

Satire, humour, and parody in 21st century Nigerian women's poetry

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Abstract

21st century Nigerian women poets have continued to utilise the aesthetics of literary devices as linguistic and literary strategies to project feminist privations and values in their creative oeuvres. There has been marginal interest towards 21st century Nigerian women's poetry and their deployment of artistic devices such as satire, humour, and parody. Unequivocally, such linguistic and literary devices in imaginative works are deployed as centripetal force to criticise, amidst laughter, the ills of female devaluation in the society. The major thrust of the study, therefore, is to examine how satire, humour and parody are deployed in selected Nigerian women's poetry to reproach and etch the collective ethos of women's experience in contemporary Nigerian society. The study utilises qualitative analytical approach in the close reading and textual analysis of the selected texts focusing mainly on the aesthetics of humour, satire, and parody in challenging male chauvinism in contemporary Nigerian women's poetry. Three long poems: "Nuptial Counsel", "Sadiku's Song", and "The Sweet, Sweet Mistress' Tale" by Mabel Ewweirhoma and Maria Ajima respectively were purposively selected. The choice of the selected poems hinges on the artistic vigour, especially the evoking of laughter, mockery and condemnation of hegemonic structures through the use of satire, humour, and parody. The paper employs Molaria Ogundipe's Stiwanism, an aspect of Feminist theory in the analysis of the selected poems. The poets have shown the interventions of humour, satire, and parody as linguistic devices in condemning and highlighting peculiarities of women peonage in Nigeria.

Keywords: 21st century Nigerian women's poetry, feminism, humour, poetic devices.

1. Introduction

21st century Nigerian female poets contend with myriads of sexist forces which tend to inhibit their aspirations in contemporary society. The 21st century is the period from year 2000 to 2099. Between year 2000 to the present moment, Nigerian female poets have demonstrated literary fecundity in the genre of poetry. In criticising patriarchal ills especially through the medium poetry, Nigerian female poets have also shown maturity in the deployment of literary devices such as satire and parody. The use of satire and parody could be described as

gimmicks and burbling stylistic intervention especially in using humour amidst the condemnation of uncouth vitiation of women in the society. Satire condemns social injustice through humour, irony, caricature, and parody (Dickson-carr 2012). Satirical rhetorics in literary works often aim at drawing readers' attention to external connections of the text and the ills of the society. While the reader or listener feels the painful dissection of a social malady, s/he is consoled with the humour which often provokes laughter in the mockery of the perpetrators of the particular vices. Parody, however, is a mocking imitation of a literary work or individual author's style, usually for comical effect (Kennedy & Gioia 2007: 21) Parody often but not in all cases exaggerates or disrupts the peculiar feature or style of the original work for comical or humorous effects. It is often intended to mock (Hornby 2000: 842)

Humour in most cases often spur readers or listeners into laughter; it functions as a cognitive factor which stimulates laughter in the audience (Polimeni & Reiss 2006: 347). Similarly, Adjei (2015: 195), sees humour as "the cognitive process which often but not always leads to the realisation of the seizure-like activity called laughter". Hence humour like satire and parody is deployed as a literary device aimed at activating the interest of the audience in any imaginative work. Satire, parody, and humour are deployed as physical slapsticks or as acoustic devices of condemning societal ills or individuals whose (in)actions are detrimental to the society. It is important to state that humour in most cases may not necessarily be situated in condemnation. As Ogonna (2015: 1) puts it, humour means the quality of being amusing or comic. However, satire and parody often tilt towards mockery and condemnation. While employing the gimmicks of humour such as playing on the convention of language or logic to activate laughter, writers deploy humour, satire, and parody to goad and sustain readers' interest. Specifically, in the selected works, the poets deploy satire, parody, and humour as textual playfulness in condemning the ill treatments of women in the society. Readers are carefully led through these literary devices to scorn the sexist practices against women and how such practices are countered by women amidst laughter embedded in the deployment of humour by the poets. Satire, parody, and humour, therefore, are intertwined as they all point to the direction of ridiculing amidst laughter.

