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Resistant Voices: an Analysis of Identity and Selfhood in Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra*

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Abstract:

*Over the ages, man and women have tried to voice their doubts on his/her own 'identity' and 'self'. The analysis I have worked on is a comparative study of Articulation of this articulation of identity and self in Indian and African setting with regard to women's narratives. Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra*, induced in me a very raw and passionate response. It was hitherto, the most violent narrative I had read. The constructs of 'identity' and 'self' found a very effective voice in this novel, and it inevitably is what I consider as 'resistance' in every meaning of the word.*

This narrative is fixed on a single protagonist, Debbie Ogedemgbe. Here, I attempt to study the evolution of self and identity, and eventually, how it is asserted by the protagonist. As the narrative unfolds, the protagonist's constructs of Pan-Nigerian and humanism, fall apart in the light of experiences with war. But she is seen to overcome it and assert a Pan-Nigerian concept not out of ignorance this time, but taking into view the cultural differences and the realities around her.

Buchi Emecheta's protagonist is different in the sense that, she has been sketched in great detail, and she evolves. So we start with the protagonist's fixed notion of what she thinks is her identity to deconstructions of it, and final understanding and articulation in the light of engaging experiences. Therefore, the protagonist here, throws away the 'conformist' patterns and etches out her own patterns of coming out of those constraining notions.

*If we look at the categorization by Susan Arndt in *The Dynamics of African Feminism: Defining and Classifying African Feminist Literatures* [2002], we can say that, Emecheta's text would fall under the radical category which argues that men as a social group, inevitably and in principle discriminate against, oppress and mistreat women. Her protagonist begins with the typical notions of colonial 'selfhood' and then, through a painful process of struggle, arrives at a radical awareness of the new frontiers of selfhood which her experience as an African woman in the postcolonial ethos opens up before her.*

Keywords: Identity, self, destination Biafra, decolonization, gender.

1. Resistant Voices of *Destination Biafra*

'Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or the exclusion of the 'content' of another culture, as difference once perceived...[but] the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference.' [Homi Bhabha, 1985]

This article discusses a very strong and powerful articulation on self and identity. Among the comparative study between Lalithambika Antharjanam's *Cast Me Out If You Will* and Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here*, Nigerian Buchi Emecheta's, *Destination Biafra* would emerge as the most 'evolved' in terms of the protagonist's understanding of her 'self'. The protagonist in *Destination Biafra*, Debbie Ogedemgbe is introduced with a typical colonial image from the perspective of a white man. The White man, Alan Grey, here, presents the other side of the colonial stereotype, where he admits being attracted to the 'brownness' of the African woman. "To his own people he knew that this colour meant primitiveness, backwardness and savagery. But to him it was excitement, richness, moistness, newness." (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra*, 35).

The traditional notion can be seen in Alan's musings about his father's supposed warning: "The native woman is only an adventure, dear boy, don't get too involved with her". (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra*, 35) In his analysis of his own feelings towards Debbie, the colonial stand towards the colonised woman, as well as women in general, emerges clearly.

- And whatever happened, he was not going to do his tying down with a girl like Debbie, for all her Oxford knowhow. She was slim and pretty, but arrogant. She was intelligent, nice to be with, but independent. She was *too English* for his liking. (emphasis mine). If he was going native, he might as well do it properly. The way he saw it, people like her were building themselves big identity problems. (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra*, 36).

In *Destination Biafra*, Buchi Emecheta sketches the evolution of Debbie Ogedemgbe, through the Biafran war and vice-versa. There is an increasing emphasis on Debbie's sense of self and an effective protest emerging out of it. At the outset, Debbie is just the daughter of the famous, rich, corrupt politician Samuel Ogedemgbe, and the lover of the white man, Captain Alan Grey. Her Oxford education stands second to these facts. She is 'paraded around' for her qualifications not for their own worth but to increase her 'worth in the marriage market'. It cannot be disregarded that Debbie is a high class, educated girl and her understanding of her own country is very limited, at least initially. But we can feel in her a sympathy (rather than empathy) for the poor in her country, which later on becomes fully sustained effort for upliftment.

Debbie resists the traditional notion of being confined to the roles of a typical wife or mother. She has her own ideals and plans in life. Despite her father being a politician, she opposes him because of his corrupt ways. Though she hates being paraded around like a fatted calf, she allows him to do it owing to 'daughterly duties'.

- I had no choice. Do you know, Father had to order that car just for today. Poor man! If he dies tomorrow, it'll be his wealth that's killed him. I thought things would have changed. But no, even though the crowd today came in their best clothes, I saw that three-quarters of them had no proper shoes. While my father bought a car costing almost ten thousand pounds just to drive through that crowd. Do you know what I kept thinking? Suppose that people had decided to mob us? Oh, I feel so guilty about it all. [...] And you can't argue with father. You know, I think I'll tell him I'm going to join the army. (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra*, 40).

Before proceeding on to the evolution of Debbie's identity, the novel showcases the background of the Nigerian society with its double standards regarding man- woman relationship, which also comes under critique when she attends Chijioke Abosi's marriage.

- 'Chijioke's life history was traced in all the news media until almost everyone in the country knew it parrot-fashion. His bride's (Juliana) background was kept a little quiet, since she had been married before and had a thirteen-year-old daughter. Many wondered why such a rich man who could have chosen any girl in Nigeria should go for a woman nearly the same age as himself: some cynics even said she was older. Yet they would have thought nothing of a man of seventy marrying a child of seventeen. To Nigerians, 'in marriage the male partner was superior and the female must be subservient, obedient, quiet to the point of passivity.' When Juliana's daughter becomes the bridesmaid and 'openly calls her "Mum", other women were either jealous or praised Juliana's boldness. There was a strong suspicion that a new breed of Nigerian women was in the making.' (Emecheta, *ibid*, 43).

Debbie belongs to this 'new breed of Nigerian women'. She chooses to differ from her father's notion of an ideal daughter though she complies with him on several occasions. Her father too believes in the idea of education for women so that they become perfect daughters and better wives.

- 'Debbie charmed everyone, playing the dutiful daughter of Samuel Ogedemgbe. The climax for her was when she confidently gave the bridesmaid toast, her accent perfect and her smile unwavering. That was what most fathers wanted: a daughter who not only was a been-to but who could talk and behave like a European.' (*ibid*, 44)

When Saka Momoh comments that she should go and join the House of Assembly, the Old Abosi puts in, "yes, as a secretary." We can note that job prejudice is very much present in the educated community as well. But Debbie has other plans. Though she is torn by daughterly duties, she resists the old world order.

