

FEMALE ANGUISH IN MALE-ORIENTED SOCIETIES AND THE
ALTERNATIVE OF SISTERHOOD IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *SECOND CLASS
CITIZEN*

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Abstract: This article is a critical scrutiny of the various aspects of female predicament depicted by Buchi Emecheta in *Second Class Citizen*. It highlights the atrocious conditions in which live certain feminine characters. Nevertheless, the latter have a firm conviction in a brighter future. The alternative of sisterhood remains for them, an opportunity to develop a flawless solidarity to dismantle male hegemony. This article tries to rethink gender, sexual subjectivity and promote emancipation of African women. It portrays their struggle against the masculinist domination to ensure a better life. This research paper aims at giving African woman valuable insights about the hardships she faces. That can booster the effective use of her potential and abilities she needs to fight back the despicable act of male oppression. First, we shall deal with the "Manifestations of Women's Predicament", secondly we will throw light on "The Rethinking of Gender and the Alternative of Sisterhood. And at last, we are going to put a stress on "*Second Class Citizen: a Call to Awareness vis-vis Women's Plight?*" As the novel under study showcases woman's repressive treatment from man, the feminist theory will be used to analyse it.

Keywords: emasculation, feminism, marginalization, sisterhood, trauma, woman.

L'ANGOISSE FÉMININE DANS LES SOCIÉTÉS MASCULINES ET
L'ALTERNATIVE DE LA SORORITÉ DANS *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN* DE
BUCHI EMECHETA

Résumé : Cet article est un examen critique des divers aspects de la situation difficile des femmes dépeinte par Buchi Emecheta dans *Second Class Citizen*. Elle met en lumière les conditions atroces dans lesquelles vivent certains personnages féminins. Néanmoins, ces dernières ont la ferme conviction en un avenir meilleur. L'alternative du "Sisterhood" demeure pour elle une opportunité pour développer une solidarité sans failles en vue de démanteler l'hégémonie masculine. Cet article tente de repenser le genre, la subjectivité sexuelle et promouvoir l'émancipation de la femme africaine. Elle relate leur lutte contre la domination masculine en vue d'une vie meilleure. Ce travail de recherche vise à donner à la femme une prise de conscience effective au sujet de ces tribulations. Cela peut booster la mise en valeur de ses potentialités et habilités dont elle a besoin pour combattre l'immorale oppression masculine. Tout d'abord nous allons traiter des "manifestations de tribulations de la femme, ensuite nous mettrons en évidence " la réexamination du genre et l'alternative du Sisterhood et enfin nous mettrons un accent particulier sur "*Second Class Citizen: un appel à la prise de conscience vis-à-vis des problèmes féminins*. Vu que le roman à l'étude met en exergue le traitement repressif de l'homme sur la femme, la théorie féministe sera convoquée pour l'analyse.

Mots-clés : efféminisation, femme, féminisme, marginalisation, sisterhood, traumatisme.

Introduction

In African societies, ever since, women's vulnerability turns them into a potential prey for men's oppression. The pre-conceived idea of their inferiority causes them profound despair. Most of the time, males negate them social ascension and they inflict on women a war of attrition. In the *Second Sex* one reads: "all oppression creates a state of war. And there is no exception. (De Beauvoir, p.53). Women seriously suffer from injustice and their anguished search for better life puts the feminine in a psychological instability. The African women can hardly overcome their quandary. Sometimes in fiction, female characters experience specific wrong in a sordid marriage.

Thus, in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, one could deplore female prevention by odd notions of patriarchy. In a male-oriented society, women suffer from the traditional confines of marriage which sometimes impose them emasculated husbands. Female life is purgatorial under the masculinist tyranny. For, in *Black Feminist Thought, Knowledge Consciousness and The Politics of Empowerment* it is written: "oppression describes any unjust situation where, systematically and over, a long period of time one group denies another group access to the resources of society (Collins, 2000, p.12). Seen under this prism, males set on low values on women's existence. They are trapped within the sense of passivity and inertia. Nevertheless, female determination and solidarity help them to redress their subordinate positions

Men seize women control of reproduction. Their marital lives are so nightmarish that they feel unnumerable dissatisfactions. The widespread frustration caused by poor living conditions increases the internalization of their inferior status. Nevertheless, owing to paid-work they struggle for visibility. African females do their best to erode the long standing prejudices against them. They fight to reduce hardships.