As Akingbe (2014: 47) avers, "satire is grounded in the poetics of contemporary Nigerian poetry in order to criticise certain aspects of the social ills plaguing the Nigerian society". Besides socio-political vices by which women are often the mostly badly hit, Nigerian women also suffer from unobtrusive sexist practices which cage their aspirational goals. This is visible especially in most African societies where the women are seen as their husband's property and it is more often than not unethical for them to aspire too much (Abesede 2002: 109). Nigerian women poets employ satire as a suitable medium of condemning vices against the female being. Ogonna (2015: 74) sees satire as using "wit, humour, irony, mockery to attack human vices, weakness, stupidities and follies in order to correct them". This therefore presupposes that a satirist must be gifted with a sense of humour and wit while ridiculing human follies. In Nigerian Literature, critics have explored the deft intervention and use of satire and parody in creative works to criticise and condemn societal ills (Akingbe 2014). Akpah (2018: 231) also elucidates the deployment of satire and parody in Nigerian literature to tackle male hegemony.

It seems, however, that most critical attention has focused largely of the imaginative works of the male writers at the expense of their female counterparts. For instance, Akingbe (2014) examined "satire as confrontation language in contemporary Nigerian poetry", interrogating Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Chiweizu, Femi Fatoba, Odia Ofeimun, Ezenwa Ohaeto, Obiora Udechukwu and Ogaga Ifowodo, all Nigerian male poets. One wonders if the sense of humour, wit and mockery as linguistic and literary gymnastics is the exclusive right of the male poets in Nigeria.

A feminist reading of imaginative works seeks to uncover, condemn, or counter male chauvinistic tendencies. Stiwanism as an afrocentric model of feminism was accredited to 'Molara Ogundipe-Leslie. It is an acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa. Stiwanism seeks to close the gap of gender classification. It negotiates for the inclusion of African women alongside their men in the repositioning of the socio-economic and political well-being of both men and women in the society. Ogundipe-Leslie "criticises the plight of African women as due to the impact of imposed colonial and neo-colonial structures that often place African males at the height of social stratification" (Ezenwa-Ohaeto 2015: 61). Besides, the conception of Molara Ogundipe's stiwanism protests the complexities of women against the backdrop of patriarchal order in Africa, which favours men as major actors in the transformation and decision-making of the society. Ogundipe-Leslie's stiwanism seems to be particular about the nightmare, and other socio-cultural, economic, and political conditions women in Africa face. In an interview with Adebayo Aduke (1996) quoted in Chidi Maduka (2009: 12), Ogundipe-Leslie says:

"Stiwa" means 'Social Transformation' including women of Africa! I wanted to stress the fact that what we want in Africa is social transformation. It's not about warring with the men, the reversal of role, or doing to men whatever women think that men have been doing for centuries, but it is trying to build a harmonious society. The transformation of African society is the responsibility of both men and women and it is also in their interest.

True, Ogundipe-Leslie's feminist approach is not 'warring with men' as evident in the radical feminists' disposition of the West. Stiwanism seeks the positive transformation of the African society with men and women given equal opportunities to participate as active agents. Ogundipe Leslie's feminist ideological stand rethinks the place of women in nation building. Thus, the business of nation building in Africa is in the hands of both men and women. Women, therefore, like men do, should aspire to attain political leadership, participate actively in the social, cultural, and economic uplift of the society. As a teacher, poet, literary critic, feminist activist, social critic, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie is not unacquainted with the socio-cultural and religious underpinnings which relegate women and undermine their relevance.