- If her parents thought they could advertise her like a fatted cow, they had another thing coming. She would never agree to a marriage like theirs, in which the two partners were never equal. Her father always called the tune. She did not hate him; on the contrary she loved both her parents very much. It was just that she did not wish to live a version of their life- to marry a wealthy Nigerian, ride the most expensive cars in the world, be attended by servants.... No, she did not want that; her own ideas of independence in marriage had no place in that set-up. She wanted to do something more than child breeding and rearing and being a good passive wife to a man whose ego she must boost all her days, while making sure to submerge every impulse that made her a full human. Before long she would have no image at all, she would be as colourless as her poor mother. Surely every person should have the right to live as he or she wished, however different that life might seem to another? She felt more and more like an outsider, and told herself that she must make a move to fashion a life for herself. Yes, she would join the army. If intelligent people and graduates were beginning to join the ranks of the Nigerian Own Queen's Regiment, she intended to be one of them. It would be much more difficult for a woman, she knew, and the daughter of a minister at that, but she was going to fight. She was going to help the Nigerian army- not as cook or a nurse, but as a true officer!' (*ibid*, 45).

This is the point where Debbie decides to take over her own life and pursue her dreams and ambitions and to live like a 'human being' rather than being a celebrity daughter, or wife or mother. She is ready to resist traditional norms and values. Her sleeping with Alan before marriage itself is a sort of reversal of old values and morals. By joining the army, she is revolting against the traditional job roles assigned to a woman, of being a secretary like old Abosi mentioned, or cook or nurse etc. She is even ready to face the consequences.

The elections in Nigeria being manipulated by the British, leads to the formation of a Government of their choice. Instead of the actual politicians with an interest in the development of Nigeria, the sections who could be useful to the British, thus came in to power.

The rich elected Nigerians had no clue about governing their country and neglected their duties, leading on to an army coup. During the coup and the civil war that follows, the corrupt politicians are assassinated, including Debbie's father, but she stands her ground and enrolls for the army. But it has to be noted that she is taken in the army and later sent on the mission not because she is a good soldier or peacemaker or for any of her negotiating qualities, but because she is a beautiful woman, whom Chijioke Abosi had had a crush on. It's her sexual value which is being considered. Therefore, she is sent by Alan and Saka Momoh to pacify Abosi using her sexual appeal. Here, Alan, the white man/coloniser as well as the black man, Saka Momoh, an erstwhile colonised, are similar in their approaches towards women. Their attitude of looking at women through a sexual angle has no difference. Since Debbie is unaware of their real motives, she considers it to be the mission of her life, i.e. to stop the civil war and negotiate peace. But earlier on we find that she has her suspicions on the role of Britain in the elections. Though she herself is a white man's lover, she knows the colonial ideology too well. She asks Alan,

"... Is Nguru Kano younger than Dr. Ozimba? Why did your people do it to him? *Is it because he's too intelligent for an African?*" (emphasis mine). "People are thinking that it was all pre-arranged by these so-called 'friends of Africa' - including, I'm sorry to say, your father. They say that with the Hausas on top you think you can continue to rule the Country forever. Anyway, thank goodness Ozimba realizes that to fight for his rights would only make you people say, 'See they can't rule themselves.' Was that why you did it, to trap us into starting a war among ourselves?" (Emecheta, *ibid*, 42).

Once the civil war starts, the narrative unfolds for Debbie. Though she has her own doubts regarding joining the army, she stands steadfast in her decision.

- What she saw and heard frightened Debbie Ogedemgbe. She had declared defiantly to her parents that she was going into the army. She knew it was a masculine preserve and did not underestimate the ridicule her announcement would engender once she dared make it public. Yet she must make a move, before her shocked parents could recover from their anger and try to talk her out of it. (*ibid*, 57)

She is also disappointed by Alan, whom she thinks would understand her decision, but she realizes 'that at heart he too subscribed to her father's concept of what a woman should be.' For her, joining the army was not a matter of going into action to shoot. She would be trained in a military familiarization, but what she really hoped to achieve was to be a lecturer in one of the military academies. (*ibid*, 57).

But when she states her plan to Chijioke Abosi, initially he tries to dissuade her from it, though he himself had had to fight with his father to get enrolled in army.

- "... Yet, I don't think any colonel would want a confrontation with your father. That's asking too much of any regiment or recruiting officer."

"But you did it successfully," Debbie argued.

Abosi put on an expression which might have been a smile; one couldn't be sure, since the lower part of his face was fully covered by a beard.

"I'm a *man*" (emphasis mine).

To which Debbie replies, "You make it sound as if that explains everything. I want to join the army and I intend to do it."

Then Abosi obliges.

"I'm sure you will if you are determined enough. But it will be extremely difficult. I'm not saying that because *I am a man I can handle guns better*. It's just that my father gave up the fight when *he realized he wasn't indispensable in my life. Parents treat their daughters differently*. Besides, you wouldn't want to hurt them too much. I'd gladly take you, Debbie-*it would certainly add glamour to our regiment*. (emphasis mine). (*ibid*, 58).

The above conversation states why a man has his way easily and a woman has to fight doubly hard. Also, the double standards of educated African men like Abosi himself, where he considers her only as a peg on the shoulder to add glamour. Once she is incorporated into the army, she has to undergo various ordeals. Since the coup was on, she had to command men of opposing regiment in the army to surrender to her. But she is shocked that contrary to what was said to her, they were humiliated and subjected to inhumane treatment and finally killed. Her own regiment asks her to be happy about handling the party which assassinated her father. But Debbie is above such petty personal politics. She is overcome with remorse at the faces of those soldiers whom she had commanded to surrender by which they came upon their death.

Later, as she vacates her father's bungalow for Saka Momoh, she speaks bitterly about the condition of Nigeria. It can be noted that she too has a class prejudice. "To clear out Samuel Ogedemgbe's things for the likes of Saka Momoh, that raw specimen who hasn't the faintest idea how a statesman should behave! Oh poor Nigeria, that you have lost distinguished and irreplaceable men of bearing and breeding..." (*ibid*, 94).

But when she mourns the death of the soldiers who was commanded by her, Alan retorts: "Are you sure you really want to see this army bug through? Because if you do, you may soon be actually killing people, not just ordering others under you to do it. If you mourn so deeply the deaths of men you didn't yourself kill and whose deaths you didn't even order, what will happen on the battlefield?"

To which Debbie replies, "In other words you think I'm weak because I am a woman? Hmmm. My secret is safe with you. Well, if there is to be a division in the Nigerian army, I'm making my way to Abosi."

