

Men's Imaging of Women in Nigerian Poetry: The Changing Perspective in Emeka Umeanor's *Meanor's Memoirs*

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Abstract: This article examines a shift in men's imaging of women in Nigerian poetry, focusing on the poetry collection, *Meanor's Memoir*, by Emeka Umeanor. This is predicated on the view that poetry in the Nigerian literary scene, reportedly dominated by men, has been consistent in relegating and misrepresenting women. Consequently, with poems selected from Umeanor's poetry collection, the paper aims to analyse depictions suggesting men's reassessment of women in Nigerian poetry. The discussion is anchored on qualitative analysis, with theoretical support from cultural feminism strand, tending to explain how the imaging is influenced by the idea that women are endowed with inherent but undervalued qualities. The paper reveals a shift in men's perspective as indicated by positive characterization of feminine traits and attributes, including beauty, love, peaceful disposition, honesty and trustworthiness, representing not just their inimitable characteristics, but too valuable to be taken for granted. Besides these, women are strong-willed and brave, similar to qualities associated with men. The paper recognizes this as an improvement in the imaging of women in Nigerian poetry in recent times, and concludes that men's misrepresentation of women is being revisited by men for the purpose of promoting equity and fairness in the literary space.

Keywords: imaging; women; men; Nigerian poetry; misrepresentation

1. Introduction

Women as subject of representation remains one of the dominant discussions in literary scholarship. This is the outcome of feminism, which has seen to the evolution of a feminist critical perspective to the study of literary texts. Since the emergence of feminism, it has not only succeeded in challenging the biased notions of women, both in the society and literature, but with the resolve to changing the narrative. Despite the oppression, marginalization, misrepresentations and devaluation in virtually all spheres of life, for centuries, women have been known for adding to the topics of literary discourse, mostly those that concerned their lived experiences (Raj, 2023). The poetic genre played significant role in this regard. This is because, it offers them the platform to amplify their voices on issues of gender and equality. From the classical period to the contemporary, women have emerged as poets to proclaim their capabilities, using their poetry to provide a counter-narrative to dominant patriarchal discourse and shaped feminist thought (Beech, 2021). Quick to call are the early proto-feminist voices like the Greek lyric poet, Sappho (c. 630-570 BCE), whose poems convey themes, such as love and passion, manifesting as a challenge to male-centred narratives. One contemporary feminist poet that has boosted feminism with a new wave is Carol Ann Duffy. According to Khalaf (2023), she is the first female poet of Britain known for feminist reinterpretations of history.

Accordingly, it can be construed that poetry, like other genres of literature, which seems designated and used by men to depict negative things about women, has equally been used by women themselves to counter the patriarchal notions. The objective, just as Sougou (2010) speaks of African fiction writers, in such ways which poetry is not different, is for poets to depict women in positive roles and emphasize their agency in society. What this means is that there has been conscious effort aimed at demonstrating the capabilities of women through the poetic art so that society see and feel their importance. But this differing perspective is not limited to women alone, as men are believed to have joined forces with women to add

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their voices to the feminist discourse, whether poetry or fiction. Male classical novelists easily come to mind in this regard. They are known in their works who, despite patriarchal dominance and influence, give account of female characters and themes that favour the feminist perspective. This is because they were oriented towards writing realistic depictions of women, giving their female characters depth of personality and fierce independence (Chando, 2025). Such novelists include Gustave Flaubert in *Madame Bovary*, Thomas Hardy in *Tess of D'Urbervilles*, D. H. Lawrence in *Women in Love*, Henry James in *The Portrait of a Lady*, Leo Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina* and even William Shakespeare in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

In modern African literature, with particular reference to the Nigerian scene, this has also been a part of the literary tradition, even though it has generally been identified as male dominated, where men are the masters and the majority (Ojo-Ade, 1987). This is noticed, more especially, in the fictional and dramatic genres where some male writers have shown to be flexible and fair in the representation of women in their works. Olusegun-Joseph (2021) and Fwangyil (2017) have attested to this in the area of fiction. While Fwangyil (2017) strongly affirms that male feminists have also added their voices in portraying the transformation of women in patriarchal societies, Olusegun-Joseph (2021) argues that "certain representations of African male writing preceding those of the contemporary turn portray revisionist attitudes to patriarchy, or any form of hegemonic masculinity. In these, the African woman is made to gain visibility and she becomes active on her own social terms" (p. 90).

