta redefines "the entire Nigerian nation that has excluded some groups from full citizenship on the basis of their gender, sexuality, or ethnicity" (Pucherova, "What Is African Woman" 117). Okparanta employs the subaltern lesbian woman's sexual agency as a model to envisage a change in hegemonic socio-political ideas. In addition, the novel demands a redefinition for the anti-homosexual rules in Christian fundamentalism: "May be the rules of the Bible will always be in flux. Maybe God is still speaking and will continue to do so for always. Maybe still he is creating new covenants, only we were too deaf, too headstrong, too set in old ways to hear" (Okparanta 322). This request for the change of anti-human rules in socio-political, religious and cultural matrix of Nigeria shows that Okparanta's work is not just a story of two lesbians' quest for self-definition, it is a literary effort to decolonise the Nigerian nation from its deeply-embedded oppressive patriarchal values and religious norms.

In the same vein, Ibrahim employs the northern Nigerian Muslim woman's radical expression of sexual pleasure and eroticism as a template to challenge the fundamentalist Islamic norms against women's sexual freedom. In other words, Binta Zubairu's quest for self-definition and sexual autonomy imagines a society beyond the religiously and culturally sanctified moral codes. However, the transgression of the strict moral code has a tragic outcome in the personal level because Binta Zubairu has to accept the death of her son, Munkaila and her lover, Hassan Reza. As a result of seeing his mother with Hassan Reza, Munkaila runs after him, he is "fallen and he [has] struck him on the back of his head" (Ibrahim 297). Later, the senator, Buba Maikudi orders his men to kill Hassan Reza because he has

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failed to fulfil an underworld mission that the senator has assigned him. Though the novel ends in a tragic and distressing tone, the notable aspect is that even within this tragic loss, there emerges Binta Zubairu's revolting spirit against anti-human religious practices that dictate women's sexual desires. The concluding situation of the novel shows Binta Zubairu is mending a cloth in which she notices the printed pattern of "pretty, little, yellow butterflies captured in different phases of flight" (Ibrahim 310). The images of the butterflies symbolise the emotional satisfaction that she has achieved by breaking the prison of religious norms. She no longer conforms to her society's moral code, and thus she is spiritually healed through the expression of her suppressed sexual desires.

3.4. CONCLUSION

Recently published narratives of third generation Nigerian writers address the gendered subjectivity of the African woman in a radical and transgressive viewpoint. The twenty-first century Nigerian writers are not hesitant to destabilise anti-human traditions and religious orthodoxies, and thus their works tend to demonstrate the idea that contemporary African feminist/womanist ideals are gradually coming closer to the challenging and confrontational position of Western feminism. Okparanta and Ibrahim's texts decolonise the African woman's body and sexuality from masculinist imperialism and oppressive religious norms. This increased focus on women's bodies and sexual pleasure is suggestive of these writers' understanding of the nexus between sexual emancipation and self-actualisation. In their depiction of the Nigerian woman's sexual awakening and agency, these writers transcend the conventional and traditional limits of African feminist ideals. Accordingly, Okparanta's and Ibrahim's debut novels foreshadow the emergence of a more powerful and compelling literary trend in Nigeria that aims to reimagine the African

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woman's quest for sexual liberation outside of traditional sexual identities and gender roles.

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CHAPTER 4: THE AFRICAN WOMAN IN WAR AND VIOLENCE

Women's Resistance against the Masculinist Discourse of War and Sexual Terrorism: Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani and Patience Ibrahim

4.1. INTRODUCTION

First and second generation Nigerian narratives on war and violence deal prominently with the genocidal Nigeria-Biafra war (1967–1970)[1]. As Chigbo Arthur Anyaduba writes, "arguably no event in Nigeria's recent postcolonial history has attracted more literary output and artistic response than the genocide of Igbos across the country in 1966 that culminated in the Biafra-Nigeria War" (88). The tormenting memories of the Biafran horror are reinvented in third generation Nigerian fictional works such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets* (2011) and Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015). However, the outbreak of Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria has constituted a thematic shift in contemporary Nigerian war literature since its focus moves from the Biafran legacy to the recent context of Islamist militancy. Similar to the Biafran war narratives, these contemporary works on the Boko Haram militancy feminise the issue by using a female-oriented perspective in order to dismantle the masculinist discourse of war. According to Obioma Nnaemeka, these war narratives represent women's gendered vulnerabilities in a war zone "but also [shine] a light on women's agency" ("Gendered Spaces and War" 175–176). In other words, these contemporary Nigerian war narratives can be considered as "a feminist revisionism of an otherwise masculinist discourse of war in Nigerian writing" (Anyaduba 87). Third generation Nigerian Boko Haram narratives portray the

[1] Flora Nwapa's *Never Again* (1975) and *Wives at War and Other Stories* (1980), Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1982) and Phanuel Egejuru's *The Seed Yam Have Been Eaten* (1993) present the gendered spaces of war and violence by foregrounding the Nigerian woman's subjectivity and agency during the Biafran War.

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Islamist militancy as a genocide impelled by religious fundamentalism and deeply embedded discrimination against women in northern regions of Nigeria. Sexual atrocities are systematically perpetrated against women as a military manoeuvre by the Boko Haram insurgents. By positioning the Nigerian woman against the masculinist backdrop of sexual terrorism, these works attempt to demonstrate the importance of women's resistance and resilience against militarised aggression. The feminist/womanist vision of third generation Nigerian narratives on Boko Haram is an epistemic revisioning of the Nigerian woman's subjectivity in the fundamentally patriarchal agenda of war, a literary effort to empower the subaltern female war victim. These Boko Haram narratives offer a compelling counter narrative against the male agenda of terrorism by encapsulating women's survival wisdom and their spiritual ability to dispel their traumatic memories and regain agency.

This chapter investigates the gendered subjectivity of the Nigerian woman in war and terrorism. The Boko Haram insurgents have deployed women's bodies as battlegrounds for settling religious and masculinist conflicts. Within the Boko Haram's masculinist discourse of religious extremism, rape, sexual slavery and exploitation of women are deployed as weapons to challenge the Nigerian government for failing to protect their women. The abducted women's self-dignity and autonomy are violated by the Islamist militants by deploying rape and sexual slavery as weapons in war. Women's victimised bodies are used as incubators or 'vessels' for the next generation of extremist fighters through the forceful impregnation of the female abductees. By providing easy access to sexually exploit the female body, women and girls are the currency with which the Boko Haram leaders win loyalty of their followers. This chapter argues that within the space of combative ideological masculinity of Boko Haram, women's bodies and their sexuality exist solely for the fulfilment of men's sexual gratification and childbearing.

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Based upon these ideas, this chapter examines Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* (2018) and Patience Ibrahim's *A Gift from Darkness* (2016), two narratives that foreground the Nigerian woman's subjectivity in the Boko Haram's sexual terrorism and her resistance against the masculinist ideology of war. Nwaubani and Ibrahim's texts give voice to the silenced and marginalised female victims of the Islamist militancy by depicting the female protagonists' harrowing experiences and their struggle for emancipation. These narratives memorialise women's gendered experiences in war and thus itself become a form of resistance against the militarised masculinity.

This chapter offers a feminist postcolonial and womanist reading to the gendered subjectivity of the Nigerian woman in the masculinist agenda of war. I explore the subaltern female war victim's quest for self-healing and agency as a womanist tendency. The female protagonists' womanist metamorphosis from the trauma to agency as depicted in the affirmative endings of Nwaubani and Ibrahim's narratives is analysed in the light of womanist ideals.

4.2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF BOKO HARAM AND ITS IDEOLOGY

Boko Haram was founded by the Salafi-Jihadist preacher, Mohammed Yusuf in 2002. The group's name 'Boko Haram' literally means Western education and civilization are sinful and forbidden. The poverty, illiteracy and unemployment in northern and north-eastern provinces in Nigeria "proved to be a breeding ground for [such] extremism" (Mazza 298). The madrasas of north-eastern cities as Maiduguri have given the space for the Boko Haram preachers to spread their radical and extremist ideology. After the extrajudicial killing of Boko Haram's founder, Mohammed Yusuf by the Nigerian police, its successive leader, Abubakar Shekau declared jihad against the Nigerian government. Under Shekau's guidance, Boko

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Haram transformed into a violent terrorist organisation, and they have targeted civilians and public places as schools and universities in their attacks.

As an ideology based on religious fundamentalism, Boko Haram advocates for male supremacy and female subordination. Its worldview is gendered since the Boko Haram men believe that women exist for the sole purpose of male sexual fulfilment and childbearing. Boko Haram's utilization and instrumentalization of schoolgirls and women in their masculinist conflict is viewed by the critics as a product of "the patriarchal ideational infrastructure of the Nigerian society" (Oriola 100). Structural gender-based violence against the Nigerian woman is pervasive throughout the country, "but particularly acute in the country's north" (Matfess 45). As Hillary Matfess argues, "while the abuses women and girls suffer at the hands of Boko Haram are more visible than the daily discrimination against women, insurgent abuse against women is ultimately an extension of the patterns of neglect and abuse women have suffered for decades" (45). The economic, social and political marginalisation of women in northern Nigeria has provided an unrestrained and uncomplicated access to women's bodies and sexuality. Thus, Boko Haram's systemic instrumentalization of women and girls is an organic product of a sociocultural context that oppresses and devalues women.

The Boko Haram insurgents deploy sexual violence against women as a weapon to terrorise the civilian population since they consider it as a demonstration of their "combative ideological masculinity" (Zenn and Pearson 51). Boko Haram's forceful implementation of Sharia law in northern areas of Nigeria has deepened gender segregation and increased gender based violence against women such as public flogging for fornication and stoning to death for lesbianism. Moreover, violence against women and girls is a means of humiliating their families and communities, "whereas women and girls are 'bearers of honour', and men are

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shamed for failing to protect 'their' women" (Bloom and Matfess 113). The gendered violence of the Nigerian authorities against Abubakar Shekau's wives and the wives of other suspected Boko Haram rebels while in the detention encouraged Boko Haram to openly target women and schoolgirls. For instance, Boko Haram's mass-abduction of 276 schoolgirls at the Government Girls Secondary School on 14 April 2014 created a chilling effect on education in the region. The abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls is a powerful demonstration of Boko Haram's jihadist ideology since the attack fulfilled three purposes: the first to show the brutality and notoriety of the group to the Nigerian government and the international community, second is to reinforce their disdain against western education by denying girls' access to knowledge, and third is to deploy the abducted girls as bargaining chips for the release of the Boko Haram rebels in the custody of the Nigerian state. By using the girls as a symbol to promote Boko Haram ideology, Abubakar Shekau has threatened to sell them as sex slaves for about 2000 naira for each at the local market or dispatch them as the wives of the Boko Haram insurgents. Boko Haram has also denied the autonomy and spiritual freedom of the abducted girls by forcefully converting them to Islam. Those women who refuse to accept the ideology of Boko Haram are raped, beaten, used as sex slaves and some are killed. In addition to the strict and fundamentalist religious education, Boko Haram adopted niqab, a veil which covers the face as a part of sartorial hijab, which can be described as an extremist method of controlling women's bodies and freedom. The prohibition of western education, jihadist indoctrination and the adoption of the niqab as women's dress code are deeply intertwined, and thus function as means of circumscribing women's free-thinking and intellectual development.

The strategic sexual enslavement of women by Boko Haram is a main aspect of the terror group's tactic for continuity. The abduction and rape of women and girls

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by the Boko Haram insurgents demonstrate their "devastating use of rape as a tactic of terrorism" (Attah 396). In addition to rape women for the purpose of rewarding the rebels and humiliating the community where they belong, the group appears to be using rape and forced marriage as a way of procreating the next generation of the extremist fighters. Among the 21 Chibok girls who were released in 2017 in exchange for five Boko Haram commanders, at least eight have had children. The use of the female body as an incubator is indicative of the hegemonic masculinist notion that women exist solely for the purpose of sexual fulfilment of men and childbearing. In a propaganda video, Abubakar Shekau has justified his arrangement of marriage for teenage girls within the context of Islamic history based on Aisha's marriage to Prophet Muhammad at the age of nine. According to Bloom and Matfess, hundreds of women are raped by Boko Haram fighters, many repeatedly as "a deliberate strategy to dominate rural residents and create a new generation of Islamist militants" (110). Within Boko Haram marriages, women are forced into becoming the sexual slaves of specific men, a mechanism that fully robs women of their agency. Women are expected to restrict their activities outside the space of home as a way of showing their adherence to the conservative Islamic wifehood. With the aim of perpetuating a fundamentalist religious ideology and creating a new generation of fighters, Boko Haram militants are instigating war on women's gendered bodies by controlling their sexual and reproductive agency. After marriage, their husbands coerce and convince the Boko Haram wives to participate in military activities and to undertake suicide bomb attacks.

Women and girls who have experienced the sexual terrorism of Boko Haram face stigmatisation from their communities. It is apparent that "these women are vulnerable not only to violence from the insurgency, but also due to the attitudes of the communities and families for their perceived association with Boko Haram"

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(Matfess 197). There is the widespread fear and misconception amongst the community in northern Nigeria that those women who are impregnated by the Boko Haram combatants carry the extremist ideology in their bodies. As Viviana Mazza explains, it is difficult to reintegrate the female abductees since both Christian and Muslim communities in the region maintain "a strong culture of honour based on a woman's body and her virginity" (321). Due to the cultural value given to virginity, women are oppressed as preservers of honour and objects of sexual slavery. One may never see the full picture of Boko Haram's sexual terrorism on women and the extent of its dehumanisation due to the prevailing conservative culture's silence on matters relating to sexual abuse and rape in Nigeria.

4.3. WOMEN'S SUBJECTIVITY IN THE MASCULINIST DISCOURSE OF TERRORISM

The masculinist discourse of war and terrorism instrumentalises and weaponizes the female body. In the patriarchal agenda of war, women are abducted and raped as 'trophies' to embarrass men. As Cynthia Cockburn notes, "like all other aspects of war, wartime rape is by no means 'senseless violence'" (13). Wartime rape and sexual exploitation are calculated violence with "complex meanings capable of being explored, analyzed and understood" (Cockburn 13). Third-generation Nigerian narratives on the Boko Haram insurgency constitute a literary investigation about the deployment of women as weapons of the Islamist militancy. By so doing, the Boko Haram war narratives resist the silence imposed by patriarchy on the multiple forms of gendered violence against women during the insurgency. Nwaubani and Ibrahim's works depict the gendered topographies of the Boko Haram militancy and its mechanism of depriving women's autonomy through sexual enslavement and physical violence. This section of the chapter presents how the Islamist militants

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deploy the marginalised women in northern and north-eastern regions of Nigeria as sex slaves through forced marriage, the use of women's bodies as incubators to generate the next generation of extremist fighters, and their act of weaponizing women as suicide bombers.