In *Writing across Cultures Gender Politics and Difference in the Fiction of Buchi Emecheta* an analysis about Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* raises two issues: "one is the protest by the heroine, Adah, against the cultural assumptions and male domination which constrict her and check her quest for selfhood. The other issue is the situation of Black peoples in London. (Sougou, 2002, p.40). Whereas In *Book Review*, a particular stress is put on the issues of race and class in *Emecheta Second Class Citizen* : "the myth of England built up by mission class missionaries and administrators which had featured so prominently in their early lives is rudely shattered by the racism they encounter and the social conditions they find in London. (Kushnik, 1975, p.433-434). Indeed, if Omar Sougou impute woman's marginalization to the weight of her traditions as well as patriarchy, Louis Kushnik castigates racial discriminations and class segregation which characters face. But both of these authors fail to well express female predicament these protagonists encounter. Thus, this situation gives enough ground to "Female Anguish and the Alternative of Sisterhood in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*". This article fosters an inappropriate image of African women's tribulations. These female characters' social marginalization gives way to the theorization of their subaltern identities.

All the same, these women repudiate their victim status and seek to endow a sense of empowerment. They give insight into committee actions. This solidarity among themselves considerably reduces the harmful function of man's oppressive power structures. More interesting still, what is the impact of anguish on these characters? To

what extent can sisterhood contribute to woman's rehabilitation? How can we perceive the vision of Emecheta in the depiction of all the social injustices that affect her characterization?

This article in the light of feminist theory puts into evidence the degradation and commodification undergone by the feminine. The choice of feminism is justified by the wide range of female characters in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. These protagonists subdue male domination in their society, and this choice can lead us to deeply analyze the scandalous living conditions of certain women.

Feminism as defined by the *Dictionary of literary Terms* appears as a set of movements that aim at defining, establishing, and defending equal political economic and social rights for women. In addition, feminism fights for equal opportunities for women in education and employment. A feminist is an advocate or supporter of the rights and equality of women, she cannot put up with injustice perpetrated to women. Feminist theory, as a pure emergence from feminist movements, makes its main concern the understanding of the nature of gender disparity by examining women's social roles and lived experience. It develops theories in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues such as the social construction of sex and gender which need frantic collaboration and an indefectible solidarity among woman which is called Sisterhood. This article includes three parts, the first is about "the Manifestations of Female Predicament the second part deals with the "Alternative of Sisterhood" and the Third one is concerned with "Second Class Citizen A Call to Awareness vis-à-vis Women's Plight?".

The manifestations of women's anguish

In feminist African novels, female characters are often victims of male oppression. They live in such difficult conditions because most African societies are patriarchal ones. They are communities where men hold a high consideration compared to women. On account of their natural privileges over females, males have the proclivity to marginalize them because the phallogocentric system grants them such prerogatives and nurtures and maintains such biases against women. This is the case in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, Adah and many other characters feel a huge resentment. They are the embodiment of the store-up frustration. Francis's wife experiences a strange mix of revulsion and pity due to her social marginalization. She cannot dislodge the grip of son preference on her. Ibuza society fails to give her the same opportunities as boys.

In addition, Adah's wifehood is painful: she faces the blind unreasoning power of her husband Francis. More to Adah, her mother undergoes sexist violence. She is in a submissive position. Ma, Adah's mother endures a marital humiliating situation. The cumulative effect of all the horror of levirate she witnesses turns her into a vulnerable person.