Alan opines: "You'd do well as a peace ambassador between the two warring leaders, since they both like and respect you." (*ibid*, 95).

Later on, after the Abori peace talk fails and Momoh divides Nigeria into twelve states, which is then countered by Abosi who declares an Independent Biafra, the country plunges into a mindless carnage of human lives. Everywhere there is a danger of being killed at any time. One day Debbie wakes up to calls of army men asking people to come out of their houses and along with it she hears a knock on the door. She quickly takes out a rifle and proceeds to the door.

‘If a group of army teenagers with shaved heads and snotty noses was going to come in here and demand to take her mother away, just as they had her father, Debbie was not going to stand for it. She would shoot to kill if necessary. So determined, she dashed under the table and fished out the rifle she had taken to carrying since joining the army.

“Who are you? Shout out your name or I’ll shoot!” she barked, her voice assuming the screaming quality she had been taught at Yaba barracks. “Speak up!”

But it turns out to be her friend Barbara Teteku, who too had joined the army.

The noise wakes up Debbie’s mother Stella, who stands confused. She asks Debbie: “But why are you up anyway? Are you going to kill somebody?”

Debbie took the time to light a cigarette. “No, mama, we’re not going to kill anyone. I had a bad dream, that’s all.

She gave Babs a cigarette and started to cough as she smoked, which made Mrs. Ogedembge wring her hands.

“I don’t know what has come over you girls. We all want freedom for women, but I doubt if we are ready for this type of freedom where young women smoke and carry guns instead of looking after husbands and nursing babies.” (ibid, 108)

This is followed by a talk between Debbie and Babs over the ‘maternal’ as well as ‘wifely’ image of Stella Ogedembge. “You’re probably right, though I don’t think Mama ever had an opinion about anything except her wardrobe. “You’re not being fair. Imagine what you’d be like if for twenty-five years you’d been the wife of a domineering man who took it upon himself to have the last word on everything that went on around him, including his wife.” (ibid, 110)

At this stage, Debbie considers her mother to be a weakling who does not know how to make decisions. She also tries to be far away from being that kind of a woman. At this stage in her life, Debbie’s image of herself is as the opposite of her mother. We can see a sharp reversal in this image when they are captured by the soldiers and Debbie is raped. Then, it’s Stella who emerges as the stronger one, at least in terms of emotional maturity and strength. She urges Debbie to live on and Debbie is surprised and realises that, all that her mother was doing when her father was around was just a mask.

- “She was grateful for having her mother around. Her mother had nursed, talked, prayed, then bullied telling her daughter to put it all behind her, that she could still lead a perfectly normal life- this from a woman who for years had pretended to be so frail and dependent that tying her own headscarf was a big task. All that show of dependence just to keep alive her marriage and to feed her husband’s ego; and to think she had played that charade for over twenty-five years!”

Here, Debbie realises that there is more to that what she thought her mother to be. Perhaps coming from an English educational background, Debbie’s interpretations of African women were the same as those conferred by the colonisers. The images which she had nursed, falls apart and newer images are being created. The same goes for Debbie.

Her own identity and concept of self undergoes constant renewal. She starts off with a non-nationalist/race identity; as a wealthy Nigerian, born to a famous politician, then the lover of White man, and when she enrolls for army she considers herself a Nigerian soldier above gender identities, but her experiences and especially the trauma of rape, changes her whole attitude. Until then her identity was that of a rich, foreign-educated Nigerian woman. She considers herself above racial identity yet this indelible thing, does not come to her help when she sets out on her mission. The civil war is mainly between the Ibos, the Hausas and the Yorubas. ‘Debbie sighed sadly. What was her position in all this mess? She was neither Ibo nor Yoruba, nor was she a Hausa, but a Nigerian.’ (126). Her identity crisis starts once she sets out on her mission. The first trauma is of the barbarous killings around and her rape by the soldiers. They fail to consider the fact that she is wearing a Nigerian army uniform as well as wielding a gun.

Debbie walked up to the first soldier to emerge, her gun cocked, and using her harshest voice shrieked, “I am a Nigerian soldier”

- This was greeted with laughter. The leader looked derisively at the crumpled man on the ground, then at Ignatius, and asked in undisguised mockery, “What is this? A battle fought by women? Is that how you intend to maintain your so-called invincible Biafra, eh?”

“I am a Nigerian soldier, not a Biafran. As far as I am concerned, Nigeria is still one.”

The leader waddled up to her and mimicked her voice: “I am a Nigerian soldier.” His laughter was like the roaring of many fierce lions.

Debbie knew she must look ludicrous; her trousers were baggy and her shirt’s shoulders were too wide for her slim frame. But she was determined not to be made a fool of by these men. (ibid, 131).

She points her gun and asks them to move out of their way or else she’d shoot. She desperately tries to free all her co-travellers. But her efforts go unrewarded and they are trapped.

- “I am not an Ibo, you know,” she began, “I am a Nigerian soldier. I know that because communications are bad those of you in the provinces don’t know what is happening in the cities. We have started enlisting women; even if you go to Abeokuta you’ll see women in the militia. I’ll hand my gun over, to prove to you that I am speaking the truth. It would be wrong for us to begin shooting at each other.” With that she gave the leader her gun.

He took it and roared with laughter. Debbie’s heart sank.

When they are reminded of their promise to let all of them go, a soldier replies, “Promise to let Ibo soldiers who we saw hailing Biafra go? Oh Mother, think of another one.” Then he addresses the leader. “Bale, do you want to take care of that chick in uniform?” The

leader eyed Debbie, who was now struggling fiercely in the arms of two hefty army boys. "Take everything off her," he commanded. The others too are commanded to take off their clothes and other valuables.

Mrs. Ogedemgbe methodically undressed herself then, with her head held high, walked to the leader addressed as Bale and begged: "Do whatever you want with me, and afterwards kill me. But please, in the name of your mother, leave my daughter out of it. Don't let me live to see my daughter humiliated, and please don't kill her.

To which they leave Stella alone, but not Debbie.

Debbie was following all these happenings with her eyes. They had torn off her clothes and stuffed her undergarments into her mouth. In her distress, she could not fail to admire her mother's courage.

When a pregnant woman is assaulted, Stella Ogedemgbe protests, for which, she is slapped by a soldier. This incident fires Debbie and she kicks at one of the men holding her and then follows her onslaught.

- Her punishment was that the man fell on her. She could make out the figure of the leader referred to as Bale on top of her, then she knew it was somebody else, then another person.... She felt herself bleeding, though her head was still clear. Pain shot all over her body like arrows... (ibid, 134).