Nwaubani and Ibrahim depict the Boko Haram's abduction of the women in rural areas of the northern region of Nigeria, which can be defined as "an extension of the 'repertoire of violence' ingrained in the socio-political and cultural milieu of [the group's] primary area of operation" (Oriola 99). Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* tells the story of Ya Ta who has been abducted by the Boko Haram terrorists. At the moment of her abduction, Ya Ta dreams of facing the Borno State scholarship exam and leaving home to attend the special boarding school for girls in Maiduguri. After the abduction, Ya Ta and other girls are rigorously indoctrinated to accept the misguided religious ideology of Boko Haram. Ya Ta and her friend, Sarah, are forcefully married to the 'brave' insurgents. Finally, Sarah accepts the Boko Haram ideology and agrees to become a suicide bomber whilst Ya Ta escapes from the insurgents during a military attack by the Nigerian armed forces against the terrorists. She discovers her pregnancy during her stay in a rehabilitation camp and decides to accept the child. The narrative ends with her expectation to go back to school and continue her education, a moment that symbolises her resilience and determination.

Ibrahim's *A Gift from Darkness* also demonstrates how the abduction of the girls from the underprivileged regions has deepened the gendered oppression against subaltern female bodies who lack political and economic agency to battle against the masculinist aggression. The rural Nigerian girls as Ya Ta and Patience are kept on the margins of the patriarchal social matrix, and this gendered positioning makes it possible for the terrorists to utilise their bodies as a valuable commodity in the male

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agenda of war. Though Ya Ta has the opportunity to receive education until she has been abducted, Patience lacks formal education due to the poverty of her family. As a girl in a family of ten, Patience is married off to Yousef, her first husband who is later killed by the Boko Haram men. After his death, Patience is forced to do the domestic work at her uncle's house since her father is unable to "feed any more hungry mouths" (Ibrahim 25). After her second marriage to Ishaku, she has been abducted by the Boko Haram militants. During her abduction, she is pregnant with Ishaku's child and she has to struggle to protect her unborn child from the insurgents since they murder pregnant Christian women. She has been forcefully converted to Islam and sexually enslaved by the militants. Finally, she escapes from the Sambisa, the terrain of the terrorists, with the help of a frustrated Boko Haram militant. When she returns back to the village, she discovers that her husband is murdered by the Boko Haram men, and she gives the birth to her child in the wilderness. She is rescued by the Nigerian army soldiers and the ending of the narrative depicts her stay in a rehabilitation camp and her hopes for a successful future for her daughter, Gift.

Nwaubani and Ibrahim depict how religious fundamentalism is intertwined with masculinist violence and aggression. The forceful conversion of the abducted Christian girls into Islam through the use of physical violence and psychological coercion exhibit how religious extremism is backed by masculinist militarism. After the abduction, Patience is forced to accept the jihadist ideology. Her uncle, Amadou who is a Boko Haram rebel brutally slaps her face when she refuses to convert: "I began to cry. Two of the men began beating me. They also jabbed me in the side. I was terribly afraid for my baby. Might it be injured by their blows?" (Ibrahim 119). In order to protect her unborn child, Patience agrees to follow their commands: "'Yes, I'll say it: *Illalala* . . .' I deliberately came out with some kind of nonsense, certainly not the Islamic confession of faith. But they didn't notice. Or at least they

seemed happy enough" (Ibrahim 119). Uncle Amadou gives Patience an Islamic name as a means of erasing her Christian identity: "And from now on you're not Patience any more. Your name is Binto [...] That's your Muslim name That's the one you answer to" (Ibrahim 119). Similar to Patience's situation, Ya Ta and Sarah in Nwaubani's text are also coerced to adopt Islamic names. Ya Ta is renamed as Salamatu whilst "Sarah's new name is Zainab" (Nwaubani 143). The abducted woman's personhood is absorbed into a religiously fundamentalist patriarchal culture due to the forceful conversion of her faith and change of her name. The adoption of a name given by the male militants symbolises the denial of the abducted woman's autonomous identity and personhood. The erasure of women's autonomy and agency is further evidenced in the sect's adoption of the female veiling, the conservative Islamic dress code. Patience's friend, Jara, realises that the niqab[2] the insurgent men recommend for women to wear is itself loaded with danger since it embodies the abducted women's conversion to Islam and their capability of becoming Boko Haram wives: "I think it's [wearing niqab] dangerous. They just want us to become Muslims so that they can marry us and we can bring up their children as Muslims too" (Ibrahim 122). Hence, veiled female bodies can easily be transformed into the 'vessels' of childbearing in the context of Boko Haram, and the traditional Islamic outfit becomes a potent emblem that signifies the unrestrained male access to the female body.

Masculinist religious extremism validates psychological coercion of women. In Nwaubani's novel, Ya Ta and her friend, Sarah, undergo rigorous and fundamentalist religious indoctrination while they remain as the Boko Haram captives. They have to follow the instructions of Al-Bakura, the Boko Haram

[2] Niqab is a veil which covers the face, worn by some Muslim women as a part of sartorial hijab. In the context of the Islamist militancy, the adoption of the face veil becomes a visible sign of controlling women's bodies and freedom. In the context of Boko Haram, it is a male instrument of oppression against the abducted women.

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preacher, and their bodies must be hidden inside "mauve niqabs" (Nwaubani 122). Under the strict religious code of the insurgents, the girls "are like dead people mourning other people who are dead" (123). The image of death evokes the spiritual and emotional death of those female captives. Clearly, masculinist militarism and religious extremism function together to formulate a patriarchal religious hegemony, a dominant system to govern women's bodies and minds. By indoctrinating the Christian girls with Islamic theology, Al-Bakura tells Ya Ta and Sarah that "Boko Haram is doing the work of God: "May Allah continue to give us the courage to change the world" (Nwaubani 132). Also, violent physical punishments are imposed upon women in order to prevent any attempt of denial to participate for Islamic lessons. When Al-Bakura discovers that Sarah has pretended to suffer from menstrual cramps in the intention of avoiding the religious lessons, he viciously beats her with a koboko: "Twenty-five lashes on her back" (Nwaubani 160). Due to this severe brainwashing ordeal, Ya Ta wonders if she "will soon forget the definition of democracy, and everything else [she] learned in school", force to live under such brutality (Nwaubani 167). The women who are victimised by patriarchal religious fundamentalism may in turn harass and abuse other women as a way of proving their acceptance of male authority. Amira and Fanne, the Boko Haram wives in Nwaubani's text, abuse and psychologically torture the abducted girls. Amira serves disgusting food for the girls whilst she eats "boiled corn, boiled beef [and] boiled rice" (Nwaubani 139), and she promises a better life for them if they agree to become the wives of the combatants: "If you marry a Boko Haram commander, your life will be much better […] You will have as much food as you want" (Nwaubani 139). Amira's words demonstrate how the fundamentalists use something as basic like food to starve and coerce the girls into submission. The religious extremists use religious ideology to justify patriarchal militarism and sexual slavery. Amira's suggestion for

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the girls to exchange their sexuality for food is demeaning since it echoes the notion that the female sexuality is an article of trade, an item that can be used to gain basic survival means such as food.

Though the abducted women are converted to Islam, it does not guarantee a woman's status within the militarised masculinist space of Boko Haram. As Mia Bloom and Hillary Matfess note, "regardless of religion, during their captivity almost all the women were repeatedly raped, gang-raped, and subjected to sexual slavery" (110). In Nwaubani's narrative, the Boko Haram men visit the sleeping area of the abducted girls in the middle of the night and select girls for rape. As Obioma Nnaemeka and Naomi Nkealah point out, "sexual acts between men and women are often expressions of masculine power and dominance, with the result that violent sex becomes a double measure for ensuring heteromasculine domination of the female body" (3). The militarised masculine domination of the female body can be seen in Nwaubani's text where Al-Bakura, the chief preacher, rapes Aisha without considering her present state of pregnancy. When Al-Bakura forcefully leads Aisha away from the other girls in the middle of the night, she screams in utter horror: "No! No! Please! Please! […] I am a married woman! I am expecting a child!" (Nwaubani 154). Whilst Aisha is being brutally raped, the rest of the girls lie silent, "pretending that [their] ears are dead" (Nwaubani 154). As Pumla Dineo Gqola conceptualises, "rape is the communication of patriarchal power, reigning in, enforcing submission and punishing defiance" (21). The silence of the other women and Aisha's submission demonstrate the erasure of the victimised women's agency and subjectivity: "Aisha's wailing gets louder and louder. Al-Bakura does not take her revolt lightly. A dull sound. A muffled cry. The end of Aisha's resistance" (Nwaubani 154). The situation captures in a brutal way the perverseness, amorality of rape as "sexualized aggression" (Lorde 117). Unapologetic and insistent in exposing rape

and sexual atrocities in Boko Haram, Nwaubani brings up for scrutiny and disapproval the deployment of rape as an instrument of war. In the same vein, Patience Ibrahim narrates how she is being raped by a Boko Haram fighter while she is pregnant. The Boko Haram man drags her away from the other girls, and she can only remember how he smelled of male sweat: "He leaned me against a tree and rubbed his dirty body against me. His member was hard. Then he lifted my skirt. My whole body was filled with pain when he forced himself into me from behind. He came after a few short, violent thrusts" (Ibrahim 138). In both Aisha and Patience's situations, their silence represents their lack of physical strength to defend their bodies.

The Boko Haram militants appear to be using rape and sexual slavery to produce "the next generation of extremists that will pursue [the group's] particular brand of jihad" (Bloom and Matfess 110). In order to achieve this purpose, the abducted girls are forced into marriages. Targeting schoolgirls is a means of getting "a flow of young brides for fighters" (Ekhomu 117). The surplus of women for sexual purposes becomes "a means of satisfying insurgents and cultivating loyalty" (Bloom and Matfess 109). As Nwaubani portrays in her work, the Boko Haram leader gathers the abducted girls in a mosque, and mocks "the fathers for allowing their daughters to waste Allah's time by going to school instead of getting married, assuring them that he would soon right that wrong" (116). The words of the leader historicise the context of the narrative by echoing the extremist utterances of the Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau. Abubakar Shekau argues that "the west uses education to infiltrate Muslim minds and destroy Islam" (Pieri 56). This fundamentalist notion demonstrates how "sexual violence against women is fervently committed in the name of God" (Brownmiller 36). As Nwaubani depicts, Ya Ta and Sarah are coerced into becoming the wives of the 'brave' insurgents. Introducing the girls to the

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'warriors', the Leader says: "These are the virgins that Allah has prepared for you" (Nwaubani 177). This act of rewarding the violent fighters with virgins demonstrates the fundamentalist gendered notion that a woman's virginity is a priced commodity to reward men's combative and aggressive masculinity: "We are their reward for being brave murderers" (Nwaubani 177). As Gqola conceptualises, "there is a connection between rape culture, the manufacture of female fear and violent masculinities" (152). This connection can be seen in Nwaubani's narrative where Ya Ta's Boko Haram husband Osama rapes her in the first night of her forced marriage: "My blood bubbles with panic. The man in the mask rises and takes a step towards me. I scream. I flee in the opposite direction […] He follows. I leap over the mattress. I stumbled on a Quran […] He throws me on the mattress" (Nwaubani 193). The Boko Haram rapist's masculinist rage, Ya Ta's act of stumbling on a Quran and her physical inability to defy his abuse symbolically represent how violent masculinity, war and religious fundamentalism are inextricably intertwined. Also, Osama's act of shielding his face under a mask is indicative of his lack of recognition for mutual feelings, and the intention of using Ya Ta's sexualised body for the gratification of his male chauvinism. In his fundamentalist religious worldview, Osama imagines that it is his right to have masculine power over his wife's body. Moreover, violent masculinity is associated with the notion of men possessing women's sexualised bodies. As Nwaubani portrays, Sarah's Boko Haram husband draws a tattoo on his wife's skin in order to claim his ownership to her body: "He told me that, with his name tattooed on my stomach, everyone would know that I belong to him, even if he doesn't return from the jihad" (Nwaubani 230). Arguably, Sarah's tattooed body with her insurgent husband's name constructs a masculinist notion that the wife being marked as the property of her husband. To put this another way, the tattooed female body with a man's name echoes the misogynist idea that the woman's body

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and sexuality are owned. In Sarah's situation, her tattooed body emblematises her husband's ownership of her body while he is alive or dead during the jihad course.

The Boko Haram's sadistic masculinist treatment of women as disposable bodies can be seen in their use of brutal and savage physical violence against their bodies. In her narrative, Patience reveals that she witnesses one of the gruesome killings of a newly abducted pregnant girl by the fighters because they discover her to be a Christian, an infidel in their worldview. The brutal young fighter kneels down and lifts the pregnant woman's skirt revealing her breasts and belly: "Then the man slit the woman's belly open. He pulled the unborn child from her innards and threw it into the field behind him [...] They left the woman who would never be a mother bleeding in the grass" (Ibrahim 146). The graphic depiction of gendered violence against women's bodies is a narrative technique of emphasising the Boko Haram men's brutality and misogyny. Instead of making readers to be spectators of gendered violence, the narrative allows them to critique religious orthodoxy and male atrocity. The emotionally disturbing and graphically potent images of killing in the scene signify the Boko Haram men's "deep psychopathy" (Ekhomu 117). The tortured and mutilated female body becomes "a ceremonial battlefield, a parade ground for [the militant's] trooping of the colors" (Brownmiller 38). The Boko Haram men celebrate and glamorise their sadistic masculinity by forcing the other women to watch their brutal killings: a means to instil fear and subjugation on the women. Another harrowing example is seen in Nwaubani's narrative, when Ya Ta's friend, Magdalene is beheaded by the Boko Haram leader since she refuses to give up her Christian faith. Ya Ta and Sarah are forced to watch the incident in order to instil fear and terror in their psyche. When Ya Ta and Sarah go to the forest in search of vegetables, they discover a vast hole beneath a baobab tree, "a cloud of flies swimming above" (Nwaubani 150). The insurgents have used the ground beneath

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the baobab tree to dump the dead bodies of the murdered women: "I now know what became of the elderly soldier, Magdalene, and the girl who slumped during the Quranic class" (Nwaubani 150). The baobab tree is a symbol of life, fecundity and positivity in the dry landscape of Africa since it provides food. However, the image of the decaying dead bodies buried beneath the baobab tree shows how war destroys life and disrupts the moral and ethical order of nature – the tree of life has tragically metamorphosed into a potent image of death and misery. The positive elements of life and fertility are subordinate in the face of masculinist politics of war and brutality. The violated and murdered bodies of women become the symbolic breeding grounds for the masculinist agenda of terrorism to plant its seeds of viciousness, a strategy to disintegrate core human values of civilised community.