Emecheta's novel investigates four vistas of insights concerning women's oppression. first, the book emphasises the preference of boys to girls, the superiority of men to women in phallogocentric societies. It means that in such communities, baby boys are given more consideration than baby girls. In Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, son preference is the infringement of girls' rights. Adah is a big step down in her parents' eyes. Leaving her aside, Pa, Adah's father and Ma pay close attention to Boy, her brother;"She was a girl who had arrived when everyone was expecting and

predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. She was so insignificant (Emecheta, 1974, p. 1). In fact, being in this underclass, Adah could not fulfil her own femininity. For her parents, the future is not female. They only promote a masculinist cult figure. In this concrete area of injustice, misogynistic traditions are valued. Adah's parents do not see any potential that lay in her. They refuse to put to effective use her potential and abilities. This lackadaisical attitude of Pa and Ma towards Adah clearly prove that she and Boy are different.

In the same vein, in Ibuza, people state the deficiency of girls' education. For these folks her instruction is inadequate and misdirected. This prejudice against Adah shatters her hopes:

Boys were usually given preference, though. So even though Adah was about eight there were still discussions about whether it would be wise to send her to school. Even if she was sent to school, it was very doubtful whether it would be wise to let her stay long, year or two would do, as long as she can write her name and count. Then she will learn how to sew". (Emecheta, 1974, p. 3).

In effect, because of this discrimination, Adah cannot nurse the ambition to become a clerk.

In reality, this chivalrous behavior of Ma and Pa does not give the girl a sense of her own importance. Adah is culturally constructed as other. Pa's daughter could not claim her rightful place in the social structure. As a girl she does not have the same assets as boys in education: "Time went by quickly, and when she reached the age of eleven, people started asking her when she was going to leave school. This was an urgent question because the fund for Boy's education was running low (Emecheta, 1974, p. 14).

As a matter of fact, Adah is relegated to secondary position. Her subordinate status does not permit her to voice her discontentment. Like Adah, Sissie in *A Girl who Can* is overflowed by social injustice which takes her rights of worker apart: "Of course she was beginning to live with the knowledge that as long as she is in that school. The headmaster was never going to recommend her for promotion. Dear God and her salary stayed the same, while inflation daily shrunk its value." (Aidoo, 1982, p. 98). It means that Sissie has no audience in her working place. She works in precarious conditions in a deep frustration. Sissie is reduced to silence. Her dignity is put into question and she also undergoes the effects of sexism.

Emecheta posits that female predicament is predicated upon traumatic experiences and body violence geared against women. In *Second Class Citizen* many women are exposed to traumatic experiences and physical aggression. They cannot subvert the dominant discourses of males since their bodies are in a conflicting space. In the following lines Adah is beaten by her Cousin Vincent:

After the burning of the first few strokes, her skin became hardened, and so did her heart. She started to count. When Cousin Vincent had counted to fifty, he appealed to Adah to cry a little. If only she would cry and beg for mercy, he would let her go. But Adah would not take the bait. She began to see herself as another martyr, she was being punished for what she believes". (Emecheta, 1974, p.17).

In other words, Vincent's violence is legitimated by the existing master scripts of sexuality Adah could not subvert. By beating Adah, he inflicts on her body deeper

scars and wounds. This girl is in dire straits. Adah's body loses its integrity. She is compelled to resistance like in *Yearning*:

resistance is that struggle we can most easily grasp. Even the most subjected person has moments of rage and resentment so intense that they respond they act against. There is an inner uprising. That leads to rebellion however short-lived. It may be only momentary but it takes place. That space within oneself where resistance is possible remains. It is different then to talk about becoming subjects. That process emerges as one comes to understand how structures of domination work in one's own life. (Hooks, 2015, p. 15)

The administration of violence by Vincent testifies that sexism considerably reduces the power of Adah in Ibuza. Liberation struggle remains a must for her.

More to this point, Ma, Adah's mother is in a humiliating marital position: the levirate. She is submitted to the repressive authority of her new husband. Adah expresses her discontent and claims justice: " She hated Ma for marrying again, thinking it was a betrayal of Pa. Sometimes she dreams of marrying early, a rich man who would allow Ma and Boy to come and stay with her. (Emecheta, 1974, p. 14).