She is pulled, stripped and repeatedly raped by countless soldiers. After a point she loses consciousness. Though her mother nurses her to consciousness, Debbie is so shocked by the experience that she fails to speak. There is a point where she is so disillusioned so as to die.

- She looked again at her mother, a well-kept woman fast approaching middle age, wearing only a lappa and a torn blouse. Blood smeared the sides of her face and legs, but her eyes were dry; she was not crying, she was even trying to smile. Had she been raped too? That was a question Debbie would never ask. She felt guilty that, with all her education, she could not lift a finger to help her own mother. Had she been a man, they would have killed her outright; instead they humiliated her and left her to die slowly.

Stella Ogedemgbe was still talking: "We are women, daughter, this is our lot.....Remember the boys in U.K. – how would they feel suddenly to hear that they had no family left? Please, Debbie, try to live. (ibid, 134).

This is the stage when Debbie finds her own image shaking. She begins to understand that all the education and her bearing hasn't helped her to defend herself and others. The conflict within her begins to unfold.

When they reach Benin, Stella reports this incident to the soldiers there to which they reply: "Give her hot water to wash herself. Hundreds of women have been raped-so what? It's war. She's lucky to even be alive. She'll be all right."

- "She'll be all right, she'll be all right- is that all you have to say? I'm telling you that my daughter has been ra-" She could not bring herself to say the word. It was too horrible, too humiliating. She cried into the only lappa the soldiers had left her.

Debbie sat in front of one of the cars. She was still too numb physically and emotionally to say a word; but her brain was ticking like a tireless clock. She admired her mother, who could use her tongue to move the hardest of men. Those attacking soldiers would surely have killed her but for the fact that, even in their vile drunkenness, they feared Stella Ogedemgbe's tongue.'

Debbie tries to stop her mother from going on narrating it, but Stella doesn't understand the reason behind it.

When the soldiers offer to report this incident if they provide the details, Debbie refuses. To this the soldier replies "Please yourself. It's a woman's world anyways. They get what they want." "What do you mean?" queried the woman who had given Debbie and her mother a lift to the Benin border. "Don't you realize that she will never find a husband now that she has been raped by soldiers?"

- "I did not rape her, so why attack me? She should go and wash herself and be a nun."

It was then that Stella Ogedemgbe saw her daughter's point. They would become a laughing-stock The pain and humiliation would forever be locked in their memories [...] it was too horrible.

But Debbie was alive, and that was everything. (ibid, 136).

The twelfth chapter of the novel itself has the title 'The Tainted Woman', which had by then become Debbie's identity in the eyes of her townsmen. Her musings on her battered self is only too clear.

- 'How was she going to cure herself of the deep mental ache that overwhelmed her each time her mind went back to that incident? That she would have to live with it, make it a part of herself, part of life, part of growing up, she had told herself many a time. But if only she could talk to someone who would understand without making fun of her or repeating it to anyone else...

But how unfair, Debbie thought, to be the victim of the very people she was trying to help. If Biafran soldiers had done this, she might have been abler to understand. But Nigerian soldiers! It was Momoh who had sent her to Abosi in the first place. She twirled the whole painful issue in her mind again and she felt sick. She could find no answer.' (ibid, 157).

At this point she realizes her limitations in that patriarchal society. Debbie feels a sense of worthlessness within despite her sound education and intelligence. But she tries to overcome it and complete her mission. Her mother tries to talk her into marriage, but she resists. And her mother even accuses her of going to Abosi because of her attraction for him.

- "Why don't you stay here and get married? In marriage you'd have all the protection you need and no one would dare refer to what has happened again. If you go, fingers will always point at you. People will always say, there she goes, the Ogedemgbe girl who was raped by Ibo soldiers. An unmarried woman is never respected, Debbie. You know that. It's a man's world here. Even if you remain single by choice, nobody would believe you. I'm going to build a new image for you. After a few years, people will forget; and, with your dead father's name and money, the right man will soon come along. Don't throw all that away."

- [...] Is that why you're going to the East? For Chijioke's sake? How many men do you want, Debbie? Do you think I have no eyes to see that, but for that feminine-looking white man, Abosi would have married you?"

Debbie is placed with choices of being a typical woman with marriage and children or carve out her own path.

Debbie's patience snapped and she cried, "I don't want the kind of life you are mapping out for me. I don't want to get married just for protection. I don't want anybody's pity. Do you hear me? I don't want to be pitied."

- [...] That is why I am going to Abosi, to warn him not to let himself be carried away by personal ambition to such a degree that he forgets his original aim." (ibid, 160).

Finally, Stella has to bow down to her daughter's wish.

- "[...] I can't stop you; you're a grown woman. Go to the Biafra of your dreams and when you get there you'll find ordinary people. Not angels, just people. And where there are people there will be corruption and exploitation. You can't change human nature. But maybe we all need our Biafras to keep us going. I only hope you don't get too disappointed with yours when you find it."

Stella is very realistic and practical in life whereas Debbie is a very idealistic person, and therefore, tries to complete her mission despite others' misgivings about its success.

Stella's ideas on womanhood as well as her confusions about Debbie reflects in her further musings:

- "...This child, born a girl wants to be a man, and wants the men to know she wants to be like them, and still retain her womanhood.... I don't know, I don't know. Most sensible men know our power, so why go to all this trouble to tell them what they already know? Debbie, I hope you don't get hurt in the process. (ibid, 161).

Debbie sets out despite knowing that she'll have to face a lot of ordeals on the way. "As a young single woman, and a non-Ibo, she must have a real reason for wanting to go.... She was no longer wearing uniform, it hadn't done her much good so far anyway." (ibid, 161).

The army uniform, which came to no help during her capture and rape, makes her realize its futility in forming an identity which others are unwilling to recognize. Therefore, she stops wearing it despite continuing her mission. It is one major step in deconstructing one of her concepts of self. Thereafter, she masks her identity of 'Debbie Ogedemgbe', which would only hinder her mission and assumes anonymity in the crowd. She constructs a fake story about being an Ibo going to meet her ailing mother. But people do have their doubts because of her foreign accent and her bearing. There is a very interesting incident which brings out the villagers' derision about Englishness and city culture.

"Our name is Madako. What is yours?"

"Mine is Ugwu, Debooo-rah Ugwu," she replied, accenting the name to give it more Ibo pronunciation.

"Do they call you Debbie for short?" asked a young man who until then had said nothing.

"Ye-es," she said hesitantly. Warning bells were ringing. If these people realized she was not really Ibo, she would have a great deal of awkward explaining to do. Her fears intensified as the young man added.