When it comes to the dramatic genre, there are several male playwrights in the Nigerian literary scene who, alongside their female counterparts, have used the genre to give voice to women. Odi (2019) alludes to this fact when she observes that both male and female playwrights have shown increased interest in matters that concern women in their dramatic works and the subsequent attention such works have generated over the years. Names like J. P. Clark, Barclays Ayakoroma and Ben Binabai are notable for their dedication to the course of advancing women in their plays. These writers tend to differ from playwrights, such as Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan, who are notable for promoting the male ideology (Onwueme, 1991). The path taken by these writers, therefore, has helped in mounting women, not just in the Nigerian stage, but the African continent, according to Odi (2019). This positive development is possible because these playwrights defied the patriarchal control and structure that were traditionally known to undermining the essence of women in the society.

Chukwuma (2000) provides detail of what has been the well-known practice before receiving modification, when she observes that "the men wrote about themselves, their wives, homes, their ideals, aspirations and conflicts, their confrontation with the white man and his ways, in sum, their society at large. They were the masters and the traditionally accepted mouthpiece of their women folk. But did they say it all? Can any being overtake the place of another? Can a male writer feel the depth of a woman's consciousness, sensibilities, femininity, impulses and indeed her weaknesses?" (p. 101).

The Nigerian poetry which this paper beams its searchlight seems to have begun to receive this modification as it is said to have been originally dominated by male poets, who have not only rendered women "invisible and inaudible", but also engage in portrayals that paint women in ways far from being positive and acceptable to the womenfolk. According to Bamgbose (2012), men in the case of Nigerian poetry "have always manipulated this literary space in order to misrepresent women and cast them into total obscurity" (p. 98). He writes further that women appear in roles that demean them and that this is done through language. However, women have emerged as poets, encouraged by the need to speak out through same language, with the intention to correct the misrepresentations, suggesting that they are worth humans and deserve to be treated equally like their male counterpart. While it is true that the Nigerian literary scene has witnessed women poets mounting the stage, it has also shown the tendency to accommodate male poets aligning with some male playwrights and novelists to advance the course of women. This article, therefore, demonstrates strong interest in this change with regards to men's approach to the question of women in Nigerian poetry. Its main aim is to highlight on the change recorded in the representation of women in Umeanor's poetry. The objectives include identifying and explaining ways in which women are imagined, and how do the representations constitute an improvement that aligns with the thought of feminism.

2. Materials and Methods

In line with the above objective, this paper samples Umeanor's poetry collection,

Meanor's Memoirs, for critical analysis. The analytical procedure used is the qualitative content analysis, which in the words of Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278), "is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns". The reliability on this procedure rest on the recognition that a literary text is composed of "certain words" that can be relied for analysis from which projected meaning by writers can be discovered. For this paper, the text in focus is *Meanor's Memoirs*, representing a collection of several poems, out of which some are thoroughly selected in line with the appropriateness of the topic. The poems include *Josephine Imodu*, *Dr Akpojeme Afiemo*, *Veronica Ufaruna*, *Adaobi Brodrick*, *Nkiru Ikedilo*, *Juliana Amiolemen*, *Barr. Onyeka Umeanor*, *Oluwatoyin Adeleke*, and *Morenike Olaiye*. These poems are read, re-read and analysed with the hope to show how the words, in the nature of poetic lines, embody and signify a deliberate praising and celebration of women, in accepting their real essence covered by the uniqueness of their feminine traits. Appropriate scholarly views gotten from online journal articles are used to lend critical support to important points made.