Francis' wife manifests revolt face up to the psychological torture and whims of the male institution which requires Igbo woman blind obedience and kneeling down: "She would never, never in her life get married to any man rich or poor, to whom she would have to serve his food on bended knee. She would not consent to live with a husband whom she will have to treat as a master and refer to as 'sir ' even behind his back. She knew that all Igbo women did this but she wasn't going to." (Emecheta, 1974, p.14). Adah sets up a counter-discourse against the subjection of the woman in Igbo society. This injustice creates a newly gentrified low class. Ma's daughter is seeking liberating positions for Woman. She claims gender equality and emancipation of Igbo women.

Female plights ride on their confinement to procreation. It means that in patriarchal societies, what is expected from women is to give birth to children for the benefit of the society Elsewhere, Ibuza society confines woman's destiny to procreation, childbearing and mythic motherhood: "A woman would be forgiven everything as long as she produced children. Adah was so fast on this score that she was given the nickname 'Touch Not' Among the other wives of her age group.' As soon as her husband touches her she gets a swollen tummy,' they used to laugh (Emecheta, 1974, p. 22). From this passage, one realizes that Adah requires a new ontological construction of her fellows. She would like Francis and her Pa (father) to unveil the immense potential that lay untapped in the feminine and acknowledge her invisible power.

On top of masculinist violence one notices that there is a gradation in woman's maltreating; «This happened at the police station at Saho Market. Ma told them with tears in her eyes that she could not swallow the gari no more. She must drink the whole lot, she was told and told in such language that Adah hid behind Mr Cole. If Ma did not Finish the gari, the policeman went on, they would take her to court (Emecheta, 1974, p. 7). Once more, we are in a society which promotes machismo. Ma is in a state of absence and silence like Tanga in Calixthe Beyala's *Tu t'appelleras Tanga*: This amnesia and the attendant loss of identity seem to be the result of a state of silence, absence and emptiness (Weit, 2005, p.34). Ma wants to fill the gaps of this emptiness.

Class discrimination is another hint that helps to get hold of the institutionalised oppression geared against women in the phallogocentric world. In Ibuza we have class

discrimination. People have no consideration for women: they only mind dishonest rich man like Nweze the lawyer:

Lawyer Nweze was defending a Hausa multi-millionaire. They said the millionaire was so rich that he had a railway line built right down to his palace door. The man had eight Rolls Roys. After the case, Nweze ended up a millionaire himself. Adah still wondered how that happened because the millionaire was jailed for forging notes in his great palace. Francis and Adah sometimes wondered what he had paid Nweze with (Emecheta, 1974,; 22).

The admiration of Nweze by the entire village is done on the detriment of Adah and her peers, marginalized and considered as outcasts. This feminine gentry is perpetually offended and suffers hardships.

Nurudin Farah states that : "when the women are free, then and only then can we talk about a free Somalia (Farah,1991, p.122). Unfortunately, societal pressures impose on Adah a heavy burden. Her wifhood is a nightmare and she is overexploited:

The day's work Jesus! She started at four-thirty in the morning. On the veranda of her new home in Pike Street, there was a mighty drum used as a water container and Adah had to fill this with water before going to school. This usually meant walking ten to twelve trips to the public 'pump'. As those public monstrosities were called in those days (Emecheta,1974, p.13).

Adah fulfils a burdensome duty and cries her entrenched dislike since she has to cater to her Family needs. Francis's wife faces unsurmountable legal difficulties which subvert her to stereotypical roles. This overexploitation is an open-endorsement of her subordination. In this gender segregation of labor, Adah is considered as an economic liability in a gruesome materialist society. She receives no unconditional moral support by her husband Francis.

More to the point, Adah has a regretful wifhood. She is trapped within the sense of fatalism."Cheated by the fact that neither her Pa nor Ma had lived to see any of her children, cheated by the fact that she was bringing so much joy into her husband's house and none into hers. Boy never visited her; neither did any of her cousins and uncles. They felt Adah had let them down. (Emecheta, 1974, p.23). Wifhood degrades and commodifies Adah. It sets on low values on her life. She cannot make informed choices about her role in her relation with Francis her husband. Ma's daughter wants to overthrow oppression; she gropes towards new definitions and roles in order to establish a feasible egalitarianism between her and Francis.