Moreover, the deployment of women as suicide bombers in the terrorist agenda metaphorizes how the male chauvinistic narrative of terrorism discards women's bodies as weaponized objects. Shirin Deylami reads female suicide bombers as victims of a virulent and violent patriarchy (178). According to Deylami, "the figure of the female suicide bomber works as an object of homoterritorial contestation between two different masculine ideals" (178). In the context of Boko Haram, these two different masculine ideals can be interpreted as the terrorist groups religious fundamentalism against the Nigerian government's masculine effort to defeat the terrorist sect and reestablish order. Working from the insights of Gayatri Spivak, Deylami conceptualises the female suicide bomber as "a subaltern whose meaning is utilised to initiate competing narratives of power" (179). This subalternity can be seen in Sarah in Nwaubani's work who is slowly indoctrinated by the Boko Haram wives to accept the jihadist ideology. It is revealed how Sarah believes the distorted religious ideology of Fanne, a senior Boko Haram wife and mentor who guides the girls how to wear "the special vest" of suicide bombers: "This is where

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you must pull […] But you must remember to first recite the Sura Albakara as you do so. Immediately, you will see millions of angels and money. You will find yourself in paradise" (Nwaubani 250). Believing Fanne's make-believe notion of paradise, Sarah becomes the first suicide bomber from the camp to go to jihad course: "Only special ones chosen by Allah can carry out this task in jihad" (Nwaubani 251). Sarah's autonomy is absorbed into a fundamentalist culture where religious fanaticism is defended, and individual rationality is submerged. In the homoterritorial power relations of war and terrorism, "the figure of the female suicide bomber works as an object of homoterritorial contestation between two ostensibly masculinist enterprises" (Deylami 178). In Sarah's situation as a female suicide bomber, she is constructed as a voiceless object positioned in between two masculinist ideals: the Boko Haram extremism and the Nigerian Army's fight against terror. Sarah's silence and submission can be seen in the narrative when she is prepared to take to the intended place of attack: "Two of our bravest rijale will take you to the place […] Your husband will also go with you. He will give you the vest to wear and tell you everything you need to do" (Nwaubani 261). As a weaponized object of male conflict, with no voice or agency of her own, it can be argued that the subaltern female suicide bomber is kept in shadow (Deylami 187). Though Sarah agrees to become a suicide bomber, her weaponized body carries the trauma of terrorism which is submerged by religious fundamentalism and masculinist militarism. Sarah's unheard misery is evoked through Ya Ta's words when she thinks about her best friend's tragic departure: "[my] best friend has left for paradise. Without bothering to tell me good-bye" (Nwaubani 264). The female suicide bomber's voice, if heard, it does not represent her agony or personal trauma, it is only acknowledged through the perspective of others. Sarah's tragedy historicizes the Boko Haram militants' act of brainwashing their wives to undertake suicide bomb

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attacks. It is noted that many women are willing participants of suicide bomb attacks. Sarah's predicament shows that many of the Boko Haram attacks were "conducted by girls too young to have agency" (Bloom and Matfess 111). Nwaubani's narrative goes beyond the plot and reveals a disturbing truth about the Boko Haram's instrumental deployment of young girls as suicide bombers, some of them are rape victims and psychologically traumatised women due to physical and emotional coercion.

Furthermore, the subalternity and marginalised position of the female Boko Haram victims can be seen in their difficulty to reintegrate into society. According to Bloom and Matfess, "the rehabilitation of these abused women will be difficult, given the conservative values and 'honor culture' that discourages premarital sex and extols virtue" (117). In Nwaubani's novel, after escaping from the Boko Haram men, Ya Ta discovers that she is pregnant with her terrorist husband's child. Sadly, she hopes her baby will be a girl: "I do not want a boy who will grow up to be a rijale like his father, or a child who will look like him instead of like me" (Nwaubani 281). Ya Ta's dilemma exemplifies the social stigma associated with those women who have spent time as Boko Haram 'wives'. The social stigma is more convincingly depicted in Patience's narration of her experiences after escaping from Boko Haram. When Patience's husband, Ishaku, is informed that one Boko Haram insurgent has helped her to escape from the Sambisa, he immediately suspects that she is pregnant with the insurgent's child: "But why did he take you prisoner again – because he got you pregnant, is that it? […] What husband wouldn't be interested in what his wife is doing with a strange man?" (Ibrahim 237). Though she is pregnant with Ishaku's child before her abduction, the widespread stories about rape in Boko Haram camps deepen Ishaku's suspicion: "[his] accusations were so absurd that I was speechless. I started crying quietly" (Ibrahim 237). Ishaku's first wife, Lara who wants to get rid

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of Patience, alludes to rape in the insurgent camps: "You must have been through a lot […] You know what happens in those camps . . ." (Ibrahim 173). Ishaku and Lara's suspicion denotes the culturally constructed expectations about women's chastity and patriarchy's anxiety and fear about women's sexual transgression and impurity. This idea of honor is further evidenced in Ishaku's attempt to silence Patience when she loudly speaks against his false accusations: "Psst, hold your tongue! Or do you want to wake the whole camp? Do you want everyone to hear what you've been up to? Is that what you want? To damage my reputation? (Ibrahim 237). His utterance demonstrates the normative idea that in a conservative patriarchal culture, the husband's reputation resides in his wife's sexual purity. Ishaku's attempt to govern his wife's sexuality is suggestive of his effort to maintain his own brand of masculinity as the 'owner' of an 'unadulterated' female body. By so doing, he deepens Patience's trauma instead of supporting her to recuperate.

The female body becomes a site for the masculinist agenda of Boko Haram militancy to settle its religious arguments. With reference to the works of Nwaubani and Ibrahim, I have analysed the subaltern gendered position of the African woman in the fundamentally patriarchal discourse of war. The next section of this chapter focuses on the Nigerian woman's struggle and resistance against the patriarchal agenda of war.

4.4. WOMEN'S RESISTANCE AGAINST THE MASCULINIST AGENDA OF TERRORISM

Third-generation Nigerian narratives on the Boko Haram militancy do not merely depict the militia's gendered violence and atrocities against women, but also foreground how the subaltern female war victims reclaim their agency, self-determination and dignity. An insightful literary account on female subjectivity in war and terrorism must go beyond the portrayals of gendered violence and take into

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account women's resilience and agency against the masculinist backdrop of terror. As Obioma Nnaemeka writes, war narratives constitute "an act of resistance, a struggle against forgetting" (191). Third generation Nigerian war narratives of Nwaubani and Ibrahim employ first-person female voice to bring out the harrowing experiences of women in terrorism. The use of first-person narrative mode allows these writers to depict women's subjectivity and agency in gendered warfare in a more convincing and realistic manner. The female-oriented narrative form emphasises the subaltern female war victim's counter-hegemonic gendered position against the dehumanisation resulting from the male discourse of terrorism. The Nigerian woman's survival wisdom in war and her quest for full humanity within the space of terror exhibit womanist tendencies. Nwaubani and Ibrahim's works demonstrate how the subaltern female war victim develops from trauma to agency. The denouements of their narratives envisage a womanist stance where the female protagonists dismantle the hegemonic agenda of male violence by overcoming the traumatic experiences of war. Though Ya Ta and Patience are exposed to unimaginable horrors of the Boko Haram militancy, they struggle to keep their self-determination and humanity unbroken.

Patience Ibrahim's *A Gift from Darkness* narrates the story of those who escape from Boko Haram. When the Boko Haram men kidnap her, she is newly pregnant with the child of her second husband, Ishaku. Her harrowing experiences as a victim of terrorism and her quest for protecting her unborn child evoke the womanist spirit of resistance. During her enslavement as a Boko Haram victim, Patience is cautious of hiding her pregnancy since she knows that the Boko Haram men kill pregnant women. After escaping from Boko Haram with the help of an insurgent, she walks in the wilderness in search of her husband and family members. She sees the horrific sight of her husband's mutilated dead body: "Seven men's bodies lay there – and their

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severed heads. I stifled a scream when I saw Ishaku among them" (Ibrahim 250). Patience's ability to endure the deaths of her first and second husbands, the death of her father and siblings, and her traumatic memories of rape transform her from the 'silent' victim to self-assertive woman. According to Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, a young girl inherits womanism "after a traumatic event [or] as a result of the experience of […] rape, death in the family, or sudden responsibility" (28). Patience's enduring spirit demonstrates the womanist notion that the traumatised African woman "knows in her subconscious that she must survive because she has people without other resources depending on her; in a positive about face she usually recovers through a superhuman effort, or somehow, aids others" (Ogunyemi 30). Patience's superhuman effort of survival is evidenced in her act of giving birth to her daughter, Gift, in the wilderness. After seeing the dead body of her husband, she grabs the knife beside the body, the instrument that the terrorists use to behead her husband, and walks deep in to the forest. When she feels the labour pain, there is no one to assist her: The narrative moment of giving birth to her child is evocative of her physical and spiritual strength: "I pushed and pushed. My vagina dilated as the child's head pushed against it from above. It was a terrible, terrible pain. I felt as if I was being torn in two while fully conscious" (Ibrahim 252). Giving birth to her daughter in the terrain of the masculinist warfare symbolically positions the forces of life, love and nurturing against the militarised notions of hatred, death and violence: "A slimy bundle lay between my legs – and started crying. I was absolutely exhausted, but also incredibly relieved" (Ibrahim 253). Though she carries with her the knife that the Boko Haram men have used to behead her husband, she does not use it to cut the umbilical cord: "I spontaneously bit through the cord with my teeth" (Ibrahim 252). Her act of biting through the umbilical cord exemplifies her survival wisdom and emotional strength to adapt to the condition. Later, when she

approaches a camp, a Nigerian army soldier sees the infant she carries on her back: "He could barely believe his eyes when he saw the tiny baby" (Ibrahim 257). When the soldier is informed that she is all alone while giving birth to her child, he is astonished by her superhuman strength for survival in the wilderness. This incident metaphorically positions the womanist potentiality for survival and endurance against the masculinist politics of war and terror.

Patience's quest for survival further represents the womanist notion that the trauma becomes "a temporary aberration preceding spiritual growth, healing, and integration" (Ogunyemi 30). Her spiritual healing can be seen in her act of blissful acceptance of her baby daughter: "I tenderly kissed my daughter on the forehead. It was done, I thought blissfully: God had placed a daughter in my arms. And I would do everything to ensure that her life was better" (Ibrahim 253). Her recuperation and self-healing are evoked through her decision to part company with the long knife that her husband is killed with: "After carrying the murder weapon around with me for months, in the end I decided to leave that part of my story behind [...] I finally dropped it into the public septic tank in a refugee camp" (Ibrahim 271). Her decision to drop the knife, a potent symbol of the Boko Haram terror, into the septic tank exhibits how she inherits a womanist consciousness as the aftermath of her trauma. With the help of other women in the camp, Patience regains her physical and spiritual strength: "[we] spent several days with the women, chiefly eating and sleeping. In their care, I soon recovered from the exertions of childbirth, and my strength returned. Gift developed marvelously well too" (Ibrahim 258). She soon forgets her tormenting past and learns to appreciate the present state of motherly contentment: "[t]his little person seemed completely contented with me and the world, as long as she lay at my breast" (Ibrahim 258). At the end, she is optimistic and confident of herself and her daughter's future: "uncertainty will be our constant companion for a

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long time to come. I will never again be able to believe that the worst is over. But neither do I believe that the best is over for Gift and me. Maybe one day we'll get some good news" (Ibrahim 272). The dynamism of "wholeness and self-healing" that we see in "the positive, integrative" ending of Ibrahim's narrative exemplifies a womanist tendency (Ogunyemi 28). Patience's resilience and determination to overcome the trauma of war connotes the womanist idea that "the black woman, less protected than her white counterpart, has to grow independent" (Ogunyemi 29). Patience's survival journey embodies the notion that womanism aids the African woman "who has been and still is concerned with the ethics of surviving rather than with the aesthetics of living" (Ogunyemi 34).