Also, the method is hinged on the cultural feminist theoretical strand which forms part of the larger umbrella body of feminism (Valiyeva, 2025). This approach which is reported to have been introduced by Brook Williams in 1975, is said to have evolved out of radical feminism, which was basically concerned with the outright ending of the structure of patriarchy, in line with women's quest for social change. But radical feminism is said to have failed in its quest, thereby creating a situation where attention had to be shifted to cultural feminism. This became necessary with the hope that if women failed to change the structure of patriarchy in the society, according to Bisong and Ekanem (2014, p. 34) "they could at least avoid it as much as possible". Cultural feminism, which parades Margaret Fuller, Frances Willard, Jane Addams, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman as its well-known proponents, is rooted on the idea that women are endowed with "special qualities" and that these qualities make them the equal of men or even superior (Jiménez-Rodrigo, 2024; Vicedo, 2025). In the words of Hussain (2019), "cultural feminism is the theory that there are fundamental personalities differences between men and women, and those women's differences are special and should be celebrated. This theory affirms the notion that men and women are different biologically due to which women are kinder and they can rule the world in a nice manner free from fear and tensions of war and weapons" (p. 232).

The concern of cultural feminism is to celebrate the positive attributes of women which have been taken for granted through patriarchal ideology of devaluation. The adoption of this theory in this paper rests on the fact that it resonates with the overriding thematic import and tone of the selected poems. Therefore, analysis will be based on looking at how women are presented and meant to be conceived through construction of words in line with the central advocacy of cultural feminists. In other words, the analysis is done, bearing in mind the contention of the cultural feminist model, seeking to demonstrate how meaning derived from the words of the poem-texts relate to revaluing and redefining of human traits that are culturally attributed to the female sex.

3. Results and Discussion

That literature can serve two opposing purposes is not in contention. This is as far as existing studies on literature would reveal. The purpose of men and that of women is a familiar one. The example of Umeanor's poems is a testament to this view. The poems selected and analysed seems dedicated to promoting women as against the ideology of men that silence and devalue their feminine traits in literary poetic texts elsewhere. It is assumed that poet manifests an inclination towards feminism by shelving the ignorance, and obstinance of patriarchy that makes them turn blind to the traits, potentials and abilities of women, not minding that such qualities have been ever useful in all ramifications. Instead, he so ingeniously speaks of women, an indication of a thoughtful representation that is clearly aimed at glorifying them as embodiments of positive ideas and values. In line with his purpose, Umeanor (2022) in the poems prioritizes women's display of love, beauty, boldness, strength, resilience and individuality. He builds powerful images around women that make them to be seen in the eyes of his readers, as indispensable assets to the society. This is thoroughly explained in selected poems under the sub-headings below.

3.1. Portrait of Love and Beauty as Positive Traits

Love and beauty are assets with which women are easily identified. This is for positive reasons, when put to use. That they are endowed with these abilities to make significant

impact in the society is given attention in Umeanor's poems with the aim of validating feminist revaluing of women. In *Josephine Imodu* for instance, the poet paints a beautiful picture about the life of women using the example of Josephine. The picture is beautiful in the sense that she is a woman who is full of love and caring. This is indicated in the expression her "heart is large". That she has a large heart is a statement of utmost significance, a clear message of how women are capable of attending to critical societal issues, in no way less than men. Off course, the picture creates the impression of how the subject as a woman chooses to dedicate her life to loving people and helping those that are in need of love in the society. It demonstrates the fact that to every woman, society is paramount and must gain from her benevolence. To prove the point that she cares so much about her society, the poet discloses that "the world is in her portal" where she spends time and resources "affecting it with the beauty of her petal". Attracted by her benevolent lifestyle, the poet, joined by numerous beneficiaries, intones:

She is our source of bliss
In her our lives enjoy lease
Even in her ranging rancour
In her we still love to anchor

The use of the pronouns, "our" (twice) and "we" in the above excerpt illustrates the point that she has transcended impacting her love on a single individual's life, to a mass of people. The choice of the words represents a striking testimony that comes from the length and breadth of the community. It is evident that women have moved away from the confine of the home, where they were traditionally assigned the role of managing the home, but now managers in public spaces. This resonates with Ujowundu's (2013) revelation that women, in reference to Africa, have overcome all obstacles to place themselves in "different professions including those traditionally seen as male jobs" (p. 145). Their disposition to love helps them to do well in discharging their professional responsibility. This is with the implication that women have been truly empowered, as a matter of necessity, for community development. The poet justifies his eulogy for the subject with the observation by Onyenze and Ebebe (2024) which affirms how women have been able to show commitment in the development of society by getting involved in financial donations. The poet's position is that this is only possible because of their inherent love.