Like Adah, Auntie Betty in Lindsey Collen's *The Enigma* hardly subverts the dominant paradigm of her husband. Her marital life is purgatorial: "Auntie Betty languished in her horrible duties, Got even thinner, unhappier and even stopped wearing make-up and wedgies. For three years this horrible situation continued (Collen, 1999, p. 64).

Taken the example of Auntie Betty and Adah, Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood* is a combative woman who in spite of family tribulations remains positive. She fends for her children with no help of her husband Nnaife: "Nnu Ego had scaved and saved to pay the last two terms' school fees for Oshia and Adim and she congratulated herself on having managed when people began saying that the war was over that the enemy whoever he was, had killed himself. That means Nnaife would be back soon she thought delightfully." (Emecheta; 1974: 91). One realizes from this excerpt that Nnu

Egu bears the family burden. In spite of difficulties she remains an able-bodied woman who refuses the traditional confines of female position as a passive being.

Elsewhere, female characters such as Adah and Trudy live in precarious conditions. The former has known a miserable childhood. She is always cantankerous and feels sick with anxiety and suspense since she has no school materials: "Adah thought of this slate. But the trouble was that it was too small. Just a small piece. It would not take many letters. But a small bit of slate was better than no slate at all. She then slipped it into the top of her dress, knowing full well that her scarf-belt would hold it up." (Emecheta, 1974, p.4). From her childhood to her wifhood, Adah's sad battered's life has known no respite. She looked desperate and torn:

They were right in a way. The housing conditions were so bad that for days she didn't see Francis at all. As soon as she arrived home from work he would disappear for fresh air. The children had no amusements and their parents would not let them out for fear they would break their necks on the steep stairs. They were hushed and bullied into silence so that the landlord and his wife should not be disturbed.(Emecheta,1974, p. 46).

Like Adah, Trudy looks skinny and miserable. Her eyes water from shock. Her whole life is a psalm of sadness Trudy's existence does not get piecemeal improvements. Poverty maintains her in a catatonic stupor: "Trudy's house, like all the houses in that area, was a slum, a house that had been condemned ages ago. The backyard was filled with rubbish, broken furniture, and very near an uncovered dustbin was the toilet, the old type of toilet with faulty plumbing, smelly and damp (Emecheta, 1974, p.49-50). From these lines one notices that poverty and vulnerability leave a harrowing emptiness in Trudy. These conditions reveal her minoring and effacement. She has no oppositional status. In reality these female characters make a plea for a marked improvement in their living conditions. Adah and Trudy try to overcome the oppressive social classes that relegate them to the bottom of the ladder. From these spaces of poverty, Adah and Trudy want to have greater possibilities to change their environment their own. Their resilience farther the oppressive boundaries imposed by the Western world and begins a process of recreation. In *Female Subjectivity in African American Women's Narratives of Enslavement* one reads: "in the process of recreating their histories, African American women writers locate black female realities and affirm new identities in places that broaden their lives rather than sites that restrict them on the margins." (Myles, 2009, p.3). These women want to remove the tyranny of class division to which sisterhood is an alternative.

African females : rethinking gender and the alternative of sisterhood

Feminist writings often deal with female strategies to overcome their frustration and oppression which victimize them. The novels that aim to highlight the struggle led by females resist male-oriented version of the world and give clues for female denial of their submissive postures. Hopefully, the common strategy proposed by feminism is sisterhood. Sisterhood is the policy that women use to empower themselves and fight back oppression. In Emecheta's novel, sisterhood is deployed through the notion of solidarity among women themselves:

We are taught that women are "natural" enemies that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another. We have learned these lessons well. We must unlearn them, if we are to build a sustained feminist

movement. We must learn to live and work in solidarity. We must learn the true meaning and value of sisterhood". (Hooks, 2015, p. 69).