The survival narratives of the female Boko Haram victims represent the transformative potentiality of the subaltern. As Gayatri Spivak conceptualises, the subaltern appears as a woman of some agency, but whose specific situation under the hegemony results in her being, in some ways, submerged. As Spivak contends, the subaltern subject is lost and hidden in institutional hegemony (99). In the context of Boko Haram, it can be argued that the marginalised female war victim is lost and hidden in the hegemonic patriarchal institution of religious fundamentalism and terrorism. To further clarify, in order to make the space for the subaltern to speak, she must be liberated from "the structure of exploitation [...] compounded by patriarchal social relations" (Spivak 84). The subaltern female war victim reclaims her voice once she ceases to be under the oppressive patriarchal institution of war and violence. Her emotional strength to overcome the harrowing memories of war and to face the social stigma makes her the empowered female subject who can dismantle the masculinist ideology of terrorism. For example, Ya Ta in Nwaubani's narrative is a brilliant student in her school during the time the Boko Haram men abduct her and other girls. As an educated girl, Ya Ta strongly criticizes the Islamist

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militancy and its treatment of women as slaves. Once her friend, Sarah, says that "Boko Haram are not really bad people" (Nwaubani 227), Ya Ta speaks out against the Islamist ideology: "[t]here's nothing brave about this jihad! They are all murderers! Killers and murderers! Every single one of them! (Nwaubani 254). Her vehement criticism of the religious fundamentalism and male domination in Boko Haram exemplifies her "outrageous [and] audacious" temperament (Walker xi). She is daring and bold enough to challenge the masculinist power of the terrorist group, and thus it shows how womanist consciousness enables women "to transcend the relations of domination and oppression altogether" (Phillips xxiv). Ya Ta's utterance typifies the notion that the subaltern female war victim can speak only when she reclaims her agency, the moment she challenges the masculinist ideology of war. Even though Ya Ta is brutally beaten by her Boko Haram husband Osama for disparaging the Islamist ideology, she does not change her rational way of thinking, and wishes every member of the group "would burn in hell" (Nwaubani 255). Osama's violent beating followed by his threat to kill her or chop her body in pieces mark the beginning of Ya Ta's womanist metamorphosis – the moment that she decides to escape from the Sambisa Forest, the terrain of violence. Osama's violent threat to kill her in the face of her resistance is suggestive of the fundamentalist patriarchal culture's intolerance of female liberation. Though the subaltern female subject speaks, the hegemonic ear of masculinist warmongers does not want to hear her voice. In some instances, the voice of the victimised woman is loaded with vengeance and retribution. This can be seen in Ya Ta's feelings of disgust and hatred towards her husband, Osama, at the moment of her escape. The Nigerian army invade the forest, and attack the terrorists whilst Ya Ta and other women run away: "Right there and then, I wonder why I never clawed out his eyeballs with my nails while he snored soundly. I wonder why I never smashed in his skull with his laptop.

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I tear my arm out of [Osama's] grip and run" (Nwaubani 267). Her demand for justice even in a form of retribution and reprisal articulates her "outrageous, audacious [and] willful" personality (Walker xi).

Furthermore, these female protagonists resist social stigma and patriarchal culture's discrimination against the female Boko Haram victims and their children. Ya Ta in Nwaubani's novel decides to accept her pregnancy though the father of her unborn child is a Boko Haram terrorist: "What is a doctor's child does not bother going to university to learn? Will it automatically also become skilled in treating complicated diseases? Why, then, is the case of Boko Haram children different? (Nwaubani 283). Ya Ta's acceptance of her unborn child and her dismantling of the popular perception about Boko Haram children as the natural inheritors of their fathers' viciousness exemplify her ability to transcend the deeply ingrained gendered and cultural stigmas in her society. She compares herself to "an eagle trapped in a coop but whose heart remains in the sky" (Nwaubani 290). The image of the sky and her strong desire to go back to school allude to Alice Walker's third component of womanism in which a womanist "loves the Spirit […] loves struggle [and] loves herself, regardless" (Walker xii). The images of the sky and the eagle waiting to soar up symbolize Ya Ta's ambition and spiritual strength. At the end of the narrative, she is "overwhelmed by a strong desire to be seated at [her] desk in school, to be flipping through [her] textbooks or answering one of Malam Zwindila's many questions" (Nwaubani 285). Her desire to go back to school is suggestive of the failure of the Boko Haram ideology in which they strive to brainwash the abducted girls by preaching that the Western education is sinful and forbidden. Her ability to remain rational and independent in the face of a rigorous religious indoctrination and violence denotes the idea that the masculinist-religious orthodoxy can be dismantled by women's self-realisation and prudence.

The positive and integrative endings of those third-generation war narratives of Nwaubani and Ibrahim signal a feminist revisioning of the male discourse of war and violence. These narratives create a binary between the victimised women's suffering and the Boko Haram insurgents' inhumanity as a means of constituting an objection against the masculinist discourse of terrorism backed by religious fundamentalism. This binary between the masculinist violence and women's suffering demonstrates how terrorism instrumentalises women's bodies in its male agenda of atrocity. The subaltern female war victim's survival strength is positioned against the hegemonic agenda of masculinist militarism and its unimaginable brutality as a narrative technique to memorialise the Nigerian woman's survival wisdom and womanist strength in dismantling the male discourse of terrorism.

4.5. CONCLUSION

In the masculinist discourse of Boko Haram militancy, the African woman is dehumanised and marginalised through the deployment of her gendered body as a battleground to settle patriarchal arguments. Nigerian women are subjected to numerous forms of physical and psychological abuse within the militarised space of the insurgent group. The female war victim becomes the gendered subaltern within the militarised masculine space of Boko Haram. Referring to two harrowing Boko Haram narratives by Nwaubani and Ibrahim, this chapter has examined the Nigerian woman's resilience and resistance against the masculinist agenda of war and sexual terrorism. The subaltern female war victim's quest for self-healing and agency through her superhuman effort of overcoming the trauma of war articulates a womanist tendency. In contrast to the war narratives of previous generations, the third generation Nigerian war narrative is female-oriented, and therefore it offers a

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compelling and convincing counter-argument against the fundamentally masculinist discourse of militarised violence and religious fundamentalism.

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CHAPTER 5: THE AFRICAN WOMAN'S QUEST FOR GLOBAL CITIZENHOOD

Third Generation Nigerian Narratives on Afropolitan Womanhood and Agency: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chika Unigwe

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the new millennium, the subject of diaspora in African literature has received more attention because the African continent is on the move. There is the emergence of a new generation of African expatriate writers who narrate "the journeys of emigres, refugees, and migrants of all sorts" (Crowley 125). It is this new generation of authors who experience migration themselves pursue a variety of different perspectives, "often ushered in by a series of diasporic realities" (Davies 233). The increase of African diasporic literature has provided the chance to recognise Afropolitanism as a new diasporic movement. Afropolitanism constitutes "a significant attempt to rethink African knowledge outside the trope of crisis" (Gikandi 9). As Simon Gikandi writes, "initially conceived as a neologism to describe the racial imaginary of a generation of Africans born outside the continent but connected to it through familial and cultural genealogies, the term Afropolitanism can now be read as the description of a new phenomenology, of Africanness – a way of being African in the world" (9). As a cosmopolitan, anti-essentialist and culturally open-minded and hybridized concept, Afropolitanism is "endowed with a particular consciousness for Africa's historical wounds" (Gehrmann 4). Thus, Afropolitanism is praised as "an attitude which can contribute to complete the as yet unfinished decolonization process of Africa" (Gehrmann 4). In the Afropolitan phase of decolonizing Africa, "identities and cultural productions are being more radically de-essentialized" (Gehrmann 5). In other words, Africa as a part of the globe, becomes

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a space of cultural mobility. This chapter focuses on the migrant African woman's racial, gendered and class position within the diaspora and her process of claiming her identity as an empowered and independent Afro-diasporic female subject by dismantling the racist, sexist and classist restraints in the West.

According to Susanne Gehrmann, "2013 was the year of an incredible boom of African diasporic literature"[3] (6). The emergence of many Afro-diasporic novels in the twenty-first century signifies how African writers attempt to transcend the national boundaries and de-centre the postcolonial Africa as a site of socio-cultural mobility. These third generation African diasporic authors use Western settings and new narrative patterns even when some parts of their fictional works depict Africa, especially when the protagonist returns back to the homeland. Based upon this background, this chapter explores the process of racialised, sexualised and classed Othering[4] of migrant African women in Western societies. It is argued that dominating white capitalist patriarchy and other forms of masculinities in the diaspora such as African-American patriarchy and migrant African men's reconstruction of traditional African wifehood function as hegemonic forces of colonising migrant African female bodies. Referring to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Americanah* (2013) and Chika Unigwe's short story collection *Better Never Than Late* (2020), it also demonstrates the migrant African woman's Afropolitan quest for global citizenhood[5] and agency. By dismantling racist, sexist and classist stereotypes and strictures in the West, the migrant African woman achieves her global consciousness and autonomous Afro-diasporic womanhood. The

[3] Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's *Dust,* NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* are all published in 2013.
[4] The terms such as 'Other,' 'Othering' and 'Otherness' are capitalized to indicate its function as a socially constructed and collective category. The term 'Other' informs how certain groups and individuals are categorized on the basis of their racial identity, gender, sexual orientation and class status.
[5] The term 'global citizenhood' in Afropolitanism means being open-minded to engage and negotiate positively with other identities and cultures and being able to recognise and resist victimhood discourses and stereotypes attached to Africa and Africanness. Global citizenhood is a rejection of nativism, nationalism and cultural autochthony and a propagation of geographical mobility, cultural hybridity and transnational African identity.

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formation of Afropolitan consciousness allows the migrant African woman to transcend racial, gendered and class hegemonies and imaginaries in the diaspora. Afropolitan consciousness is a way of negotiating and challenging the historically and culturally-tailored racist, sexist and classist imaginaries in the West. These Afropolitan female protagonists formulate a transnational female solidarity or an Afropolitan sisterhood as a mechanism of promoting migrant African women's unity. It allows them to occupy an empowered and independent social position within the racist and sexist topographies of the West since they seek emotional support from each fellow African migrant.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award and shortlisted for the 2014 Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction, is considered by many critics as an iconic text of Afropolitan womanhood. The narrative deals with Ifemelu's migration to America for university education leaving her high-school fiancé, Obinze, in Nigeria. Being challenged by the racist and gendered constraints in American culture against an African female émigré, Ifemelu struggles to survive economic hardships. Her financial insecurity leads her to experience sexual abuse at the hands of an unnamed tennis coach. As a result of her feelings of shame and guilt due to her traumatic sexual experience, Ifemelu breaks off contact with Obinze. Shortly after, her friend Ginika helps her to find work as a babysitter. Her relationship with the white American, Curt, provides the chance for her to realise the racial constructions in American culture, and thus, she starts her online blog on race. Ifemelu's blog on race is representative of her autonomous voice as an Afropolitan woman, a passage to formulate Afropolitan identity and agency. Adichie portrays how Ifemelu becomes an object of desire or an exotic accessory in her relationship with Curt that symbolises the superiority of the white American man and the racialised Otherness of the black Nigerian immigrant woman. Ifemelu breaks

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up with Curt since she cheats on him with another man. Her next affair with the black American professor, Blaine, is equally worried and racially laden because he is unable to understand her racialised position. As Eva Rask Knudsen and Ulla Rahbek note, "if Curt's desire for [Ifemelu] is fashioned around her exotic difference, Blaine's desire is to mould her difference in the direction of a specific African American politics of resistance" ("In Search of the Afropolitan" 251). Adichie's narrative exemplifies how Ifemelu decolonises and demarginalizes her racially and sexually denigrated migrant African femaleness through her formation of an autonomous and independent Afro-diasporic personhood. Adichie's representation of Ifemelu's attempt to liberate from the racist, sexist and classist bounds in America demonstrates the migrant African woman's resistance against white-supremacist and capitalist hegemonies. She develops her Afropolitan consciousness by struggling for her emancipation within a socio-political and cultural space defined by white-American racial superiority and socially unrecognised and marginalised African migrant female status.

The Afropolitan female identity construction in Adichie's novel is read alongside Chika Unigwe's short story collection *Better Never Than Late* (2020). The Afropolitan female protagonists in Unigwe's work can be characterised as economic migrants[6] who migrate to Belgium due to the harsh economic circumstances and political instabilities in Nigeria. In Unigwe's stories, the marginalities against the migrant African woman are determined along xenophobic, gendered and classist lines. We can see how the migrant African woman's autonomy is controlled through racial denigration, patriarchal colonisation of the female body and enforcement of class discrimination against migrant African women. Her educated, ambitious and

[6] Economic migrants are those who leave their native countries purely for economic purposes. Unigwe's female protagonists in these short stories leave Nigeria and settle in Belgium with better working opportunities, improved standard of living and economic prospects.

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non-conformist Afropolitan female protagonists launch a novel discourse of power and agency for migrant African women. In my discussion, I refer to three short stories from the collection, namely, "Becoming Prosperous," "Cleared for Takeoff" and "How to Survive a Heat Wave." The migrant female protagonists in these stories – Prosperous, Ego Añuli – interrogate and resist putative non-European Otherness, biased and unfair gendered norms and oppressive economic barriers in Belgium in order to formulate their autonomous Afropolitan identity. In "Becoming Prosperous," the reader meets the rebellious female protagonist, Prosperous, who challenges her husband's patriarchal ideology that a wife must do all household work as cooking and cleaning. The story demonstrates how Agu's effort to conform his wife to accept the conventional wifely duties turns futile in the diasporic setting since the migrant African woman destabilises the oppressive gendered norms in the aim of claiming her autonomy. Similar to Prosperous's Afropolitan agency, Ego in "Cleared for Takeoff" leaves her husband and daughter in search of her professional success and autonomy. As a graduate in Chemical Engineering, Ego expects a productive career rather than confining her intellectual abilities within a self-abnegating marriage. Those progressive and globally mobile African female economic migrants represent how African women transcend the national boundaries and occupy more progressive and career-oriented lifestyles in the West. They possess economic power and emotional strength to question and challenge traditional gender roles and patriarchal authority in African culture. For instance, Prosperous and Ego's self-determined and economically progressive personalities demonstrate how African women reimagine their new roles and identities in a challenging global context. Their characters and identities are developed within a transnational and global culture and their struggle for liberation has to be measured up against the world at large. Furthermore, Unigwe's "How to Survive a Heat Wave" portrays how the white

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masculinity objectifies the African/black woman's sexuality. In a commuter train, Añuli is sexually molested by a gang of Belgian men by forcing her to drink beer and attempting to rape her. Exacerbated by racist typecasts of the African woman as hypersexual, the sexual abuse and violence against the African female émigré often becomes a standard to exhibit white male authority. The narrative depicts how Añuli overcomes her traumatic experience by revealing it to her African migrant friends, an act that signifies the transnational sisterhood and its ability to empower women.

Accordingly, the following section of this chapter introduces Afropolitan womanhood and its theoretical basis within the larger framework of Afropolitanism. Before investigating the migrant African woman's quest for global citizenship, it is important to focus on her racialised, sexualised and classed subjectivity in the West. Referring to Adichie and Unigwe's narratives, I demonstrate how the migrant African woman is Othered and marginalised within the racist, sexist and classist topography of the West. Finally, this chapter examines the migrant African woman's Afropolitan and womanist resistance against the racial and gendered stereotypes in the diaspora and her resilient quest for global citizenhood, autonomy and agency. In other words, it highlights the Afropolitan woman's counter-hegemonic effort to dismantle the notions of racial, sexual and class Othering of African femaleness as a way of reimagining a liberated Afro-diasporic womanhood.