The poet's aim of celebrating women for their ability to impact on society positively through love and positive mindset is continued in *Dr Akpojeme Afimo*. This is as he draws attention to the life of another woman, *Dr Akpojeme Afimo*, whose life symbolizes love also. The poet depicts her as a woman who has love in abundance to share to humanity. The volume of love, the poet notes, makes her "caring always to the high". This is in demonstration of her patriotic disposition towards her society. There is the suggestion that her disposition is undefeatable. Because her life is bound together with her society, she "carries the world in and around with grace". There is the sense of enormity involved in discharging one's duty, as defined his or role to the society. Here, the poet raises the point that there is the equal share of grace between the two genders. This account of the subject is true about the capabilities of men and women but it is rather unfortunate that that which concerns the latter is often taking for granted. The ability of women to show love, and like with every other quality, is said to be complementary. To this end, it is good for the growth of society as women make meaningful contributions, more often proven to surprise members of society by exceeding normal expectations (Idike et al., 2020). This is the point highlighted by the poet through the image builds around the subject. It can be seen in the admission of the subject's worth in the excerpt below:

She is quite easy to love
You can't but show her love
Captures the essence of our groove
She's is brilliant and there's proof.

Similarly, in *Veronica Ufaruna*, the poet once again shows how women are capable of making their society proud through the exhibition of love. He reiterates the view that with love women can affect their society greatly. This he proves in the way he presents the subject of this poem to the reader. The poet says "she's got a heart love full" (line 1). Identifying love with women here again is to give emphasis to its importance as a quality in the society. It makes it known that with love women become valuable. The worth of women as revealed in the subject's character is that "she takes the crust of life with a smile" (line 3). Crust of life reminds the reader of those things that make the human life difficult to live and hardly give

anyone joy. The expression, an oxymoron, is used by the poet to suggest that women play, if not the most difficult roles in the society, yet they are never displeased, even though they are not appreciated. The “smiles” represent their peaceful and welcoming disposition to things that inflict pains on them when they play important but difficult roles. This attitude the poet shows is an important tool to keep society at peace, as they are used to overwhelm the pains. Illustrating how the subject is able to achieve this, he discloses that she keeps “her pains away in miles” (line 4). This does not only counter the standpoint that women are emotional, but also underscores the point that they are psychologically disposed to square up with social realities. The poet’s purpose herein echoes the objective of feminism which is “to validate feminine attributes that have been systematically undervalued within a patriarchal society” (Mohajan, 2022, p. 19).

The pains are enormous and the reason for the enormity, the poet explains, is as a result of her willingness to offer her “shoulders for others to lie”. Here, a striking image of women is created, which at best draws attention to the view that women are dependent. While that remains a shallow, patriarchal misrepresentation of women, the poet’s representation of his subject does not only dispute the view, but also show that women can be self-reliant. Taking it a step further, the poet in the words illustrates that, women, apart from the ability to assert their independence, can cause others to depend on them on many aspects of social life. The “others” in the excerpt indicates the possibility of both men and women, the young and the aged, who seek help from the subject. With this, the poet shows an interest in how women manage to eschew the tendency of becoming discriminatory, highlighting how they help to build and strengthened a harmonious society. More so, it captures their inclination to remain truthful to themselves on their choice of role. This is what the poet insinuates when he mentions that even when the subject finds it difficult to help, she does not leave room to be doubted.

Ever leave rift without a try
Even when she can’t help but cry
Will leave with a fine impression.

To amplify this quality, the poet informs that her good nature is “beyond human comprehension” (line 9). This depiction tends to authenticate the point that women are generally special and it will not be out of place to treat them with respect.