"Debbie...Debbie- isn't that what they call that top society woman, Ogedemgbe's daughter? We read about her a lot in Benin."

"But I don't think her full name is Debooo-rah, Debbie put in quickly. "It is Oritsha Debbie, you know-hers is a Nigerian name, mine is English."

"Congratulations," the young man said cynically.

"What for?" Debbie wanted to know.

"For bearing an English name".

Everybody burst into jerky laughter.

Though it helped her from being caught, this was a class alienation which Debbie felt for the first time. There is another instance where again she feels alienated from her own Nigerian people because of her class difference and education. This is when the women who escape from the soldiers, hide in the bush but in their bid to escape they almost get trapped in a mud swamp. But they successfully come out of it and when Debbie feels her face which had got smeared with the swamp mud, she is reminded of her beauty treatments at a beauty parlour in London.

- 'This triggered in Debbie the memories of a face-pack she had once applied when she visited a beautician in London. Now she tentatively peeled mud from her face and felt the skin underneath. It was as smooth as it had been on that day many years before, when she had had to pay a large amount of money to get the same effect. Now she paid nothing. She smiled, wanting to share the irony of it with the other women; but she could not, for she knew they would think her arrogant to bring up such topics when they were not even sure that they would live to see the next minute. It was at moments like this that Debbie really felt lonely, surrounded as she was by other women. Her education, the imported division of class, still stood in the way. She was trying so hard to shake it off, to belong, but at times like this she knew that achieving complete acceptance was indeed a formidable task. These women would only accept her if they did not know her real background, so she had to keep silent about her store of past experiences.' (ibid, 211).

Debbie feels alienated here because of deculturalization. The fact of being a woman, and a Nigerian at that doesn't help in their bonding completely. 'Sisterhood' helps them to overcome their common misery and helplessness faced at that stage but class difference still stratifies them. Here, she cannot call herself a true native Nigerian woman. Her self is partly of a modern educated woman who has been exposed to western ideals and thoughts. Another instance where she questions her own Africanness is when she fails to hold a baby properly on her back.

'Debbie offered to carry one of the Madako toddlers, though she had not backed a child in her life. She was clumsy in tying the oja round the baby so the mother suggested she should use only one wrapper to hold the child on her back. Still Debbie was nervous and

the baby had to be held firmly for her to knot the cloth round her waist. A soldier was watching and he could not help laughing and remarking:

“What type of women is Africa producing? That one can’t even back a baby. How will you carry your own child when you have one?”

“Her type will push hers in that keke thing they call a pram,” another woman put in.

- Debbie made light of it. But as she walked down that dry road in the heat, with the weight of the child almost breaking her back, it struck her that African women of her age carried babies like this all day and still farmed and cooked; all she had to do now was walk, yet she was in such pain. What kind of African woman was she indeed? (ibid, 191).

In this instance, Debbie has to fight with the native image of the African woman. On one side they are subjected to humiliation because they are ‘women’, and on another, are expected to be strong and sturdy because they are ‘African women’. But this ‘strength’ reign in domestic situations alone.

Despite her ‘modernity’, Debbie herself wonders about her Africanness as she has to fight a battle with the notion of ‘perfect African woman’. Until then she hadn’t reflected on this notion. Perhaps her images of African women have been built through the colonial education she has had which fails to make her look at herself as a native African woman. And when she is compared with native women on the sole aspect of motherhood and physical stamina, she fails to perceive her identity in those terms. At that point, for a moment, she feels inferior to them.

So, the ideal of motherhood as reflecting an important aspect of a woman, trickles to Debbie’s consciousness as well. Despite her own outbursts at the outset that she does not want to ‘start breeding’, she is, at this moment, confused about her trueness in being an ‘African woman’. Whether this aspect influences her decision to eventually ‘mother’ the orphans who come by her in the war, needs to be considered. Perhaps, it’s Emecheta’s own ambiguous attitude regarding ‘motherhood’ which reflects in her heroine. In Africa, a child is considered the child of the community rather than that of its biological parents: this thought is reflected when the baby ‘Biafra’ dies of malnutrition. Debbie’s group of women, including herself, therefore, feels the loss as they had considered it their own child.

On her mission, Debbie is once again raped. This time it is by Salihu Lawal, a Nigerian soldier, who is also a staunch Hausa. Though she had already met him and he too is aware of her mission, he had never hid his contempt for Debbie and her English boyfriend. At an early part of the story before she sets out on her mission, there is an instance which makes his stance clear on the colonial situation. He started to whistle, and then tried again. “Seen your friend lately?”

“Which friend?” Debbie asked cagily.

“The Bature.”

“He has a name, hasn’t he? How would you like being called ‘the Black’?”

The sergeant started to laugh huskily. “They call us so in their country. His people taught me to refer to people by their colour. So don’t blame me, white man’s girl.”

- ...Salihu smiled and wished her luck. Then he remarked, “I don’t understand why you black girls think that when you are well educated your black men are no longer good enough for you. To the Bature you are just a whore, to be used and discarded, just as they are doing to our country. May Allah forgive you!” (ibid, 125).

Racism was quite prevalent in their society, but Debbie had always considered herself above racial concepts. Perhaps, because she had a White boyfriend, as well belonging to the upper class, she did not feel its effect.

It is this same Lawal who rapes her when she is on her way to the East to meet Abosi. At first, she is secluded from the crowd and taken to his tent.

“The man was Lawal Salihu. Yes, she had heard that he was in charge of mopping up Ibos in the Benin area., that he was to restore Benin to Nigeria. He was the officer who had driven her to the army barracks in Apapa to kit her outfit in her new uniform, the man who has mocked her for being the white man’s plaything, who had despised her so openly. Now she saw the arrogant and solid profile. Would he be merciful now? How had he recognized her in this dim light and among so many women? Had he watched when she stripped herself naked, for the sake of dear life?

She tightened the cloth she had around her more securely as if she were feeling cold and as if she was going to face a war, *a personal war for her womanhood*. As she moved *she became aware of herself as a woman, a body*, different from the mass of all the other passengers in the lorry. She knew that hundreds of eyes were following and watching.” (emphasis mine).

Here, Debbie has to suffer the humiliation of finding herself as an ‘object’ and being ‘gazed’ by Lawal and other men.

Debbie knew she ought to have saluted since Lawal was senior in rank to her, but she knew how ridiculous she would look standing to attention and saluting in a lappa, one that did not even belong to her...

“I thought you were a soldier, he asked scornfully.

“I am still a soldier, she snapped.