5.2. AFROPOLITANISM AND AFROPOLITAN WOMANHOOD

Susanne Gehrmann writes, "to put in a nutshell, Afropolitanism can be said to be cosmopolitanism with African roots" (1). In her article "Bye-Bye Babar," Taiye Selasi has used the term 'Afropolitan' to define "the diaspora generation whose parents had left [the African continent] in the 'brain drain' of the 1960s–70s, and who had consequently moved across many different Western metropoles, provoking a heterogenous sense of heritage" (Balakrishnan, "The Afropolitan Idea" 6). As a

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means of being African in the world, the conception of Afropolitanism is a liberatory one, "claiming Africa as the future while simultaneously letting go of its colonial past" (Balakrishnan, "The Afropolitan Idea" 8). As Sarah Balakrishnan argues, Afropolitanism signifies an attempt to "rethink African history outside of indigenous terms" ("Afropolitanism, The End of Black Nationalism" 377). In other words, Afropolitanism refuses the notions of racism, nativism and autochthony by promoting cultural hybridity, openness and communal belonging beyond the nation and nationalism. As Chielozona Eze theorises, Afropolitans "are more interested in human flourishing than in parading [their] heritage" ("We, Afropolitans" 117). As Eze further argues, "the Afropolitan is one who stakes moral claims to Africa and the world, and conversely admits that others can lay the same claim to Africa" ("We, Afropolitans" 117). The spatial mobility of Africans is symbolic of their inner mobility: "one does not need to have crossed geographical boundaries to be Afropolitan, one only needs to cross the psychic boundaries erected by nativism, autochthony, heritage and other mythologies of authenticity" (Eze, "We, Afropolitans" 116–117). This transnational and open culture, which Achille Mbembe calls 'Afropolitanism' is "an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world" (60). It can be defined as a way of deconstructing socially formulated typecasts relating to the African diaspora, "a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity – which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the law of the world" (Mbembe 60). Mbembe further clarifies that Afropolitan culture promotes new possibilities in art, philosophy and aesthetics, a new movement "that can say something new and meaningful to the world in general" (60). An Afropolitan has the ability to embrace "strangeness, foreignness, and remoteness, the ability to recognise one's face in that of a foreigner and make the most of the traces of remoteness, to domesticate the

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unfamiliar, to work with what seems to be opposites" (Mbembe 60). Afropolitan posture is a philosophy committed to cultural openness, a way of negotiating our relation to the world, and a humanistic approach that dismantles the myths of racism, nativism and autochthony.

Afropolitan womanhood is an emerging avenue of revisioning the African migrant woman's negotiation and resistance against the xeno-racist, gendered and economic stereotypes and restraints in the diaspora. Caroline Lyle and Bridget Tetteh-Batsa expand the concept of Afropolitanism to include migrant African women's racialised and gendered/sexual subjectivity. Caroline Lyle suggests that Selasi's conceptualisation of Afropolitanism should be broadened: "It is crucial for Afropolitans, especially female Afropolitans, to form a racialized sexual identity as well" (103). Afropolitanism dismantles victimhood discourses attached to Africa, and therefore, it can be posited that Afropolitan womanhood envisages a transnational, culturally-open and empowered Afro-diasporic femininity. As Bridget Tetteh-Batsa conceptualises, "the Afropolitan woman battles racialized and gendered subjugation on account of her maligned [Africanness or Blackness], the Afropolitan feminist insists on, and inscribes agency tethered to an African self – a counter hegemonic move that challenges what negative presumptions of Africa deluge public consciousness in [the diaspora]" (119). As Tetteh-Batsa further explains, the Afropolitan woman battles against "constraints tethered to her femininity, her Black femininity, and her African difference" (122). Afropolitan femininity decolonises migrant African womanhood from racist, sexist and classist archetypes in the West against African women by encouraging them to destabilise those archetypes. The decolonisation of migrant African female bodies is not simply a process to destabilise the external forces such as racism, sexism and classism, but to claim a consciousness that can transcend the emotional boundaries and barriers for autonomy. So,

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Afropolitan womandom or Afropolitan female culture is a discourse of negotiation and resistance that dispels any form of victim identity and powerlessness in the face of challenging global circumstances. Afropolitan femininity, thus, can be interpreted as a global African revival that challenges racist and sexist myths against migrant African women. In addition, transnational African sisterhood works as a system of female solidarity and mutual support to challenge the racial denigration, sexism and class discrimination in the diaspora. As Tetteh-Batsa notes, transnational African sisterhood "describes African female friendships forged outside boundaries that demarcate Africa as home and mobilized by shared aspirations astride the trauma and uncertainty of living in-between nations" (72). Transnational African female-bonding is a system of solidarity obligated by shared expectations and comprehending the trauma of occupying the identity of a racialised Other in the West. In order to conceptualise Afropolitan womanhood, we have to merge the ideas of Afropolitan theorists such as Selasi, Mbembe and Eze with feminist postcolonial and womanist concepts. Afropolitan womanhood reframes the migrant African woman by emphasising her counter-action against the hegemonic patriarchal, racial and economic restraints in the West. Thus, female-oriented Afropolitan literary works offer alternative and new modes of formulating identity and belonging in the globalised context.

5.3. THE RACIALISED, SEXUALISED AND CLASSED 'OTHER' IN THE WEST

Bernie Lombardi writes, Afropolitan womanhood "redefines socio-geography and challenges patriarchal definitions of place offering alternative ways of being and belonging to the world" (222). In order to reclaim her agency, the migrant African woman has to comprehend the racist, sexist and classist orthodoxies in the West. The historically and culturally-tailored xeno-racist, gendered and economic myths

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systematically marginalise the migrant African woman. Gendered trauma infused with racist denigration follows socio-political and economic discrimination weathered against migrant African women. Despite white capitalist patriarchy's racial, sexual and economic marginalisation of migrant African women, other forms of dominant masculinities such as African-American patriarchy and African men's reconstruction of traditional wifehood in the diaspora[7] extend the migrant African woman's process of becoming the Other. Besides, white capitalist female superiority functions as another form of racial and class oppression against the racially Othered lower-class African migrant woman. Thus, the overriding concern in this section of the chapter is to illustrate how the migrant African woman becomes the racialised, sexualised and classed Other within the diverse forms of masculinities and white female power structures in the West. Using a feminist postcolonial critical stance, this section explores how migrant African female bodies are racially and sexually objectified and abused in the West. Whilst positioning migrant African womanhood against the dominating patriarchies in the diaspora, the analysis concludes with an examination of white capitalist female superiority over migrant African women as a perpetuation of modern racism and class discrimination.

Racial marginalisation and sexual discrimination aggravate "the ongoing stigmatization of black sexuality in Western societies" (Lyle 103). Racial, gender and economic discrimination against the migrant African woman increases her "susceptibility to gendered abuse" (Tetteh-Batsa 72). Stigmatising race-based sexual archetypes propagate sexual violence against migrant African women. African sexuality in Western culture is "marked by hypersexualization, notions of the exotic Other, and sexual exploitation" (Lyle 103). In other words, sexual identity plays a

[7] White supremacist capitalist patriarchy is the most dominant form of oppression against the migrant African woman. However, other forms of masculinities such as African-American male authority and migrant African men's misogyny extend the migrant African woman's victimhood. Thus, she becomes an extremely marginalised existence within those all forms of masculinities and male privilege in the diasporic context.

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fundamental role in "the formation of a racial consciousness for female Afropolitans" (Lyle 115). In Adichie's novel, we can comprehend the connection between its female protagonist's sexual personhood and the formation of a racial consciousness. Adichie demonstrates how Ifemelu's sexual identity is interconnected with her racial and economic marginality and subordination as an African immigrant woman in America's racist and sexist topography. Her sexual abuse at the hands of an unnamed white American tennis coach distinctly shows how Ifemelu's racial identity formation is complicated through white American patriarchy's objectification of her racialised female body. Ifemelu comes to America with a preconceived notion that the Western diaspora is a space of escape for Africans who yearn for better educational and socio-economic prospects. Soon after her arrival to America, with her visa expired and economically insecure, Ifemelu decides to accept the position as a female personal assistant for a wealthy white American tennis coach, a job that leads to sexual exploitation and trauma. The job that tennis coach offers to Ifemelu as a personal assistant to relax his body and mind through sexual therapy signifies dehumanising and insidious archetypes of the African woman's sexuality as an object of pleasure. The instance of sexual exploitation is marked with Ifemelu's voicelessness: "She did not want to be here, did not want his active fingers between her legs, did not want his sigh-moans in her ears" (Adichie 154). After this traumatic sexual experience, she is depressed and emotionally deadened as she feels her fingers sticky, "they no longer [belong] to her" (Adichie 154). Due to guilt and shame, she is estranged from her body and sexuality, and thus, she walks to the train "feeling heavy and slow, her mind choked with mud" (Adichie 154). The late autumnal weather that accompanies the incident of sexual exploitation metaphorically conveys Ifemelu's distress: "It was late autumn, the trees had grown antlers, dried leaves were sometimes trailed into the apartment" (Adichie 150). As Lyle explains, the moment

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of sexual abuse leads to "Ifemelu's self-alienation in a multistep process during which she is robbed of her voice, ownership of her sexuality, her body, and finally, her sense of self – she feels fully deadened by the experience" (107). Besides, this situation of sexual exploitation highlights "the particular misery of capitalism in a thoroughly white-supremacist nation-state" (Hallemeier 242). Ifemelu is racially and sexually submerged by the racist, sexist and capitalist politics of a system historically-arched to validate white male privilege and black female subordination. In Ifemelu's situation, she is self-alienated and traumatised because of her "extreme marginalization and lack of agency as a black female lower-class immigrant who is forced to work illegally" (Lyle 107).

It is understandable that the socially and politically privileged position of the white man aggravates the process of marginalisation and sexual exploitation of the migrant African woman. The orientalist myth[8] of the African woman as hypersexual works as a dehumanising stereotype against migrant African women. Similar to Ifemelu's traumatic sexual experience, Añuli's subjection to sexual abuse and its resultant trauma in Unigwe's "How to Survive a Heat Wave" distinctly demonstrates sexual exploitation as a racist and masculinist means of objectifying and colonising the black female body. Unigwe's short story challenges a narrative in which white European male chauvinism exploits economic migrants, especially African women who migrate to Europe for employment. It can be asserted that the migrant African woman becomes a racialised and sexualised proletariat[9] within the white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Through its depiction of Añuli's tragedy of getting sexually molested by a gang of young Belgian men in the night train, Unigwe presents how

[8] Orientalist archetypes include the depiction of colored women as hypersexual and thus bearers of incurable sexual immorality. Also, it stereotypes colored women as sexual subordinates to men. These archetypical representations of the racialised and sexualised Other perpetuate modern racism and sexism in Western societies.
[9] The term 'proletariat' in this context is used to represent the marginalised and submerged position of the migrant African woman against the dominant class of white patriarchy and its gendered supremacy.

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racism is entwined with sexism to submerge the migrant African woman. Though Añuli invites her immigrant Nigerian friends, Prosperous and Oge, to reveal her traumatic sexual experience, "the heavy words refuse to roll off her tongue" until the end of the narrative: "Añuli feels a clamping in her chest. If she cries, she has to tell her friends everything and she is not yet ready to" (Unigwe 110). Her inability to reveal the tragic experience to her husband reveals her self-alienation and agony: "She has not even told her husband. When she came home last night and made straight for the bathroom, she had told him she ate something which upset her stomach" (Unigwe 110). As the narrator describes the situation, when Añuli is returning home by the night train from Herentals, a group of young men forces her to consume beer and attempt to rape her. The Belgian men's attempt to gang rape[10] a migrant African woman typifies the dehumanising racialised typecasts and orientalist myths about the black woman as hypersexual and her body can easily be objectified and enslaved: "She remembers hands grabbing her breasts. Feeling under her skirt. She remembers screaming. She remembers the men, beer cans in hand disappearing into the night once the train stopped in Turnhout" (Unigwe 111). Unigwe's narrative analogizes the present day sexual violence against the migrant African woman with Belgium's colonial legacy of slave trade where "King Leopold in the Congo who had his men chop off the limbs of workers who underperformed" (109). By invoking the historical memory of colonial atrocities against the colonised African bodies, Unigwe implies how modern racism and racialised sexual violence have their historical and colonial origins. Exacerbated by modern racist myths of the African woman, sexist violence against the black female body "often becomes a

[10] Though a moment of gang rape is not depicted in the story, the Belgian men's attempt to undress Añuli is indicative of a sexual molestation – unwanted touching, bullying and sexual humiliation.

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standard within our community, one by which manliness can be measured" (Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex" 120).

Through Ifemelu and Añuli's traumatic racialised sexual experiences, Adichie and Unigwe demonstrate race and gender injustice against the migrant African woman in the West. It can be posited that sexual violence against the immigrant African/black woman is complicated by xeno-racist[11] ideologies, and thus it confirms that "gender and race are already intertwined in the white American and white European imagination: racial 'Others,' always already sexualised" (Wright and Schuhmann 9). Both Ifemelu and Añuli's situations exemplify how racism supports and promotes sexual violence against the racialised and sexualised Other. Masculinist dominance is entwined with white capitalist supremacy and racial privilege.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the body of the racialised and sexualised Other is objectified and instrumentalised in inter-racial romance and sexual desire in the diasporic context. As bell hooks theorises in her essay "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance, "when race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other" (367). As it is often the case in white supremacist capitalist patriarchy in the West, white males are confident that the racialised Others have more life experience, and thus they are "more worldly, sensual, and sexual because they [are] different" (hooks, "Eating the Other" 368). The existence of the racialised Other, her sexualised and exoticized body is seen as a resource that can be utilised to fulfil white male

[11] In this context, the term 'xeno-racism' means the racial prejudice towards the alienated, foreign Other. Ifemelu experiences xeno-racism due to her non-American blackness.