Ogundipe-Leslie in *Re-creating Ourselves: African Woman and Critical Transformation* (1974) argues that stiwanism negotiates "the inclusion of African women in the contemporary social and political transformation in Africa". Thus, African women should not play a secondary role to men in the modern socio-political transformation of the society. Chioma Opara (2013: 64-65) is of the view that "there can be no doubt that Ogundipe-Leslie is patently committed to the economic and political emancipation of all classes of women". Stiwanism, like other variants of African feminism/womanism, is though foregrounded in African culture, experiences and peculiarities, seeks air of pride in women's self-discovery and actualisation of their goals without losing their male presence or companionship. Aliyu-Ibrahim (2011) is of the view that, in Ogundipe-Leslie's stiwanism, the ideology of women has to be situated in the context of the African experience. This is unlike western feminism which tackles the symbolic order of western patriarchy (Humm 1995: 51).

The discourse of this paper is not without the explication and exposition of the anguish women suffer in contemporary patriarchal society; the paper also explores the linguistic manipulation or deployment of satire, humour, and parody as textual acrobatics in reflecting and countering the displacement of women in Nigeria's socio-cultural milieu by Nigerian female poets.

2. Interrogating satire, humour, and parody as textual playfulness in Mabel Evwierhoma and Ajima's poetry

The poetry of Mabel Evwierhoma and Maria Ajima is imbued with the use of humour, satire and parody. Evwierhoma employs satire as a textual strategy in her examination of oppressive constructs which confer servitude to the female being in marriage. In her poetry collection, *A Song as I Am*, Evwierhoma demonstrated a deft use of satire and parody deployed to create humour in her condemnation of patriarchal hegemony. There is evidence of humour and wit in Evwierhoma exposition of the uncouth negative practices against the woman in her poetry. In the poem "Nuptial Counsel", for instance, Evwierhoma uses the dramatic poem to satirise nuptial counsel which often is initiated to preach morals and submissive virtues to the newly and about to be married bride:

Be quiet my child when your man speaks
look down and count your toes – never look up
to look at his face is insolence
cook his meals launder his clothes
massage his ego – no matter how fragile
at night time no matter your aches welcome him

always:
with open arms and open legs
keep quiet my child when in-laws arrive
with bended knees and head bowed
See to their needs and special whims –
A welcome always awaits the in-law
whether young, old, male or female.
It does not matter what day of month or time of night.
When he brings a co-wife
and this causes you heart pain
smile and let your lips reach you ears
he was circumcised to please several wives

(Evwierhoma 2005: 10.)

The lines above hint on all that relates to the towering patriarchal order which combine to mute the voice(s) of housewives and force them into perpetual submissive roles in marriage. Against the backdrop of a society which believes that the "ideal wife is defined through her relationship with her husband and her children [...] more so if this commitment entails the sacrifice of her own interest" (Flora Nwapa 2007: 538); the wife must ensure that she respects her traditional roles. Thus, the about-to-wed bride has to be properly groomed by her mother to "be quiet" and totally submit to her man and the in-law if she would breathe the air of existence in her matrimonial home. The wife should, therefore, learn that she has no control over her body and hence must be willing to welcome her man "with open arms and open legs"; she must be told also that her privacy can be bombarded by unhindered in-laws' patronage who may invade her privacy at will.

The simplicity of the diction foregrounds the simple life and humility the wife is bound to exist. She must not allow the psychological trauma even if the man decides to bring "a co-wife". The woman should be humble and must not allow the entrance of a co-wife to cause her any "heart pain" (Evwierhoma 2005: 21) for it is the right of her husband "to please several wives" (Evwierhoma 2005: 10). This opens another debate on the socio-cultural elevation of sexism which favours men to practice polygamy while making it a taboo for the women. The

woman thus becomes enslaved by societal constructs and identity since “she is nothing but a slave to everything” (Bamgbose 2012:100).

Evwierhoma hammers on the fate of the African woman in marriage where in most patriarchal cultures, the woman’s body and anatomical configuration are used as a means of putting her at a disadvantaged position (Jegede 2011: 213). And truly, the woman, particularly the wife, is doubly at a disadvantaged position. Back in her parents’ home, she is stripped of recognition and rights and now in her matrimonial home, her right and freedom of existence are caged by patriarchal dictates. She is, therefore, at sea during moments of marital conflict. The poet makes it clear through this nuptial counsel by the mother:

My child the day you married you became something
under your husband totally to be controlled
and ironed out your personality flat.
Never come back here when there is a rift
your room was given out to your brother

(Evwierhoma 2005: 10.)