Also, in *Adaobi Brodrick*, the poet reiterates the need to identify and praise women’s special gifts as he continues to demonstrate how their sense of love makes them indispensable in the development of the society. This is seen in the way he eulogies the subject in the poem. Specifically, hammering on the depth of love exhibited by the subject, the poet reveals that she possesses a “heart” that “can reach out and touch” on many lives, even to the extent that she does it “sometimes in ignorant rush” (line 4 and 5). This implies that her generosity knows no boundary because even those that do not deserve of such good, have often benefited. This resonates with the earlier suggestion that women detest discriminatory tendencies when they choose to be nice. What is amazingly revealing from this depiction is the ability of the subject, not minding her gender, to remain unperturbed in the face of distractions emanating from her mistake of only trying to be nice to all. This the poet captures in “ever smiling away with fright” (line 9). Finding it truly amazing, he speaks of her, with particularity to her heart: “beautiful is her heart” (line 8).

3.2. Portrait of Traits of Honesty and Trustworthiness

A society of people with dishonest character, especially in leadership positions, is fated to fail. As an important element of moral character, it is valued in many societies which is not beneficial only to an individual well-being but the community (Le et al., 2022). This is not to be measured in men alone but women who are proven bearers of honesty as a pathway to the overall development of the society. For this reason, society “must ensure that women have an equal opportunity to hold leadership positions in all areas of life because, if only men continue in this race, the abilities and capabilities of women will be underutilized” (Obioha & Daminabo, 2021, p. 1125). The poet seems to have agreed to this recognition now given to women in *Dr Akpojeme Afemo*. In furtherance of his objective, he hints at the fact that, truly, apart from the ability to love, women can as well display the attribute of honesty. This is because it is helpful for the moral well-being of the society, if it must advance its course of development. In promoting general image of women, the poet insinuates that his subject lives an honest life. This particular personality trait, he notes, is not confined to her private life alone but also finds expression in the public space, often in instances where she is giving the opportunity to serve her society in leadership positions. Thus, she sees herself as a public

figure with higher expectations. This portraiture agrees with the submission made by Dhawan (2005), Kumari and Siotra (2023) about Indian women that they are less susceptible to corruption in form of bribery and favouritism, sweet tongued but also honest. Indeed, the poem's subject is said to have no record of misconduct in her public life as revealed below:

Ever coming clean without trace
Our sensation and ace.

It can be seen that the poet is unequivocal about describing her as an asset to her society as he sums it up metaphorically that "she is our jewel and pride" (Umeanor, 2022). She is treated as a valuable asset not on the template of a wife but in the public space where women should be giving equal opportunities to contribute to societal development, because they have the potential positive effect in participations that can result to less corruption rate, faster economic growth and improved overall living standard (Fasiku, 2023). This might be the result of what Ogunjemilua and Familugba (2015) pointed out when they remark that women in the globalized world constitute an important segment of the productive population, noticeable in the areas of governance, politics, economy, public service among others. The global recognition of women's agency as captured herein is the basis for Umeanor's praise for the subject. The use of "our" again shows that the society, not just the poet, is appreciative of her shining quality, which by extension, every woman.

Umeanor's continued drive to highlight the tendency of women to evince honesty and a commitment to the ideal of the society is advanced in the poem, *Juliana Amiolemen*. This is strengthened in the poet's imaginative painting of the subject as a model of honesty in the society. It starts from her "heart" which serves as the storehouse for such an important value. Laden with eulogy, such organ is described as beautiful. The beauty which the heart represents is likened to "the Lilly" (line 2). It is from this lily-like heart that her honest disposition to both private and public life makes her a "comforting, thoughtful and motherly" figure, of great importance to all in the society. Giving emphasis to the height of perfection recorded about her honest conduct and life, the poet announces that she has a name that is lauded "but seen hardly" (line 4). Furthermore, perhaps as characteristic of the nature of women, despite her good record of honest doings, she "never jostled for the spotlight" (line 5). She is not bordered by this lack of presence or visibility as used to be the practice of men, because she has a duty to her society which must be seen in how she "lives a life adjudged to be alright" (line 6). Hers is to pursue what Ordu and Abdulkarim (2018) outline as the aspiration of every resourceful person or leader, which is to direct their actions by developing and encouraging a shared conscious manner of behaviour, aimed at appealing to people that would be won over to pursue and attain the desired result.