“Really? On whose side are you on now? Biafras? You must be, to be among those Ibos going home.” (ibid, 174)

When Debbie retorts that she is still on the side of Nigeria, and that Nigeria is one country, Lawal derisively points out that Nigeria had never been one and those were mere political markings constituted by the British and the French.

Then he questions her about Alan and his double dealings, which even Debbie reflects on. “Debbie partially agreed with Lawal. On whose side were the British? On whose side was Alan Grey?” (ibid, 175).

The issue of nationalism finds an echo here. Where Lawal sees the ‘imagined community’ as a sham created by the colonizer, Debbie who has been brought upon that ‘unified’ ideology fails to look at the cultural differences within her own country.

The colonized’ angst comes out in the form of brutality against Debbie.

Based on the psychoanalytic interpretation by Fanon, we can look at Lawal's rape on Debbie as a resistance to colonial power. But in the process, the African woman gets abused.

- "So he is back, eh? We've been out of touch here in the bush for over two weeks. You are still his plaything then, are you? You are all saboteurs, selling our country to the foreign powers. People like you?" As he became more and more worked up and enraged he started to stammer. "Go in, go in there. I am going to show you that you are nothing but a woman, an ordinary woman."

Debbie offered no resistance. She knew already that here was a losing cause. In the end, who was she to complain to? A pain shot through her as the weight of the Hausa officer fell upon her. She smothered her urge to scream, for fear of the reaction from this angry man. He groaned and thundered, he swore and pushed her around, but the uselessness of it all had made her indifferent. It seemed he could not satisfy himself, could not go on. In despair he got up and cursed.

"You are as dry as the desert and as unappetizing as a great grandmother." He swore and slapped Debbie.

She did not know what came over her; maybe it was a desire to humiliate this man with his holier-than-thou attitude, maybe it was a knowledge that she could never be moist and soft for any man again. She slapped Salihu Lawal back, and he fell back on the bunk bed, staring at her. He was dumbfounded. He was being confronted by a new kind of woman and he could not understand it.

"Three or maybe four weeks ago I was raped by I don't know how many Nigerian soldiers when I was on this mission. Now you are raping me too.

Lawal stared. His hands frantically located his beads. Debbie's laughter was hysterical.

"I was raped by Nigerian soldiers; do you hear me?"

The huge man was telling his beads vehemently now. "Allah, Allah!" he prayed.

"Allah will never forgive you now because you tried to violate a woman who has been raped by so many soldiers, a woman who has been raped by black Nigerian soldiers. You thought you were going to use a white man's plaything, as you called me, only to realize that you held in your arms a woman who has slept with soldiers."

(ibid, 176).

Though a bit remorseful, Lawal does not shed his attitude towards women. There is always the point of marriage and woman's image coming into question, which echoes in Lawal's reflections.

"... What man in his right senses would ever think of marrying you now, Debbie? Maybe your white man; they have no sense of value in such things. My mother would die if she heard I had anything to do with a woman like that."

- "But would she think better of me if I was raped by white soldiers? Suppose you had been the first to touch me, what would some other person's mother think? You poor, poor men have so many problems to solve, problems you created for yourselves... Yes, I'll stay here till morning, so that your soldiers will continue to think of you as a real man. Do you want me to cry out for their benefit? Would that make you feel better?" (ibid, 177).

Rape is a weapon; which men use against women to show their supremacy or to boost their own ego. Here Lawal as well as the soldiers earlier, use this against the hapless women. Despite failing to defend herself physically, Debbie is successful in putting across her views to Lawal. The act of hitting out at him shows that, despite her humiliation and conflict within, she is not ready to take on the traditional role a woman is assigned or what the societal notions of a raped woman are. She asserts her individuality even in the midst of crisis. She still believes that as an individual taking on the role of a peacemaker, she can alter the war.

The whole equation behind rape is changed by her.

Roopali Sircar in 'The Twice Colonised', argues that the rape of Debbie is a rape committed on a people, a nation. It is an allegory of the imperialistic rape of Africa and her continuing trauma and humiliation at the hands of the new African rulers.

But here again, according to traditional notions, men have been portrayed as the aggressive ones and women have been the peacemakers, which is what even Debbie is subscribing to. Only at the end, she takes up the cudgel. After this second assault on her womanhood, Debbie traverses with the other women and children who escaped and has numerous experiences in the forest and reach Asaba, where they see the recapture of Asaba by the Nigerian army which is followed by another bloody carnage of the town people as well the rape of the missionary sisters who help them out of the forest. When initially they meet the missionary sisters, they too are taken aback by finding a person like Debbie who speaks excellent English to be in such a situation. They try to find out her real identity and Debbie is piqued because she feels that her nationality and patriotism is being questioned there, confined to the notion of educated Africans not serving their own societies.

'The old nun was joined by another nun, and for a while they listened to Debbie speaking. They had seldom heard Africans speak English that way.

"Look, you're not an Ibo, what are you doing here?" the old woman asked.... Daughter, let me ask you again, what are you doing here?"

- Anger which Debbie found difficult to control was fighting inside her. How could a foreigner ask her what she was doing in her own country? Because she was well-educated these do-gooders obviously did not expect her to soil her fingers helping her own people. What hypocrisy, what a sham! did these women sincerely believe in what they were doing, or did they still subscribe to the old idea of helping the savages?" (ibid,

Here again, despite her class difference and education and her belief that she is not of a particular race but a new modern 'nationalist', Debbie is trying to belong to her own people. The 'third world' woman is questioning the role of 'first world' women in trying to be the 'up lifters' of her society. Debbie believes that as a Nigerian, she has to help her own people and country, contrary to the popular notions among native Nigerians as well as others that once the Nigerians leave their country for educational purposes, they break off all ties with it. In fact, during that period, it was one of the serious allegations against foreign educated Nigerians.

From then, she is the one who takes upon herself, to speak about the misery and ruthlessness of war, and the suffering of women and children. During her journey, she takes down notes and records her experiences and forms a manuscript which she could publish later. She observes to herself that during wars, only men's version is recorded while the bravery and strength shown, as well as humiliation which women undergo goes unrecorded. Debbie resolves to articulate the women's experience of the war if she comes out of it alive. "When the history of the civil war was written, would the part played by her and women like Babs, Uzoma and the nuns in Biafra be mentioned at all? ...She sighed, wondering if the plight of people like them, trapped in the bush, was noised abroad." (ibid, 195).

[...] If she should be killed, the entire story of the women's experience of the war would be lost. A great deal of what was happening was too dangerous to write down so she had to make her brain porous enough to absorb and assimilate, writing down only key words to trigger off her recollections when she finally sat down to put it all into plain words. She must try to live, not just for the women but for the memories of boys like Ngbechi. (ibid, 224).