Evwierhoma further exhumes the battered pride of the woman after marriage. She satirises the subjectivity of the woman while deploying comical strategy as often associated with humour to show how the woman is stifled by double-decked socio-cultural constructs which perceive her as a disgrace outside her matrimonial home. For her to be adjudged a “full and complete woman”, she must be emotionally and psychologically prepared for a long journey into servitude by her mother.

Evwierhoma’s creative fecundity and use of satire manifest in how she employs humour to activate laughter in her readers while leading them to scorn the intimidating sexist order in “Nuptial Counsel”. The dramatic structure of the poem is impressed in the concluding part of the poem when the daughter responds to her mother’s nuptial counsel:

Mother, to be tongue tied when my man speaks
Means I have no voice or language
or was born mute.
Mother to ask a question is to live
To query your situation is life
Beauty lies in asking the why of your circumstance
and:
To seek change is life

(Evwierhoma 2005: 11.)

The impression conveyed in the lines above is that of a conversation between a mother and her about-to-marry daughter. Evwierhoma graphically inscribes how the daughter who universalises the “modern woman” is willing to confront negative traditional roles and social constructs which seek to define her existence. She parodies such traditionally sanctioned constructs which deprive women of their privacy, freedom, right to life and mandatorily force them to bow redundantly to masculinist orientations. Hence the enlightened and educationally advantaged woman knows that “to be tongue-tied” when her “man speaks”, means that she has “no voice”. Fully aware of the rampaging patriarchal structures which overshadow her freedom and right to exist, the “modern woman” like the daughter in the poem knows that if she fails to challenge forces of oppression, she “will become totally invisible and silenced by figures of power” (Kehinde 2006: 171). The daughter, therefore, asks rhetorically:

Why should I be quiet mother?
I talk to father

I talk to my brothers
Father is a man
My brothers are men too
My man is a man like them

(Evwierhoma 2005: 11.)

The poet persona typifies a fully enlightened woman who is in charge of her world. As a matter of fact, she is aware that her husband and his relations are not super beings. They are like her father and brothers whom she interacts and engages on issues which affect her being. Therefore, to be cowed into degrading or subservient role as her mother counsels is sequel to selling herself into slavery. The interactive mode of the poem which involves two characters, that is, the mother and the daughter, symbolically suggests the older traditional women represented by the mother, and the new generation of women which the daughter represents. The “new” women are not willing to be overshadowed by primordial sexist underpinnings and have vowed to challenge the *status quo*. This is evident in the last stanza of the poem where the daughter indicates her resolve to rupture society’s heritage of traditions and norms which intrude on the socio-cultural life of the women. She therefore responds:

I WILL stand tall mother
I WILL not be dwarfed
and I realise this
In-laws may come and go
Should I be servile to all?

(Evierhoma 2005: 11.)

The choice of upper case in “WILL” is indicative of the poet persona’s resolution to stand firm in her confrontation against oppressive behaviours which are clearly accentuated in her mother’s nuptial counsel. This is also accompanied by the tone of determination and rejection which pervade the last stanza. This suggests the daughter’s determination not to allow her being “to be dwarfed” in her matrimonial home and hence, her decision to reject her mother’s nuptial counsel! The mother thus symbolises the docile traditional African woman who mutely and passively surrenders to “the whims and dictates of the African man” (Cham 1987: 90). Her daughter, the “new” woman, represents a feminist voice which seeks to challenge unwarranted socio-cultural constructs often militating against the female being. Evwierhoma’s authorial goal in this poem is to use the conversation between the mother and daughter in the poem to eloquently make a case for all women in their marital life. This is in validation of Evans’ (1987: 136) belief that “women have a right to respect and equality in the modern world”.