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desire. In Adichie's novel, Ifemelu's romantic and sexual intimacy with white American Curt demonstrates how the racialised and sexualised Other is commodified and objectified within the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy in America. Through Ifemelu's romantic union with ebullient, white American Curt, we can see how xeno-fetishism[12] and racial stereotypes about African femininity function together to colonise the body of the racialised and sexualised Other. As bell hooks explains, "within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture" ("Eating the Other" 366). Curt and Ifemelu's first moment of sexual consummation results in him erotically objectifying and exoticizing her black female body: "Curt had never been with a black woman; he told her this after their first time, in his penthouse apartment in Baltimore […] he told her he had never been so attracted to a woman before, had never seen a body so beautiful, her perfect breasts, her perfect butt" (Adichie 195). His act of sexualising Ifemelu's racial Otherness connotes the idea that "the commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling" (hooks, "Eating the Other" 366). Curt's xeno-fetishism is evidenced in his eagerness and excitement to possess and consume Ifemelu's sexuality: "He wanted to suck her finger, to lick honey from her nipple, to smear ice cream on her belly as though it was not enough simply to lie bare skin to bare skin" (Adichie 195). He considers having sex with a coloured woman to be "something he alone can decide for or against" (Lyle 113). He is interested in keeping track of the racially different bodies that he consumes sexually, "exotic species [such as] a Japanese girl, a Venezuelan girl" (Adichie 190). In the perspective of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the desire for the erotic

[12] Curt's attraction towards Ifemelu is a kind of xeno-fetishism because he is attracted to her racially 'exotic' body and body parts. Xeno-fetishism a kind of paraphilia in which the sexual arousal gained through the exoticization and objectification of the racial difference.

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fantasies about the racialised Other reinscribe and maintain racism, sexism and classism. Curt's actions of buying groceries and textbooks for Ifemelu, sending her gift certificates for department stores, and taking her to the lavish restaurants are suggestive of his racially-tainted benevolence. His racially-tainted benevolence and goodness towards Ifemelu irrevocably links himself to "collective white racist domination" (hooks, "Eating the Other" 369). In other words, it can be argued that white male generosity does not represent a progressive change in racism since it is tainted with racial and patriarchal dominance. Thus, Curt's experience of white capitalist patriarchal dominance has left him "unprepared to function in a relationship in which his goodness, which is to say his material resources and limited empathy, does not ensure the total and constant affirmation he desires and expects" (Hallemeier 239).

As I have discussed above, within the racist and sexist white patriarchal context in America, white males claim "the body of the colored Other instrumentally, as unexplored terrain, a symbolic frontier that will be fertile ground for their reconstruction of the masculine norm, for asserting themselves as transgressive desiring subjects" (hooks, "Eating the Other" 368). The marginalisation and exploitation of the racial and sexual Otherness is not only an aspect that can be found within the dominant white patriarchal culture. Adichie's novel affirms that the racialised and sexualised Other's romantic and sexual relationships with intra-racial African-American men are inevitably marked by racism and sexism. Ifemelu's next romantic affair with the African-American intellectual and professor at Yale, Blaine, is "equally strained and in fact also racially intoned with the result that he, too, does not really 'see' her because of how 'race' disciplines even love" (Knudsen and Rahbek, "In Search of the Afropolitan" 251). Whilst Curt's attraction towards Ifemelu is centred on a kind of xeno-fetish instrumentalisation of her Africanness,

Blaine's intention is to bring legitimacy to her race politics and to convert her non-American blackness to accept the resistant ideologies of African-Americans. Though Ifemelu's affair with Blaine has provided her the opportunity to enter into a circle of liberal-minded African-American companions who appreciate her race blog, she becomes the racialised Other within that same circle due to her non-Americanness. As a racial superior in contrast to Ifemelu's Otherness, Blaine becomes a coercive mentor in their affair. Upon Blaine's request, Ifemelu decides to support Barack Obama instead of Hillary Clinton since Obama embodies the racial dignity of African-Americans. On the day Barack Obama becomes the nominee of the Democratic Party, "Ifemelu and Blaine [make] love, for the first time in weeks, and Obama [is] there with them, like an unspoken prayer, a third emotional presence" (Adichie 356). The consummation of love entwined with racial politics metaphorically conveys how Ifemelu is used by Blaine to legitimise and validate his African-Americanness. This coercive political influence is further evidenced in Blaine's demand to revise Ifemelu's blog posts on America's racialised metropoles: "Remember people are not reading you as entertainment, they're reading you as cultural commentary. That's real responsibility […] Keep your style but add more depth" (Adichie 312). His intention of revising Ifemelu's racial standpoint is demonstrative of his effort to "appropriate, or at the least, adjudicate [her] voice on assumption he occupies superiority as prescient male academic and so informed intellectual" (Tetteh-Batsa 109). Hence, by observing Curt and Blaine's racial perspectives, it can be argued that racism governs and controls American men even though they are intellectuals or otherwise. Racial understanding and mutuality between African-Americans and African migrants "do not ultimately preclude, or attenuate repression" (Tetteh-Batsa 109).

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Whilst masculinities and racial orthodoxies in the West exacerbate the process of Othering migrant African women, African men in the diaspora also become the perpetrators of their women's victimisation. We witness a parallel between racial and sexual marginalisation of migrant African women within white capitalist patriarchy and exploitative and dominating African patriarchy domiciled in the diaspora. Migrant African men's effort to reconstruct the stereotypical image of the ideal and conventional African wifehood exacerbates gender discrimination by marginalising and Othering migrant African women within the domestic sphere. Migrant African women are burdened with the task of maintaining the traditional and stereotypical role of African wifehood[13] which is unfulfilling, self-abnegating and enslaving. Unigwe's short story "Becoming Prosperous" demonstrates how the migrant African female protagonist leaves her marginalised and self-abnegating position as a housewife and reclaims her personhood as a progressive and empowered woman. The narrative portrays how the reconstruction of traditional African wifehood in the diaspora becomes an emotional burden for the migrant African woman. The narrative reveals that Prosperous's husband, Agu, was caring and loving in the beginning of their marital life: "In the old days, they would have been doing this together: the cooking and the dancing and the kissing in between" (Unigwe 31). Unfortunately, after their migration to Belgium, Agu is transformed: he orders Prosperous to cook meals for his friends during their evening gatherings at home, and he avoids supporting her. Agu's dominating patriarchal character can be identified as one of masculinist Otherings of women within the marriage institution. This unequal masculinist arrangement underscores the recreation of patriarchal colonisation of the gendered Other. In the story, Agu works in a bread factory whilst

[13] Traditional African wifehood is a prioritization of a woman's conventional duties as a wife over her individuality.

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Prosperous is employed as a cleaner, a job does not commensurate with her university degree: "She has suffered as much as he has. Gave up much as he did" (Unigwe 35). Patriarchal configuration of power and superiority is evidenced in Prosperous's act of preparing meals in the sweltering kitchen whilst Agu and his male guests laugh and enjoy in the living room: "The kitchen is hot and she wishes there were a window she could open. She feels like she is being slowly steamed like the moin moin she is cooking on the bigger burner" (Unigwe 36). It can be asserted that Prosperous's job as a toilet-cleaner and her domestic position as a subservient housewife exemplify how she is doubly marginalised and oppressed as a migrant African woman. As Unigwe mentions in an interview with Laura Reinares, "once in Europe, husbands of those formerly independent women expect their wives to revert to traditional patriarchal roles, sometimes even reinforcing this through beatings" ("On Writing Transnational Migration" 6). Hence, it can be claimed that the migrant African woman's gendered position is conditioned by the dictates of a racialised and patriarchal culture in the West, and the enforced traditional African wifehood extends her gendered subordination and victimisation.

Despite masculinist domination and racism in the West, class privilege and elitism of white women functions as a xenophobic Othering of migrant African women. White women who are materially privileged occupy the position of the racial and class superior above the materially and racially disadvantaged position of migrant African women. As Audre Lorde writes in her essay "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," for white women "there is a wider range of pretended choices and rewards for identifying with patriarchal power and its tools" (118–119). As bell hooks conceptualises, "as women, particularly previously disenfranchised privileged white women, began to acquire class power without divesting of their internalized sexism, divisions between women intensified"

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("Feminism Is for Everybody" 16). Adichie's novel portrays the issue of classism between the privileged white woman and the disadvantaged migrant African woman. The white American woman's xenophobic denigration and classist exclusion of the migrant African woman is evidenced through the condescending attitude of Cristina Tomas, the officer at the registration desk in the college, towards Ifemelu. Cristina Tomas talks to Ifemelu in a disdainful tone with an emphasis on each word: "Yes. Now. Are. You. An. International. Student? […] I. Need. You. To. Fill. These. Out. Do. You. Understand. How. To. Fill. These. Out?" (Adichie 133). As a privileged white woman occupying racial and class elitism, Cristina Tomas "wields and exercises the power to distinguish and diminish international students' voices as different and inappropriate, and so proceeds to exclude them from proper or decorous treatment" (Tetteh-Batsa 58). The situation exemplifies that the migrant African woman occupies the place of the dehumanized subordinate in the context of white women's race and class superiority: "Ifemelu shrank. In that strained, still second when her eyes met Cristina Tomas's before she took the forms, she shrank. She shrank like a dead leaf" (Adichie 133). Being challenged by American racism and classism, Ifemelu starts practicing and perfecting an American accent, "which is a decisive step towards an American identity" (Feldner 187). The difficulty of achieving solidarity between privileged white American women and disadvantaged migrant African women is further demonstrated in Adichie's text through Ifemelu's employer's sister, Laura who maintains a contemptuous and mocking attitude towards Ifemelu. Laura's unwillingness to hire Ifemelu as their babysitter and her demeaning remarks of Africa's poverty exemplify her racial and class thinking. In a conversation with Ifemelu and Kimberly, Laura points out a photograph in a magazine captured in Nigeria in which "a thin white woman, smiling at the camera, holding a dark-skinned African baby in her arms, and all around her, little dark-

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skinned African children were spread out like a rug" (Adichie 163). This photograph that Laura uses to humiliate Ifemelu by pointing out Africa's poverty is an archetypal representation of Africa and its people as the racial Other in contrast to white-supremacist capitalism. White women's racial and class superiority which is very similar to white patriarchy's domination of the racial and sexual Other, perpetuates the migrant African woman's racial and economic inferiority.

Furthermore, it can be argued that white women's benevolence and goodness towards the racially Othered women is tainted with racism and classism. The racially and economically privileged white woman's benevolence and caring attitude towards the migrant African woman is suggestive of a kind of paternalism and racial authoritarianism. As bell hooks conceptualises, "when the dominant culture demands that the Other be offered as sign that progressive political change is taking place, that the American Dream can indeed be inclusive of difference, it invites a resurgence of essentialist cultural nationalism. The acknowledged Other must assume recognizable forms" ("Eating the Other" 370). For instance, in her novel Adichie depicts how this acknowledgement of the racial and class Other is a makeshift solution for racist and classist exploitation of migrant African women. As Adichie portrays, opposed to her xenophobic and classist sister, Laura, Kimberly displays a sense of acknowledgement and benevolent affection to Ifemelu, which is suggestive of an act to conceal the existence of racism and classism. Kimberly gives her old car for Ifemelu to use, stands against Laura's racist comments on Africa, and acknowledges and appreciates everything African/black. Kimberly's illogical appreciation of everything African is once challenged by Ifemelu when she points out a plain black model in a magazine and says that the woman is stunning: "You know, you can say just 'black'. Not every black person is beautiful" (Adichie 147). It can be posited that this adoration of blackness is "rooted in the atavistic belief that the spirit

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of the 'primitive' resides in the bodies of dark Others whose cultures, traditions, and lifestyles may indeed be irrevocably changed by imperialism, colonization, and racist domination" (hooks, "Eating the Other" 369). The racially and economically privileged white American woman's desire to appreciate and value the racialised Other "assuages the guilt of the past" (hooks, "Eating the Other" 369). Thus, Ifemelu's counter-argument on the African model's beauty works to unmask racism hidden beneath pretensions. The white American woman's overcompensation for the historical guilt exemplifies how she tries to mask the overriding issues of modern racism, classism, and even sexism.

Furthermore, the idea of racial, sexual and class Othering of migrant African women can be connected with the standards of beauty set by white supremacist culture. There is a racially denigrating and demeaning effect of white American and European beauty standards on African women. For instance, "black hair in its natural state is often negatively marked for its difference" (Randle 117). Adichie depicts the African woman's kinky, unruly hair as the ideal metaphor for racial and class Othering in America. To look professional for a job interview, Ifemelu relaxes and straightens her kinky hair, which ultimately leads to a scalp burn due to relaxer chemicals: "I need to look professional for this interview, and professional means straight is best but if it's going to be curly then it has to be the white kind of curly, loose curls or, at worst spiral curls but never kinky" (Adichie 204). As bell hooks argues in her Z Magazine essay "Straightening Our Hair,"[14] within white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the social and political context in which the custom of black folks straightening [their] hair emerges, it represents an imitation of the dominant white group's appearance and often indicates internalized racism, self-hatred, and/or

[14] In her article "Straightening Our Hair" (1988), which was published in Z Magazine, bell hooks theorises the connection between white supremacist racial politics and the African/black women's hair. She argues that the black women's obsession with hair reflects continued struggles with self-esteem and self-actualization.

low self-esteem". The black woman's act of straightening her hair is "exclusively a signifier of white supremacist oppression and exploitation" (hooks, "Straightening Our Hair"). When Ifemelu cuts her hair short, her office workers ask whether it has a political message or she is a lesbian: It seems that the African woman's natural hair is stereotyped and Othered as "an unwanted politically charged marker in the [American] workplace" (Randle 119). It can be asserted that the racist typecasts of treating African women's natural hair as inferior and different are the indicators of racist denigration of African migrant women in the West. Being confronted by those racial stereotypes of the African woman's hair, Ifemelu retorts in a tone of derision: "I have natural kinky hair. Worn in cornrows, Afros, braids. No, it's not political. No, I am not an artist or poet or singer. Not an earth mother either" (Adichie 297). The racial stereotypes of the African woman's hair construct the myth that "black women are not acceptable unless [they alter their] appearance or hair texture" (hooks, "Straightening Our Hair"). Thus, the social construction of the black female body and identity within racist and sexist Western societies perpetuates the racial, sexual and class Othering of migrant African women.