Sexually harrassed and perpetually offended by male power, female characters have no choice than rethinking gender and sexual subjectivity. Consequently, they federate different bodies of thought. Female characters call for solidarity in order to improve their living conditions. That can give momentum to their campaign against oppression and reach revolutionary accomplishment.

In Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, Adah and Janet launch a new era of good relations. This sustained woman bonding helps them to overcome class privilege which prevails in their environment: "Adah told Janet about her troubles and Janet confided in Adah. She suggested that Adah should look for a daily-minder for her children until the nursery had vacancies for them. (Emecheta, 1974, p. 48). Janet gives precious advice to Adah. This female solidarity enriches their bonding and finds solution to family problems such as childbearing and nursery: "So rampant was the idea of foster-parents that African housewives in England came to regard the foster-mother as the mother of their children. They say that in England Nigerian children have two sorts of mothers _the natal mother, and the social mother." (Emecheta,1974, p.44). Feminine cooperation solves household issues of African housewives based in England. It aids in backing up these women in their duties. Adah like Janet separates the barriers that exist between wives in Pike Street. This collaboration confronts the absorption of Francis's supremacist role.

Elsewhere, Adah and Janet share experiences. They give their partners flawless support and infallible assistance. Adah receives Comfort brought by white midwives in London:

Those women kept showing her many things. They seemed to be telling her to look around her that there were still many beautiful things to be seen which she had not seen, that there were still several joys to be experienced which she had not yet experienced; that she was still young, that her whole life was still ahead of her. (Emecheta,1974, p.115).

In reality, these women develop affectionate expressions of their being together. They learn from one another. Franci's wife sees values in this experience. This talk enriches her understanding of womanhood from various backgrounds. These female characters recognize, acknowledge and appreciate their differences. Adah and these midwives feel a sense of community. In the same vein, we notice that: "by mapping out various strategies, we affirm our diversity while working towards solidarity. Women must explore various ways to communicate with one another cross-culturally (Hooks, 2015, p.89-90). This political solidarity of these ladies contributes to the restoration of their dignity.

As female writers their collaborative works can find strategies to emasculate men in their novels. Thus, Emecheta in *Second Class Citizen* emasculates men showcasing their impotency and the disunity among them. First, we have Mr Babalola who is a poor manager of his resources. He suffers from the perfidy of his friends who left him: "Word went round that he was getting poor. He could not maintain the old level of entertainment so his friends of the happier days took to their heels. They stopped coming and Babalola moved to a much more modest area. (Emecheta, 1974, 47).

Actually, this dissension among Babalola and his friends reveals that they have no sense of responsibility and it refutes the alibi of women's inferiority.

Next, we have Adah's husband, Francis. He is an unsuccessful man with dubious qualifications. He endlessly blames Adah for his rampant failure, "Things got even worse for her when Francis failed his Summer examinations. He blamed it all on her. If she had not brought her children and saddled him with them, if she had allowed them to be fostered, if she had not become pregnant so soon after her arrival, he would have passed." (Emecheta, 1974, p. 49).

The sad passionate conviction of Francis which stipulates that his failure is entirely due to family affairs demonstrates that he is an incapable husband who does his studies with a climactic disgust. This carelessness justifies his decay and extreme vulnerability. This masculinist feebleness leads Adah to be aware of female potential. So Adah joins her friend Janet and other women to be stronger, to share experiences and take care of all the family and assuming positions of responsibility: "She was to save for her fare and that of the children, she was to feed herself and the children whilst they were still in Lagos and pay the rent and help in paying the school fees of some of Francis's seven sisters. (Emecheta, 1974, p.21).

To some extent, one can compare Francis to Akobi in *Beyond the Horizon*. In fact, despite his brilliant qualifications, he is rejected by women because he is a clerk messenger:

it is a passionate dream Akobi soon realised. He could never fulfil on his messenger clerk pay, since those kinds of women went out not with the likes of him but with bank managers dubious businessmen and senior civil servants who could finance their requirements. Even accommodation he soon realized never came easy without the right amount of money in the pocket. And what accommodation the money in his pocket could afford." (Darko, 1995, pp.5-6).