Evwierhoma undoubtedly in “Nuptial Counsel” examines how the patriarchal world orders are sometimes and unconsciously incubated at home. It is not out of place to surmise that the home thus becomes the starting point for the promotion of masculine order. Most often, it is initiated by the mother in a bid to ensure her daughter’s compliance with traditional roles which her daughter is bound to contend with after marriage. This is often to make the wife to be suitably qualified in the public eye as a ‘good wife’. It also signifies that the mother has performed her responsibility in the proper upbringing of her daughter who respects her husband enough, particularly in traditional African context where a wife’s argument with her husband is frowned at by the society. The poem, therefore, indirectly warns newly wedded wives to be conscious of such socio-cultural constructs which reduce women’s self-worth and visibility to nothingness. While Evwierhoma satirises the uncouth treatment of women in her poem, it is worth knowing that the poem is not without humour which helps to trigger laughter and further accentuate the woes of women in marital relationship.

Perhaps, because of the trauma of phallus infliction on females, Ajima, in her collection *The Thrill...* composes the poem “Sadiku’s Song” as a counter text to Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel*. In the poem “Sadiku’s Song”, Ajima shows her agility in her textual playfulness. The use of parody in the poem besides mimicking, which mocks its targets and as a means of social correction (Filani 2016), Soyinka’s Baroka, the lion king, attempts at deconstructing the masculine superiority exhibited by the character of Baroka in Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel*. Baroka, the *Baale* of Ilujinle, in the play successfully enfeebled and hemmed both Sadiku and Sidi in. But the dialogic intertextual relation in “Sadiku’s Song” is an attempt by Ajima to transpose the meanings particularly those relating to Sadiku in Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel*. This is what Ajima hints in these lines:

Gals throw him, over,
Let fall straight
Pin him to your laps,
And dance around him;
Poke him for fun,
Let’s make him our plaything,
What he made of us,
Pestle him mortar,
Grind, pound
Ah, the sheer ecstasy,
Ah the orgasm
All generated by us
The Lion, the king has lost its roar,
The lion has lost its strength

(Ajima 2007: 50.)

The pervading atmosphere of the poem is that of ecstasy. The mood of excitement is, however, tainted with sarcasm intended to mock the character of Baroka and “poke him for fun”. Baroka is “the Lion” who metaphorically represents male supremacy. Sadiku in the play is the head of Baroka’s harem who is sent to woo the village belle and Jewel of Ilujinle, Sidi. However, Sidi proves difficult for both Baroka and Sadiku to woo. It is against this background that Baroka exploits Sadiku’s gullibility and deceptively confides his loss of manhood to Sadiku. Sadiku though expresses shock, betrays Baroka and, in the words of Onayemi (1998: 81), “celebrates in a ghoulish orgy”. Sadiku extends her celebration to Sidi whom she invites to the Baale’s palace to make a mockery of Baroka’s impotence. They give Baroka a lascivious treat as a means of torturing the old fox emotionally. Sadiku and Sidi preen themselves for their perceived dismantling of Baroka’s power symbolised by his phallic order.

As Onayemi (1998: 81) puts it, “this celebration is a way of releasing repressed feelings of a female protesting against male domination”. Unfortunately, in what appears like a phantasmagoria, before Sadiku and Sidi could realise it, having rushed to the “Lion’s den” to “poke him for fun”, the treachery of Baroka had successfully undressed Sidi. She is deflowered to the chagrin of Lakunle, her supposedly young lover in the play. Onayemi (1998: 146) succinctly captures the scene thus:

Sidi however, soon pays for her arrogance and conceit. She walks right into the Lion’s den-Baroka who deflowers her and proves the case of his impotence to be a scheme to get Sidi play into his hands... Unfortunately Sidi falls ignorantly to the seduction of a sixty-year old lecherous chief Baroka.