Here the act of 'writing' itself emerges as the strongest articulation a woman could employ in a society where only men's voices and especially, 'his-stories' were heard.

Later on, while they part, Debbie reveals herself as 'Debbie Odegemgbe' to her fellow woman traveller Uzoma. Uzoma is surprised and shocked but by then their mutual bonding prepares her to accept this fact and she parts with Debbie on amiable grounds. The important aspect is that women have risen above racial or tribal identities and bonded well in the light of crisis.

Finally, Debbie meets Abosi but her mission fails. By then the war had aggravated and despite her efforts, he does not agree to surrender. Here again they both have an argument regarding gender.

- "But I am sorry if you've risked your life for nothing. What good could you have done, just you, little you?" he smiled.

"I am me. Debbie, the daughter of Ogedemgbe. Tell me, if I were a man, a man born almost thirty years ago, a graduate of politics, sociology and philosophy from Oxford, England, would you have dismissed my mission?"

"You are brave, but you've answered the question yourself. You are not a man." (ibid, 239).

[...] Oh, Abosi, I wish you'd seen a tenth of what I have seen. You would believe me then."

"Hmmm, you are enjoying a woman's privilege. If you were a man, you would have been shot this minute as a traitor. So you see, being a woman has its advantages."

[...] You're still naïve. Woman, we are fighting for the right to live in our homeland. The right to be ourselves, the right to live." (ibid, 240).

Then Debbie asks him to give her a chance to go to Britain and try to catch the media and world attention on the plight of Biafran people. She says that as a neutral Itsekiri woman, her versions would be more authentic. Abosi agrees and sends her to London. In London, Debbie hold meetings and publishes photos and narrate her accounts of the war. The Nigerian students at the Universities there too support her causes and finally, the people present there acknowledged Biafra's war for freedom.

After the press meeting, Debbie meets Alan who thinks that whatever she narrated was just a fictional account to catch the attention of the world. "That was very moving, Debbie" [...] "where have you been all these months?" To this Debbie replies: "You heard what I said in the hall this afternoon; those were personal experiences, not tales."

Alan considered this for a while, the stories of torture, of rape, of mass murder, and he looked at her, but found it difficult to relate such happenings to Debbie. Surely, she was being over-dramatic; she had been under great strain. (ibid, 241).

Debbie finds out that Alan, or considering him as 'the symbol of Britain', is supplying arms to Momoh and food to Abosi. Now for the first time she condemns him openly. "Well, I've heard of hypocrisy, but to see it practised this way is something else." (ibid, 242).

Debbie then goes on with a monologue criticising Britain and its colonial men who have taken advantage of the situation. "We invited them to come and settle our trouble for us, so they started to take sides to their own advantage. We can only save ourselves. I wish Momoh and Abosi could see that..." (ibid, 242).

Debbie is intelligent and more aware of the tricks and strategies of the colonial countries in taking advantage of the situation in Nigeria to serve their imperial interests. Whereas, the two warring men along with their soldiers are blind to the part played by Britain and others, and their policies of 'divide and rule'. For a moment even Alan is made conscious of this fact but then as all men, and surprisingly though being a foreigner, Alan brings in an image of a 'woman stereotype'." Do you do this often now, talk to yourself? You know what they'd say in Africa?" "Yes, she laughed, "They'd say I'm a witch." (ibid, 242). We can note that women's sensible talks are disregarded/ignored and dismissed by men as the mumblings of a witch. In the whole novel the wives emerge stronger, sensible and practical than their men. Like the wife of Dr. Ozimba who despite her husband's political stance, helps her son escape to England, and the wife of Dr. Eze who questions him about the actual reason behind this war. "Coping with one over-educated Ibo female whose only outlet was her husband was enough for the evening. He would rather face an angry Salihu Lawal than two such women." (ibid, 227). [...] 'As Dr. Eze lost consciousness, he remembered his wife's voice saying, only an hour or so before, "Was not the oil the reason for all this mess in the first place?" All women were witches-how did she know?' (ibid, 254).

But as Debbie keeps on speaking, Alan takes note of her and asks her "Tell me, Debbie, when you said you were speaking from personal experience this afternoon, you didn't really mean yourself, did you?"

"Oh, white man, don't you understand your own language now? What does the word personal mean?"

"You mean you were...I mean"

"I mean I was raped, several times, Alan, in the bush, I don't even know by how many men, I didn't count."

"Stop, stop, for God's sake. Must you go into the details?"

"You asked me." (ibid, 243).

After this, the relation between them becomes strained. Debbie feels that even Alan, despite being an educated European is the same as that of any other typical man, be it Nigerian or uneducated: that they all are the same when it comes to the notion of a women as

defiled if she is raped.

“Debbie was not surprised that the conversation was changed and became very abstract and political.” [...] Alan soon got up to go, and as if in a dream Debbie felt him brush his cold lips on her cheek. He was so distant, so English, such a gentleman. Debbie’s smiled wobbled on her lips.

- “What do you advise me to do? Ring a bell and cry, ‘Beware, here comes a leper?’” [...] Funny, I had expected the son of Sir Fergus Grey to behave differently from an unsophisticated Moslem African, but you reacted exactly like Salihu Lawal. Tell me, would it have made any difference if I had been raped by white soldiers?” “I don’t know what you are talking about. Stop being ridiculous” is Alan’s feeble attempt at hiding his inability to accept her accusation. (ibid, 243).

Now Debbie realises that race also plays a part in the formation of identity. She feels that these men consider ‘Black’ as inferior and therefore her being raped by Black men has added more shame to her than if it were by Whites. Though she herself is above racial prejudices, she understands that it is a major factor even in the matter of assault. It’s not that they consider it shameful of men, be it of any race or colour to behave in such a manner but it’s the woman who is subjected to it receives the backlash.

With her expectations from Alan frustrated, she gets disillusioned about their relationship. This a turning point in her relationship with him. “Somehow she felt that a formerly useful door had just been slammed in her face. She cried all night, not because she wanted him but because of the uselessness of the whole charade.” (ibid, 244).

After this, Abosi tries to use Debbie to get the arms to Biafra in a Red Cross plane which was to supply food. ‘He told her that arms had been specially made for the Biafrans in a particular English town whose name he would give her later. Her instructions were to go and collect them and see that the next Red Cross supply plane carried arms, not food.’ [...] When Debbie voices her doubts she is reminded that ‘she was a woman and that a good woman should do what she was told and not to ask too many questions.’ (ibid, 244). But by now, Debbie has had enough of the manipulating men and moves to take situations in her own hand. ‘If Abosi thought he was going to use her to get arms into Biafra because as a woman she would be less conspicuous; she was going to give him the greatest shock he had ever had in his luxurious life.’ (ibid, 245). So breaking her promise to Abosi, she sends only food in the Red Cross plane, and Abosi is furious at this let-down, but it makes him realise that he is losing the war.