Accordingly, it can be posited that white supremacist capitalist patriarchy and other forms of masculinities in the diasporic context such as African-American patriarchy and African men's attempt to reconstruct traditional wifehood exploit the migrant African woman. Besides, white women's racial privilege and class elitism combined with racist, sexist and classist mythologies and stereotypes aggravate the process of Othering and marginalising immigrant African women. The racialised, gendered and classed experiences of the migrant African female protagonists in Adichie and Unigwe's narratives demonstrate how the socially constructed racist, sexist and classist structures and stereotypes dehumanise migrant African female bodies. The following section of this chapter will focus on migrant African female

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protagonists' resistance against these dehumanising xenophobic, patriarchal and economic archetypes in the West.

5.4. THE AFROPOLITAN WOMAN'S QUEST FOR GLOBAL CITIZENHOOD AND AGENCY

Afropolitan womanhood is a critical space of inquiring of what it means to be an empowered African woman in the global context. It is a process of decolonising migrant African women from the racist, sexist and classist restraints in mainstream hegemonic white culture in the West. Achille Mbembe theorises Afropolitanism as "a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity" (60). Based on Mbembe's theorisation, Afropolitan womanhood is a process of unlearning and deconstructing white supremacist attitudes against African femininity. In other words, high-achieving and cosmopolitan migrant African women challenge and resist "victimhood discourses attached to Africa and the Black diaspora" (Gehrmann 5). As Chielozona Eze conceptualises in his essay "Rethinking African Culture and Identity: the Afropolitan Model," Afropolitanism is a solution to "the write back discourse and its attendant binary identity that implicitly unwelcomes victimhood as a starting point of discourse and self-perception" (240). Using Adichie and Unigwe's narratives, this section of the chapter demonstrates Afropolitan women's unapologetic moves to dismantle the dominant discourses of racism, sexism and classism. Afropolitan women's unfettered agency signifies how they achieve Afropolitan consciousness through their transnational and transgressive geopolitical knowledge. Afropolitan female consciousness embodies these migrant female protagonists' "fundamental openness to others and otherness" (Eze, "We, Afropolitans" 115). These migrant African female protagonists' spatial mobility and cultural hybridity inform their "inner mobility and their readiness to negotiate reality" (Eze, "We, Afropolitans" 115). Inspired by these Afropolitan ideas, I

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demonstrates how the Afropolitan woman negates the victimhood discourses attached to Africa in her quest for global citizenhood and agency. Afropolitan female protagonists' counter-hegemonic moves against hegemonic white patriarchal culture and other forms of masculinities are analysed as an Afropolitan attempt to overthrow victimhood discourses attached to African femininity. These migrant female protagonists' transnational female-bonding is viewed as a supportive mechanism to overcome the trauma of racism, sexism and classism.

The Afropolitan woman dispels victimhood identities of African women constructed by mainstream hegemonic white capitalist patriarchy in the West. As Caroline Lyle argues, migrant African women's active role in their relationships with white men characterises them as black female subjects "with agency and breaks the prevalent 'politics of silence' surrounding black sexualities" (111). Afropolitan women's empowered subjectivity in her sexual intimacies dislodges the stereotype of "the nonsexual black lady" which has "become a staple in [popular culture]" (Springer 80). For instance, Ifemelu's romantic relationship with white American Curt in Adichie's novel "underscores or perhaps validate [the Afropolitan woman's] distinctive counter-normative power, which is [her] strategic acquiescence and submission to sanctioned arrangements for otherwise inaccessible socio-economic gains" (Tetteh-Batsa 96). Within white supremacist patriarchal culture, "black female sexuality is defined in relation to white maleness" (Springer 79). Racial stereotypes about African women's sexuality in the West demand them to be silent "about sexuality and sexual pleasure" (Springer 79). Adichie's Afropolitan female protagonist, Ifemelu, challenges and subverts this archetype of the asexual black woman by involving in a pleasurable sexual relationship with Curt. Though Curt exoticizes and instrumentalises Ifemelu's sexualised black body, she opens an avenue for sexual liberation through her affair with Curt. She willingly agrees and enjoys his

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romantic and passionate love-making, travelling to "Cozumel for one night, London for a long weekend" (Adichie 208), and accepts his financial assistance. As Kimberly Springer argues, "between respectability and silence, black women found little space to determine who they were as sexual beings" (79). As an empowered Afropolitan woman, Ifemelu does not 'silence' her sexuality, and thus considers it as an aspect of her freedom and agency. It is apparent that her affair with Curt offers her an opportunity to develop her social mobility and racial consciousness, which climaxes in her act of starting an online race blog. Furthermore, the stereotypical image of the sexually silent and respectable black woman is challenged through Ifemelu's act of cheating on Curt: "The sex was good the first time, she was on top of [the stranger], gliding and moaning and grasping the hair on his chest, and feeling faintly and glamorously theatrical as she did so" (Adichie 286). Ifemelu's sexual agency liberates her from the position of an object of white male gaze. At this point, we can see how she decides her sexual choices, becomes the agent of governing her sexuality and body. By liberating the African woman's sexuality from the stereotypical parameters of respectability and silence, Adichie's narrative corrects the entrenched image of the sexually subordinated and passive African woman.

Afropolitan idea of dispelling any form of victim identity attached to Africanness is a method of decolonising the migrant African female body from white patriarchal, racial and economic hierarchies in the West. The rejection of victimhood discourses attached to African femininity is not simply a process to gain liberation from an external coloniser, but to create a psychological and emotional space of autonomy and agency for migrant African women. In order to formulate a space of autonomy for the migrant African woman, she has to engage in a process of dismantling the racist, sexist and classist orthodoxies in the West about her body. For instance, in Adichie's novel, Ifemelu challenges American and Euro-centric beauty

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standards by discontinuing to use hair relaxers and accepting her natural kinky hair. Her acceptance of her natural kinky hair serves as a pointer to her act of dismantling white American beauty standards and racialised sexual politics on feminine beauty. Adichie deploys the extended metaphor of the African woman's natural kinky hair to demonstrate her Afropolitan female protagonist's reclamation of agency and autonomy. Ifemelu agrees with Wambui's stance that relaxing the natural kinky hair is "like being in prison" (Adichie 209). As bell hooks writes in her essay "Straightening Our Hair," the act of embracing the natural black hair is a celebration of black bodies, a participation "in a liberatory struggle that frees mind and heart". Ifemelu rejects the archetypical and prejudicial racist codes of feminine beauty by falling in love with her natural hair: "On an unremarkable day in early spring […] she looked in the mirror, sank her fingers into her hair, dense and spongy and glorious, could not imagine it any other way. That simply, she fell in love with her hair" (Adichie 213). In the same vein, she gives up her carefully practiced American accent as an act of liberating herself from the racist strictures in America. Ifemelu decides "to stop faking an American accent on a sunlit day in July" (Adichie 173). The lushness and warmth of a sunlit day in summer metaphorically represents how Ifemelu regains her true African identity as an empowered Afro-diasporic woman. Her search for her authentic personhood echoes Chielozona Eze's conception of the inner mobility of Afropolitans: "We are not trees that are condemned to a place. Our roots are in our hearts; we take them wherever we go, and remain committed to openness, which is the premise of our humanistic stance" ("We, Afropolitans" 117). Thus, Ifemelu's act of embracing the African cultural roots in her heart whilst remaining committed to cultural openness is an act of resistance against the dominant discourses of racism and sexism in America.

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As I have already outlined, Afropolitanism is "an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world" in which the victimhood position of Africans is challenged and dismantled (Mbembe 60). The migrant African woman's high-achieving, progressive, autonomous and cosmopolitan personhood delineates how Afropolitanism destabilises the victimhood position of African women. According to Mbembe's stance, Afropolitans are "broad-minded" and intellectually progressive, and thus they must "continually measure up against not the village next door, but against the world at large" (60). This kind of broad-minded and universalist Afropolitan and womanist temperament can be identified in Unigwe's female Afropolitan protagonists. She portrays how female economic migrants who leave Nigeria and settle in Belgium refuse patriarchal victimisation by rejecting traditional and normative gendered roles prescribed for women. In Unigwe's short story "Becoming Prosperous," she demonstrates migrant African women's "audacious, courageous [and] willful behaviour" (Walker xi) as a transgressive Afro-diasporic femininity. The short story portrays how Prosperous challenges her husband's attempt to domesticate her as a traditional housewife. Before migrating to Belgium as an economic migrant, Prosperous has worked as a successful financial worker in a bank in Nigeria. Her husband, Agu, decides to leave Nigeria due to the ethnic riots in Jos. Due to the sudden migration, Prosperous has to work as a toilet-cleaner in the host country: "Her boss in Nigeria used to say that she was his most dedicated member of staff, nothing escaped her attention. And now, how easily she has transferred that dedication to toilet bowls and wooden floors" (Unigwe 43). In an epiphanic moment, Prosperous decides to reclaim her agency when she is informed that one of her friends in Nigeria, Ifeatu, is running for governor of Enugu State. Her act of overthrowing her victimhood as a subservient housewife and cleaner is embodied in her decision to master Dutch, the language of Belgium, since it will open

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endless prospects for her: "If Ifeatu could chase her dreams, why can she not?" (Unigwe 46). Opposed to Agu who never entertains the notion of learning Dutch and trying for a progressive career, Prosperous represents the development of an Afropolitan identity that can transcend gendered victimisation. Also, she plans to register for a course in graphic designing or bookkeeping, something closer to her educational qualifications, or for something new and radical as printer or mechanic. Prosperous's self-determination and courageousness exhibits her womanist character, her "love for struggle" (Walker xi).

It can be posited that Afropolitan women challenge patriarchal ideologies of female subordination and victimisation. As Sylvia Bawa and Grace Ogunyankin note, "the practice of re-asserting patriarchal control over women who are economically independent remains a problem in postcolonial societies" (4). Afropolitan women resist "immutable cultural expectations that limit women's possibilities outside of the domestic" (Bawa and Ogunyankin 10). Unigwe's short story "Cleared for Takeoff" aptly exemplifies the Afropolitan woman's transgression of the culturally-tailored victimhood discourses attached to African women such as the subordinated wifehood and 'good' motherhood. Ego's empowered Afro-diasporic womanhood in Unigwe's narrative embodies how the Afropolitan woman goes beyond the traditional postcolonial migrant narratives and reimagines new diasporic possibilities for African women. Ego, a graduate in Chemical Engineering, migrates to Belgium with her husband and daughter because her husband, a football player, wants to play with a first division team. Tragically, a knee injury terminates his football career and he ends up working in a furniture manufacturing factory. As a resilient Afropolitan woman, Ego metamorphoses from her subservient wifehood to agency once she decides to leave her husband and daughter for a teaching position in London: "A schoolmate of hers with whom she had reconnected on Facebook had

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told her there was a shortage of good teachers in London. Why was she wasting her brilliant education in a factory?" (Unigwe 91). Her husband files for divorce with full custody of the daughter, she does not "contest the divorce" (Unigwe 95). It is revealed in the story that Ego has worked too hard for her degree "to ever feel satisfied not being able to work without it" (Unigwe 93). Ego's act of leaving her husband and daughter demonstrates how geographical mobility provides the opportunity for the African woman to transcend traditional ideologies of wifehood and motherhood. In the political discourse of patriarchal nationalism[15], African women are expected to focus on being 'good' mothers and "reproduce nation" (Bawa and Ogunyankin 4). By transgressing the traditional patriarchal discourse of 'ideal' wifehood and motherhood, the Afropolitan woman "moves beyond the nation and the continent in terms of geography and ideology for liberation" (Hodapp 5). In the narrative, Ego's spatial mobility informs "her inner mobility and [her] readiness to negotiate reality" (Eze, "We, Afropolitans" 115). Ego does not say that "she [is] a bad mother, putting her career before her family" (Unigwe 95). By resisting and rebelling against the idealised and extoled metaphor of African motherhood, Afropolitan womanhood dismantles the nativistic and nationalist patriarchal burdens placed upon African women's bodies. Instead of favouring the 'ideal' motherhood trope, Unigwe presents a picture of an economically independent, cosmopolitan and high-achieving female character through Ego's metamorphosis: "She dressed like someone out of a magazine. Red lipstick and high heeled shoes, skirts with slits and colourful sweaters. And always, she smelt of perfume" (Unigwe 93). Hence, the Afropolitan woman's ability to think beyond the nation and its hegemonic and nationalistic patriarchal ideologies allows her to overthrow victimhood and to reclaim her autonomy.

[15] Patriarchal nationalism in African nations idealizes and idolizes motherhood by linking it with the nation. Though patriarchal nationalism constructs motherhood as an ideal virtue, it becomes a self-abnegating servitude for women. For example, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) portrays how motherhood becomes a form of victimhood within patriarchal culture.

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Central to the process of unlearning victimhood discourses attached to African femininity is the Afropolitan woman's formulation of critical consciousness, the ability to deconstruct the dominant racial, patriarchal and class prejudices in the West. The migrant African woman expands her Afropolitan consciousness by decolonising their minds and breaking with "the kind of white supremacist thinking" (hooks, "Loving Blackness" 18). In Adichie's novel, Ifemelu develops her Afropolitan consciousness, the process of unlearning and deconstructing mainstream hegemonic white culture, through her critical engagement in writing an online race blog. As Serena Guarracino writes, Adichie's narrative "self-consciously engages with the trope of Afropolitanism in its own arena, social media, by having its character writing a blog not just on Nigeria or the US, but on race as a global discourse" (11). As an empowered Afro-diasporic woman, Ifemelu's decision to write a blog can be read as "the liberation of her voice, which serves as a metaphor for her growing subjectivity" (Reuters 7). As an Afropolitan metaphor for her social activism and agency, the online blog *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black* emblematises her womanist character, her critical commitment "to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (Walker xi). Ifemelu reveals how she becomes the racialised Other by travelling to America: "I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America" (Adichie 290). Writing an online blog allows Ifemelu to regain her voice, "something the immigrant is often denied, and enables her to comment upon her experiences in the new society" (Feldner 192). For example, in one blog entry, she narrates the incident of a white American carpet cleaner who mistakes Ifemelu, the babysitter at Kimberly's, as the owner of the big house, and thus treats her in a contemptuous manner. In her blog post "Sometimes in America, Race Is Class," she

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illustrates the nexus between race and class in America: "*It didn't matter to [the white American carpet cleaner] how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked*" (Adichie 167). In another post, she sardonically comments on the absence of racists in America whilst racism remains deeply ingrained in the community: "In America, racism exists but racists are all gone. Racists belong to the past. Racists are the thin-lipped mean white people in the movies about the civil rights era" (Adichie 316). As an Afropolitan cyberspace, the blog dismantles racist, sexist and classist discourses that victimise migrant African women. Her acquirement of Afropolitan critical consciousness echoes the womanist idea that the African woman is "oppressed not simply because of her sex but ostensibly because of her race and, for majority, essentially because of their class" (Hudson-Weems 19). Ifemelu's blog posts on racial history of America, Michelle Obama's hair as a race metaphor, and Barack Obama as the Magic Negro entertainingly "educate and shape public consciousness" (Tetteh-Batsa 104). Thus, the Afropolitan woman's activism to dispel victimhood discourses such as racism, sexism and classism exemplifies her "collective struggle with the entire community [to enhance] future possibilities for the dignity of African people and the humanity of all" (Hudson-Weems 31).