However, in Ajima's "Sadiku's Song", the poet intends another meaning different from Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*. Hence, she declares in these stanzas:

The Lion can only bark now
The lion can only wag its mane
The lion has become the hindquarters of a lion,
Its hair has gone all shaggy
The lion has lost its voice
It can roar no longer
Come, you queens of the palace royal,
Come, let's sing and dance,
Let's join Sadiku in her dance.
The Lion has lost its story!
And this time it's real!
Ah, girls, the Lion has lost its tail,
The whipping tail,
The tail that cowed us, crashed us,
The Lion has lost it

(Ajima 2007: 51.)

Ajima delineates a clear perspective of her feminist mission in the poem. Her commitment to feminist struggle is unwavering as she satirises and deconstructs crippling sovereignties of hegemony symbolised by Baroka by authenticating his impotence. Parody often is intended to mock by means of scornful imitation as seen in the poem. While creating the humorous effect, it is often clear to the reader the subject whom the writer is deriding. As it is customary of intertextual relations, authors always invent meaning often different from the original text as a means of offering a new perspective or idea to the original text. Cuddon (1994: 454) further strengthens that intertextuality reveals: "The way discourses or sign system are transposed into one another so that meanings in one kind of discourse are overlaid with meanings from another kind of discourse".

There is no ambivalence in "Sadiku's Song" that Ajima intends to rupture the vitiation of womanhood in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*. Rather than making the reader(s) to scoff at the dilemma of Sadiku, Sidi and women generally in Soyinka's play, the reader should be made to know that women are ready to take their pound of flesh against men's invidious sexist tendencies who, according to her, had "cowed us, crashed us" (51). The choice of "us", the object case of "we" suggests that women often are at the receiving end of men's uncouth dispositions. It is clear that feminist perspectives in the poem aim at giving women generally a prod to help them get over churlish chauvinistic practices. Ajima does not hesitate to beckon on women to take a revenge on their humiliation by autocratic male order and hence she declares:

Let's make him our plaything
What he made us,
Pestle him mortar
Grind, pound

(Ajima 2007: 50.)

Inherent in the foregoing is Ajima's unhidden determination to ridicule and tackle overbearing male authority. The dexterity displayed in the use of parody is a plus in stimulating the readers' interest with humour, which is a major feature of satire and parody. One of the functions of humour, as explicated by Adjei (2015: 195), is to help the writer downplay the magnitude of certain misfortunes against humanity. According to Adjei, the

issues discussed by the writer may not be of great importance, but the use of such literary devices as humour and parody have the tendency of luring the reading and sustaining his or her interest to read and eventually enjoy the text. This assertion is evident in the poem “Sadiku’s Song”.

Ajima intensifies her corpus particularly satirising and parodying perceived female devaluation by poking fun at the male order and sustaining humour in the poem “The Sweet, Sweet Mistress Tale”. In this poem, Ajima speaks through the voice and confession of a “mistress” who recounts her sexual escapades with a man who cheats on his wife. Ajima interrogates the moral judgment of a man and his mistress’ marital infidelity in the poem as a means of reinventing and deconstructing cases of infidelity among the men and women alike in the society. She invites us as reader(s) to how men exploit their wives’ fidelity with fairy tales. The poet person (a mistress) pokes fun at the man who abandons his wife with lies to flirt with her:

He tells me that he tells you lies.
Of when he keeps away
That he’s on a business trip
That keeps him late at nights
and renders him useless to you
he tells me you take the bait
being a dim wit, dull and wet
and now it’s too late to give him back,
when you want him high and strong
because I have him tight in grips

(Ajima 2007: 43-44.)