In *Barr. Onyeka Umeanor*, the poet continues to recognize and value women on the simple truth that they are capable of demonstrating honest and trustworthy behaviours as positive traits which are imperative for the improvement of society. The woman in question here is a wife, whom the poet portrays as a perfect representation of womenfolk. He expresses excitement and gratitude in having her as an equal partner with inestimable potentials to add value to the human life. The subject being an embodiment of honesty is never in doubt, judging from her words and actions. Evidence is drawn from the statement that she stands for a life "where all good thrives" (line 4). This is more so, because she is out to keep "shining brightly in your drives" (line 5). This implies that her willingness to remain steadfastness in her honest act is assured all the time. In response, the poet in appreciation prays:

Have a great day dear wife
May yours be a beautiful life
One devoid of strife.

The above underlines men's recognition of the place of women in contemporary societies, following reassessment of earlier assumptions against them. The re-imaging becomes a convincing antithesis to negative thoughts that were long held against them by patriarchy. It can be seen as signifying a trend towards ending the devaluation of things positive about women.

3.3. *Portrait of Traits of Bravery and Energy*

Women in reality have been able to prove that they have the gift of energy and bravery in their own way that make them special in the society. This again is one positive attribute that calls for attention. This is as Shairgojri (2023) asserts that "women are vital to our country's progress because their mental and physical contact with life is far more extensive than men's. The cradle-rocking hand rules the world. A revolutionary energy that can create a paradise on earth is hidden in women. Benevolence, adjustability, integrity, and tolerance

are among its many attributes” (p. 33).

The above gives backing to Umeanor’s portrayal of women in *Josephine Imodu*, where he also informs that the subject is gifted with boldness, physical strength and, more so, a peaceful heart. The part that she is bold would sound strange as it has been claimed that the male sex alone is a symbol of bravery. This is one obvious case of a biased patriarchal notion that comes under scrutiny in the poem. Here, the poet is seen contesting the notion by crediting same attribute to the subject, hinting that women are not by nature timid, but actually bold. Convincing the reader with the description of her level of boldness, he metaphorically speaks of her beauty by comparing her to a “lion”, before hinting at her peaceful disposition, by equally comparing her to a “lamb”. What this means is that she combines these two attributes even though she is a woman, to succeed in sustaining her benevolent act. The combination represents the complex nature of human, of which it seems unique to women. But that this is gifted to women enables the poet to establish the point that it is necessary to possess such qualities if one must impact on lives and the society, especially where there is preponderance of antagonism and envy.

The poet also draws attention to the mental and physical strength of women in the poem, just as it has been attributed to men. Hence, it is obvious that he has in mind to show how women can equal men in strength, virtually in all aspects. This is as he notifies that the subject is an athlete who displays great skills and energy when she is set on the track. This is reinforced by the display of gallantry which she is always prepared for the task of competing with other contestants. As a result, she always emerges victorious.

She has the energy of a horse
On the race track she is no loss
She is not scared to carry the cross.

The lines above bring about an image of an energetic female athlete who does not entertain any form of fear, but has to be feared by her fellow competitors. The poet explains that she never loses any competition because she has the energy of a “horse”. Noting on the subject possessing the energy of a horse through the metaphor employed drives the reader to compare her with her male counterpart who traditionally enjoys the social construct of being strong and energetic. With this, the poet’s target of equaling women with men on the account of their possession and deployment of energy becomes obvious in the poem.

Similar depiction is to be seen in *Nkeiru Ikedilo*. The poet in a spectacular way describes this subject as someone who, defying the traditional notion of her gender, faces life with positive mindset. This is demonstrated in the expression, “parrots’ power” and moves “through obstacles like a mower.” These lines metaphorically highlight the strength and resilience that women are capable of displaying. The poet uses the lines to throw light on what the subject displays when she faces life’s challenges, which are inevitable in society and not only applicable to a particular gender. Strikingly, as the poet is excited to portray, despite the enormity of these challenges that life poses to her, she is able to overcome them with ease and determination. By comparing her movement in the face of obstacles to a mower, the poet tends to suggest that she is relentless in her efforts to overcome the difficulties in her path to success. In other words, the metaphor tenders the clarification that she is capable, and determined to crush any obstacle that stands on her path, much like a mower will do to clear a path. This becomes symbolic of women who are bound to face life’s toughest moments but are not in want of the positive mindset and strength to deal with them.