Again Alan contacts her with another mission. By then she has started typing down her historical novel ‘Destination Biafra’. She’s asked to force Abosi into surrendering and very rudely asks her, to use her body to get to him. This enrages Debbie and this is the final point of her detachment with Alan. “‘Good. Do your woman bit tonight,” he said. “Abosi used to fancy you, I used to see the desire in his eyes when he talked to you at Government House in Lagos...Well, use that part of you to make him do what you say.” Debbie walked up to Alan Grey and slapped him on both sides of his face. “This is for the way you and your country have fallen in the eyes of the black nations. This war is one of your greatest shames.” (ibid, 255).

This is a very effective anti-colonial protest by Debbie. She has finally rescued herself from the colonial influence and stood her ground as a Black Nigerian woman. We can say that now perhaps, she has come to understand her own self, and from being a colonised mind, symbolised by being the lover of Alan Grey, she has become a true anti-colonial protestor. This articulation of herself is very prominent at the end of the novel when she denies Alan’s proposal of marriage. After this episode she flies to Nigeria carrying arms and other explosives. Her mission of asking Abosi to surrender fails again. Now Debbie hatches her own plans. She decides to eliminate Abosi. She reasons that if Abosi is assassinated, the war would be over. “Debbie prayed to God to forgive her. If Abosi was eliminated, she reasoned, millions of lives would be saved.” (ibid, 255) Therefore, though she had a secret love and admiration for Abosi, in the greater interests of the country and the people, she decides to assassinate Abosi herself. But in the nick of time, Abosi escapes. But Debbie also has her confusions. ‘Had Abosi suspected that he was going to be forced to surrender? Would she have been able to harm him personally if he had refused? Was her love for Nigeria greater than her admiration and suppressed love for this man? Her feelings were mixed.’ [...] He owed her- he owed all of those who had believed in him, in his burning zeal, his ideal- an explanation.’ (ibid, 256). But when she finds out that Abosi has plans to escape from the country, her decision is made. ‘A hot uncontrollable anger enveloped her, making her sweat and shiver at the same time. To be so betrayed by the symbol of Biafra!’ [...] ‘She had always known herself to be impulsive and that in this particular case, circumstances would dictate her actions. Abosi must not escape. He must not be allowed to escape and leave all the believers of his dream to face Lawal and his crazy ‘Operation Mosquito’ campaign of mass mutiny. Like a good captain, Abosi should die honourably defending his ship. Her mind was made up. No man, not even Abosi, was going to make a fool of her, a fool of all those unfortunate mothers who had lost their sons, the hopes of their families.’ (ibid, 257).

- Now Debbie acts and plant landmines under Abosi’s plane, but her plans fail again. ‘Hatred and the urge for revenge drove reason from Debbie. She cursed under her breath as they scrambled in the dark. Then came the sound that put an everlasting hole in the pit of her stomach: the sound of a plane taking off. The landmine had failed her; it had not gone off.’ (ibid, 257). While she tries a second time, there occurs another explosion near her and she is also injured badly. ‘The shrieks were deafening. And in the middle of it all she saw him too, the white man. How did he manage to be here? Was there anything, anything at all, black people could not hide from these white people? She wanted to die at that minute.’ (ibid, 258).

Following this is the final encounter between Alan and Debbie: the coloniser and the anti-colonial native. He asks her to escape from that place. ‘Come on, let’s go to that waiting plane. It will take us to England in no time. This is one of the worst places on earth to stay now.’ To this Debbie retorts angrily. “‘Why, why should you want to take me along with you? To start patronizing me with your charity all over again? You forget I have the plague; you forget that I was raped-”

Now Alan tries to be the ‘protector’ which Debbie declines. ‘We’ve been through a great deal together. I’ll marry you if that’s what you want.’ [...] ‘If Abosi could leave, why not you?’ Debbie then articulates her deviation from the colonial identity.

- “I see now that Abosi and his like are still colonized. They need to be decolonized. I am not like him, a black white man; I am a woman and a woman of Africa. I am a daughter of Nigeria and if she is in shame, I shall stay and mourn with her in shame. No, I am not ready yet to become the wife of an exploiter of my nation.” [...]

“There are two boys, the Nwoba boys, and many other orphans that I am going to help bring up with my share of Father’s money. And there is my manuscript to publish. I shall tell those orphans the story of how a few ambitious soldiers from Sandhurst tried to make their dream a reality. Goodbye, Alan. I didn’t mind you being my male concubine, but Africa will never again stoop to being your wife; to meet you on an equal basis, like companions, yes, but never again to be your slave.” (ibid, 259)

Finally, Debbie has come to realize what she has construed as her identity. She has found herself to be a Nigerian woman, who through her intelligence and sensibility and helped by her education would try to remake Nigeria. Unlike the men who are still colonised, she has not got influenced despite her foreign education. She has decolonised herself and by rejecting Alan gives a new image to herself and Africa. She reverses the role by calling Alan her male concubine and also rejects the role of a wife to a white exploiter. She has taken upon herself as being the symbol of Africa and thereby, is talking for the whole Africa and African women. She is an African woman above racial or tribal images as well as not confining to the traditional notion. She asserts herself as an individual who likes to live life her own way but with an allegiance to her nation and its people. Debbie has deconstructed her colonial identity and emerged as a true native but without its limiting factors. She successfully comes out of her cultural alienation to belong to the place where she was born, coupled with the education and empathy she needs, to help rebuild her nation.

Sircar asserts that, ‘Debbie Ogedemgbe is the most compelling example we have of the New Woman in Africa. She embodies a liberating ideal, of potentiality, of a rich, active, and fulfilling future for African women, and it is an autonomous future she embraces, a future without men’. [*The Twice Colonised*, 96]

So, tracing the three texts, there is an increase in the mode of articulation of resistance. From Lalithambika’s ‘muted’ protagonists [with exceptions like Tatri], who by mere portrayals of reality and at times yielding to the conformist patterns to Aidoo’s ‘contentious voices’ where the conflicts of identity is articulated, we come to the most effective and non-conformist resistance in Emecheta. There is an evolutionary pattern which shows different notions of identity and its expression, reflected by the cultural, racial, social and educational background that the protagonists come from.

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