The above lines satirises and condemns the sexual infidelity of a man which obviously negates marital vows. While making humour her literary weapon, Ajima brings to notice issues which often instigate instability in marriage. Flirting and keeping late at nights have been identified as factors which impede marital harmony among couples (Akande 2004; Bolaji 2015). However, against the societal perception of women’s infidelity in marriage, and where women are often held culpable for adulterous act, Ajima’s authorial mission is thus to reverse the notion of women’s culpability for adulterous life in marriage. She interrogates the heap of blame often on the side of women. Idunwonyi (2002: 100) observes that

adultery and bearing children out of matrimony is never blamed on the men: illegitimacy is a non-issue. But a woman caught in adultery must be punished. She is usually at the mercy of her husband and family. He enjoys the punitive game because he has several women in the harem who are objects of his sexual pleasure. So he could afford to ill-treat or kill one of the beasts.

In Ajima’s “The Sweet, Sweet Mistress’ Tale” like “Sadiku’s Song”, the poet invents a persona who is willing to redefine her womanhood and deconstruct her objectification. Ajima tickles the readers’ imagination with such a woman persona who has determined to boldly humiliate the man sexually and render him “powerless” to both his wife and the society. The persona determination to humiliate the adulterous husband echoes in these sarcastic lines:

And oh well, that’s how they all behave.
The men, the sweet, sweet men
At least the ones that come
To me now and then
So know now dear madam
I’ll give him back one day,
When I’m done with him

When he's gone
Gumless, powerless and such like
Then I'll have to pack him off
On you, for you to nurse and love.
Cos he'll be of no more use to me
But may be you,
You could get something out of him
I'll show some mercy then,
Yes I'll surely do!

(Ajima 2007: 44.)

The foregoing validates the view that the women are responding to men's antics with equal measure. Rather than being at the mercy of men's "punitive game" (Idiunwonyi 2002), women exemplified in the "The Sweet, Sweet Mistress' Tale" are ready to deconstruct their subjectivity and objectification. As seen in Diji's "A shipment of Flowers", where the woman is exploited sexually and abandoned when she has become a "rind", Ajima thus responds with a mistress who is willing to take the "game" to the man by exploiting him sexually while also "packing him off" and discarding him when he has become "powerless" and indeed a "rind" as well. Thus, Ajima envisions the relocation of power to the woman who now deploys her sex in retaliation of male suppression. This validates Chielozona Eze's (2006: 99) assertion that "African feminism partakes of the illusory moral edge resultant upon the reliving of the feeling of hurt and the hidden but impotent wish to wreak havoc". One can argue also that Ajima wants her reader(s) to know, in the words of Aliyu-Ibrahim (2011: 7) that the woman has "the same virtues and vices as the man".

In spite of the sordid details of the mistress' sexual exploitation with such an unfaithful husband, Ajima makes a statement particularly on the culpability of the men on issues relating to illicit sex in marriage. Her poetry is not a cavil or *belles lettres* but full of serious issues which affect the female personality. Her perspectives on women's emancipation tilt towards acknowledging and preserving the dignity of womanhood and also offering the woman her rightful place in the society.

Ajima cannot be labelled as anti-men; her perspectives in poetry only show that feminist writing is aimed at exposing overbearing sexist forces, which limit the space for women to operate successfully alongside the men in the society. This is the major thrust of Ogundipe-Leslie's Stiwanism.

3. Conclusion

21st century Nigerian female poets have continued to exhibit literary viability in the craft of humour and deployment of satire and parody as stylistic and literary devices in their imaginative works. Their poetry evidently explores satire, humour, and parody as linguistic choices in the condemnation of hegemonic stances against women in the Nigerian society. As positive advocates representing women in the society, Nigerian female poets have unapologetically deployed these literary devices to confront sexist forces. Thus, Ewrierhoma's and Ajima's poetry represent the social consciousness of the Nigerian nay African society, unapologetically in a tone of condemnation amidst laughter, which often is the goal of satire, humour, and parody.

The poetry of Ewrierhoma and Ajima satirises the symptomatic devaluation of the female being. These poets and their poetry did not hide their affinity with the course of women by deconstructing amidst humour sexist practices that pose danger to the female being and their

aspiration. Ajima and Evwierhoma as satirists have proved that satire, humour, and parody as literary gymnastics are powerful instruments of condemning vices against womanhood.

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