The above imaging of women is also featured in *Oluwatoyin Adeleke*, as the poet continues to acknowledge and eulogies women for their worthiness. The characteristic energy and strength that women are endowed with comes to play as they continue to play the role of care giving within and mostly, outside their homes. This particular role requires energy and strength because it is obviously demanding. It is to this end that women are ready to prove a point which have seen them successfully match these important assets with their care-giving role. In the poem, this role is once again given prominence as captured in the expressions: “Loving her friends so kin” and “Her heart filled with care to the brim” (lines 2 and 3). The manner with which they show up their energy and strength to sustain and realise the objectives of this all-important role as exemplified by the subject in the poem, is portrayed in:

She fought for their sake
She restrained them a take
She was strength you dared
Beyond that was a soul in dear
Carrying everyone in care,

The above image is reinforced with the poet's outright calling of the subject a "mother hen". This can easily be seen as a superb way of painting and speaking glowing of women in their protective role which remained unmatched, or not even to be seen as being shared by their men counterpart. The strength and energy with which they go about this vital role is perceptible to all, and stands opposed to what they have wrongly perceived. This resonates with the view expressed by Rodrigues et al. (2023) that women have proven to be strong enough to deal with the stereotypes labeled against them, and have shown the courage to justify what they believe.

Similar painting that recognises the vitality of women runs through in *Morenike Olaiye*. In this poem, the poet shows that women combine smartness and boldness to confront realities that tend to undermine them in the society. In describing the nature of realities and outcomes, the poet notes that it comes with "pains", but in spite, it is expelled "like holly" (line 4). As characteristic of their kind, it is always related to their understanding of love, its importance and the passion with which they explore it for the common good of the society. As a result, society "can't help but jolly" (line 3). Therefore, it must be reiterated that such results cannot be attained if they were not naturally smart and bold. They are ever encouraged by the consciousness of the efficacy of these qualities gifted them to dare any circumstances they find themselves. This can be referenced in what is said about the subject, illustrated in the lines: "She stutters her way out smartly" (line 5). Her application of smartness, where necessary, is aided by a boldness she displays which the poet compares to a "samurai" (line 6). By this, women are proven warriors because they can as well engage in things that bring out that trait of fearlessness in them that Overlooks their sex. This has been acknowledged by the society; hence the poet attests in the lines below that:

She is our priceless gift
The one we are glad to lift.

The use of the pronouns "our" and "we" is a proof that the recognition now offered women is not the single viewpoint of the poet, but a collective one. The poet, on this basis, has only taken up the challenges before male feminists to portray the changing roles of women in the society, their successes in their chosen area of interest and their ability to surmount challenges and emerge stronger (Barnhart & Mahan, 2018). This goes with the strong inclination to value women as the same with men.

4. Conclusions

This article in the forgoing has yet delved into the feminist discourse with the view to appraise and provide updates on its concerns and prospects in literary representations, of which the focus had been on the Nigerian poetry. The article particularly centered on discussion relating to the clamor for a fair representation of women and how writers have been able to respond correspondingly. Umeanor's *Meanor's Memoirs* falls into this category which in the forgoing analysis showed that the poet is disposed towards a fair and positive representation of women. This is supported by findings which revealed that the women subjects in the poems are identified and celebrated for being endowed with special qualities, including beauty, love, peaceful disposition, honesty and trustworthiness, which are not just unique to their gender and nature, but considered too valuable to be taken for granted. Same women also share attributes that are purportedly reserved for men, like strong-willed and bravery. Hence, the poet's treatment of women in the poems demonstrates the strong belief that women have been erroneously undervalued by the society. Their biological difference is insignificant. This renders the binary opposition system unusable, in the sense that men and women have become competitors for revered values in the society. With the Umeanor's example, this article has, therefore, demonstrated that the path has been truly taken by male feminist poets in the Nigerian literary space to begin to prioritise positive representation of women in present times.

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