Furthermore, Afropolitan consciousness is "an attempt to rethink African knowledge outside the trope of crisis" (Gikandi 9). Instead of positioning Africa and its people in stark opposition to Western modernity, Afropolitan consciousness attempts to "overcome the malady of Afro-pessimism – the belief that the continent and its populace is hopelessly imprisoned in its past, trapped in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment, and held hostage to corrupt institutions" (Gikandi 9). Ifemelu's Nigerian blog *The Small Redemptions of Lagos*, which is a replication of the rational Afropolitan voice she brings to her race blog in America, embodies a liberatory

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vision, “a symbolic reclamation of a contested voice better housed in an African context unencumbered by discomfiting racism” (Tetteh-Batsa 116). Attuned to social, economic and political realities of homeland, her Nigerian blog makes the audience aware of “the danger of blindfolded copying of Western modernity in a Nigeria’s rapid and impatient grasp at material improvement and social advancement” (Knudsen and Rahbek, “In Search of the Afropolitan” 137). Ifemelu explains to Obinze that she prefers to travel through Nigeria “and post dispatches from each state, with pictures and human stories” (Adichie 436). Her attempt to overthrow Afro-pessimistic ideologies exemplifies her activist and empowered political stance. Her openness to comprehend the diversity, richness and uniqueness of different cultures is a testimony to the Afropolitan woman’s transcendental global perspective. In one blog post, she writes: “Lagos has never been, will never be, and has never aspired to be like New York, or anywhere else for that matter. Lagos has always been undisputably itself” (Adichie 421). Ifemelu’s Nigerian blog is symbolic of her self-perception as a global citizen and an Afro-diasporic woman with an open mind. It is fair to claim that the Afropolitan woman’s spatial mobility is “the motif that frames [her] radical openness to reality” (Eze, “We, Afropolitans” 115). It is understandable that Ifemelu, as an Afropolitan, “perceives the world from multiple perspectives” (Eze, “We, Afropolitans” 117). Her open-mindedness is evidenced in her act of appreciating the culinary culture of her homeland: “[Nigeria] is a nation of people who eat beef and chicken and cow skin and intestines and dried fish in a single bowl of soup, and it is called assorted, and so get over yourselves and realize that the way of life here is just that, assorted” (Adichie 421). As a liberal space of critical ideas, Ifemelu’s blog metaphorizes the Afropolitan woman’s global perspective and her psychological ability to transcend the bounded constraints of the

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nation. By transcending these geographical and ideological limitations, she succeeds her quest for Afropolitan female agency and liberation.

Moreover, it is important to focus on **transnational African female solidarity** as an Afropolitan process of dismantling the victimhood discourses against migrant African women such as white-supremacist xeno-racist prejudices, sexual discrimination and economic marginalization. As a process of decolonising migrant African women from hegemonic white patriarchal discourses of racialised sexism and classism, the solidarity amongst Afro-diasporic women is based on their shared aspirations and achievements. As bell hooks theorises, women should bond with "other women on the basis of shared strengths and resources [because] it is this type of bonding that is the essence of Sisterhood" ("Sisterhood" 128). This type of transnational African woman-bonding is portrayed in Adichie's novel through the female solidarity amongst Ifemelu and her African migrant friends, Ginika and Wambui. Ginika guides Ifemelu to find her first job as a babysitter whilst Wambui encourages her to write the race blog. After reading Ifemelu's e-mail on the African woman's kinky hair and its associated race politics, Wambui inspires her to become a blogger: "This is so raw and true. More people should read this. You should start a blog" (Adichie 295). When Ifemelu is distressed due to the relaxer burn occurred as a result of straightening her kinky hair, Wambui asks her to overthrow white standards of beauty and accept her natural hair: "It's the chemicals […] Do you know what's in a relaxer? That stuff can kill you. You need to cut your hair and go natural" (Adichie 208). Wambui's words motivate Ifemelu to reject archetypal beauty standards constructed by Western culture. Thus, Adichie's narrative positions the transnational African sisterhood against the racist, sexist and classist topography of America to delineate how Afropolitan sisterhood promises passageways for female agency and autonomy across the entwined fetters of racism, sexism and classism. In

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other words, transnational African female friendships promise survival and agency for migrant African women by challenging white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy's racial, sexual and economic discriminations against the racialised Other.

Additionally, transnational African woman-bonding provides emotional strength for the migrant African woman to overcome the 'trauma' of racialised sexism. Unigwe's short story "How to Survive a Heat Wave" demonstrates how its migrant female protagonist, Añuli, "inherits womanism" after her traumatic experience of attempted gang rape" (Ogunyemi 28). Añuli's migrant Nigerian friends, Oge and Prosperous, assist her to overcome her traumatic memories by listening to her tragedy. The narrative exemplifies how global sisterhood amongst African women can become a supportive mechanism for African women to regain their agency. Significantly, Añuli's conversation with her two friends takes place at the kitchen table whilst the three women are shelling the unshelled egusi seeds (Unigwe 107). The female-centric space and seriousness of the revelation invoke the womanist metaphor of the kitchen table. As womanist theorist Layli Phillips notes, "the kitchen table is an informal, woman-centred space where all are welcome and all can participate […] At the kitchen table people share the truths of their lives on equal footing and learn through face-to-face conversation" (xxvii). Towards the end of the story, Añuli uncovers the truth: how the young Belgian men on the isolated night train have forced her to consume beer and violated her by forcefully touching her breasts and genitals. She hides the trauma from her husband, and ultimately, exposes it to her friends as a means of overcoming the distress and regaining her agency: "[She] opens her mouth and the words that could not come out before begin to spill out, spreading out in the room, mingling with her pool of tears, releasing the clamp in her chest, relieving her of that unholy trifecta" (Unigwe 114). Her act of speaking and disclosing her traumatic experience underscores how African female

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solidarity allows women to regain their voice and agency. She finds it is comfortable to share her traumatic experience with the fellow Nigerian friends. It is understandable that transnational African sisterhood is a counter-hegemonic effort to destabilise dominant discourses of racial oppression, sexual discrimination and economic marginalisation against the migrant African woman.

Accordingly, migrant African women confront white supremacist patriarchal culture and its racial, gender and class stereotypes in her quest for global citizenhood and agency. Reclaiming Afropolitan global citizenhood is an eradication of victimhood discourses attached to Africa and Africanness. Adichie and Unigwe's Afropolitan narratives represent how migrant African women formulate Afropolitan consciousness and womanist agency as a counter-hegemonic approach to dismantle racist, sexist and classist restraints and prejudices in the West. Their quest for empowered Afro-diasporic femininity envisages an emerging global female identity that can negotiate and resist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy and other forms of dominant masculinities in the diaspora.

5.5. CONCLUSION

Afropolitan narratives of third-generation Nigerian writers challenge conventional postcolonial images of Afro-diasporic womanhood. Afropolitanism offers a model of redefining migrant African womanhood by redressing racialised, gendered and classed stereotypes created by white-supremacist patriarchal culture in the West. Afropolitan female agency is not simply a process of dismantling racism, sexism and classism, but an approach of transcending psychological barriers erected by nationalism and autochthony. Adichie and Unigwe's Afropolitan female protagonists challenge racial, sexual and class archetypes in Western culture as a way of claiming an empowered and autonomous Afro-diasporic female identity. Their acts of negotiation and resistance against racialised sexism and classism in Euro-

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American context signal the emergence of a new diasporic reality which dispels racist denigration, sexual discrimination and class marginalisation of the migrant African woman.

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CONCLUSION

Contemporary third generation Nigerian fictional narratives reimagine the African woman's gendered position within the national and global contexts by challenging oppressive patriarchal culture and its gendered constraints. These contemporary Nigerian writers portray spirited, determined and empowered female characters who are pitted against hegemonic masculinist culture and its oppressive gendered norms. The ideological rebel against the archetypical representations of the African woman which has been started by first and second generation female writers such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and Ifeoma Okoye has been re-energized and uplifted in the works of third generation writers. This dissertation foregrounds how Nigerian women decolonize their gendered and sexualized bodies through their resistance against oppressive masculinist discourses. This research has transcended the monolithic definitions of African femininity by demonstrating how this new generation of writers counters and responds to the stereotyped and impaired image of the African woman. They re-write postcolonial Nigeria itself by redefining the Nigerian woman's gendered experiences in masculinist national and global spaces.

The first analysis chapter entitled "The Empowered African Daughters" is an exploration of the adolescent Nigerian girl's spiritual quest for womanist agency and self-definition. The female protagonists in Atta and Abraham's coming-of-age novels metamorphose from victimhood to agency within patriarchal spaces. Their resilient quest for empowerment is read against the masculinist nation and its gendered normativity as a way of metaphorizing how the postcolonial Nigerian woman resists male discourses of her nation. The adolescent womanists dislodge the masculinist configuration of the nation by offering alternative and ideologically progressive female-centric ideals to belong to the nation. Atta and Abraham move their female protagonists out of the domestic sphere and position them within the challenging

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political arena of the nation. Whilst the first analysis chapter has provided the foundation for this dissertation by addressing the adolescent Nigerian girl's spiritual journey for empowerment, the next chapter entitled "The African Woman's Sexual Awakening" identifies the Nigerian woman's transgressive sexualities as an epistemic revisioning of African womanhood. It has been argued that the emergent lesbian subjectivity and the Nigerian Muslim woman's sexual transgression and agency as a deconstruction of the stereotypical gendered codes of the African woman's body and sexuality. There is a tendency in African culture to consider transgressive sexual performativity as lesbianism is un-African. However, the sexually liberated female protagonists in Okparanta and Ibrahim's debut novels offer a fascinating and gripping counter argument against religiously and culturally constructed female sexual normativity. The rise of Nigerian literature on women's sexual transgression is a radical epistemic shift in African literature. It liberates women's sexuality from oppressive masculinist discourses that govern women's bodies. Okparanta and Ibrahim dispel the myth of the sexually subordinated African woman by foregrounding her spiritual ability to challenge and resist heteronormative patriarchy and oppressive religious teachings against women's bodily freedom.

The third analysis chapter of this dissertation entitled "The African Woman in War and Violence" has identified an important shift in Nigerian war novels, from a focus on Biafra to the Boko Haram insurgency. It has demonstrated that recent Nigerian literature offers a compelling counter narrative to the masculinist discourse of sexual terrorism backed by religious fundamentalism. Set against the masculinist background of sexual violence and brutality, Nwaubani and Ibrahim's Boko Haram narratives depict the Nigerian woman's struggle and resistance against male chauvinism and religious orthodoxy. Here I argued that the male agenda of sexual terrorism and religious extremism function as oppressive masculinist tools to

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transform women's gendered bodies into battlegrounds. These third generation Boko Haram narratives give voice to the subaltern female war victim through the depiction of her emotional transformation from trauma to self-healing and agency. Using the womanist ideals of Walker and Ogunyemi, it has been posited that the victimised women's trauma becomes a temporary aberration preceding spiritual growth, healing and integration. The female war victim's metamorphosis from victimhood to self-healing is viewed as a womanist rebel against the dehumanizing forces of masculinist agenda of sexual terrorism.

This dissertation concludes with an analysis of the migrant African woman's resistance against the racist, sexist and classist strictures in the West. The last chapter entitled "The African Woman's Quest for Global Citizenhood" demonstrates how the migrant African woman formulates Afropolitan consciousness and agency as a counter-hegemonic move against the dominant white patriarchal discourses of racial discrimination, sexual oppression and class marginalization. This chapter has demonstrated that third generation Nigerian novels transcend the national boundaries and position African womanhood against challenging global concerns such as racism, sexism and classism. Adichie and Unigwe's spirited Afropolitan female protagonists negotiate and challenge the racist and sexist archetypes in Western societies of America and Europe. Third generation Afro-diasporic female narrative exhibit migrant African women's counter hegemonic moves against white supremacist capitalist patriarchy and its racial and gendered prejudices.

This investigation of third generation Nigerian narratives as a body of academic work allows us to comprehend its new trends and approaches in addressing women's gendered subjectivity. The writers of this generation ideologically and epistemically revision and reimagine African womanhood by altering impaired and stereotypical pictures of African women. Their narratives are no longer restrained by

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patriarchal national, religious or cultural concerns. They produce new and fascinating models of female personhoods that subvert masculinist discourses of power and dominance. A compelling aspect of this generation of writers is that their ability to position the African woman within complex issues such as political tyranny, homophobia, religious fundamentalism, racial marginalization and economic hardships. Their gendered positioning of women within diverse spaces represents a fascinating effort to dismantle hegemonic masculinities and gender injustice. Nevertheless, due to the vastness of themes in third generation texts, it is not easy to pigeonhole these new writers along a particular ideological or theoretical stance. This dissertation is an attempt to demonstrate how emerging female identities in their writings challenge and subvert patriarchal power structures and normative codes against women's gender performativity.

Based on these conclusions, a future researcher can examine emerging queer sexualities in Nigerian/African narratives as an epistemic revisioning of African feminism and gender identity. This kind of future research can be extended to explore lesbian, gay and transgender sexual identities of African subjects in the context of diaspora. By so doing, a future researcher should demonstrate how African feminism and gender ideas are gradually coming closer to more liberal and radical stances in Western feminism and gender theory.

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