As a matter of fact, the emasculation of characters such as Akobi and Ossey in Darko's novel force the dominant parties to recognize their wives' qualities. Mara and Ossey's wife realize from their husbands' deficiency that they must unite their forces, strategies and intelligences to overcome the life difficulties in Germany. That can bring gender equality.

Elsewhere, some contributors to women's well-being are tired to notice the portrayal of African characters in abject victims, so they decide to contribute to female empowerment so that they could design for themselves a nicer image and occupy a world-wide messianic position. In Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, Mr Cole the school teacher of Adah plays a decisive role in boosting her education: "Mr Cole assured her. Yes, of course she could come again if she liked, but if her parents would not allow her to come he would take it upon himself to teach her the alphabet. (Emecheta, 1974, p.7). As a teacher, Mr Cole gives Adah a means to construct changes in her life. This school master wants to increase her rightful opportunities in education and enlarge her contribution to social development in the future. Mr Cole refutes the harmful stereotypes developed against Adah. Like Ngugi he negates the traditional female discourse." "Ngugi attacks the traditional female discourse of the African woman as being dominated, exploited, abused and merely used as a beast of burden." (Sayed:170).

There is another character which is charitable and responsive to Adah. Pa's father considers her as his dearest one. He is the facilitator of Adah's going to England. The limitless sacrifices he devotes to the lady can empower her in her struggle for better life:

Francis broke the good news to her one day after their evening meal. Pa had agreed, he said. Adah was so full of happiness that she started to dance an African Calypso. So they were going at least! She was soon going to be called 'been to' which was a Lagos phrase for those who had 'been to' England (Emecheta; 23-24).

Pa's father is a friend in need for Adah. He transcends the patriarchal barriers which inferiorate Adah. This unconditional support received by the lady reveals that the future is feminine. Adah's father-in-law is also a promoter of her rights. He encourages her birth control: "Pa Noble reminded Francis of Adah's health and God bless the old man, he sent all the inquisitive tenants away. There was nothing bad in Adah getting birth-control gear, Pa Noble said but she should have told her husband. (Emecheta, 1974, p.155)

In the same way, the sleek woman's husband pays a close attention to his wife. This love of the couple arouses admiration in Adah:

She liked to watch the way the sleek woman's husband usually sat by her bedside, taking her hand gently, both of them laughing quietly, sometimes just sitting there, he stroking her forehead, saying nothing, just sitting there, like lovers in the cheap movie pictures Adah had seen at home. (Emecheta, 1974, p.119).

This complementarity gives more visibility to woman and grows her hope for gender equality.

***Second Class Citizen* or a call to awareness vis-a vis women's plight?**

Buchi Emecheta, through her novel, wants to call to awareness the world vis-à-vis women's plight. She wants to tell the world that women have suffered for years and continue to undergo male's injustice and oppression. Women are facing in their different homes humiliation and physical abuse. Some or the majority do not know their rights for not having been to school. And even those who went to school like Adah are oppressed because of the tradition. Buchi Emecheta wants the world to be apprised of the suffering her sisters in Africa are going through in the name of tradition. Having experienced a similar situation (Emecheta, *Head above Water*, 1986), she knows the impact of such a behavior on the victims. In publishing and exposing African women's lives through the character of Adah, she wants the world to do something to stop women slavery.

Through this exposition, she denounces some aspects of African tradition and accuses them of being the basis for women's subjection and submission. This attitude is seen through the treatment inflicted on Adah who, despite being a read person and a literate woman and though she is the main breadwinner of her family, she is excluded from decision-making (Emecheta, 1974, p.23). Due to this injustice, one can say that though "Tradition and modernity are frequently mutually reinforcing, rather than systems in conflict," (Gusfield, J. R., 1967, p.335) some elements in the first (tradition) need to be corrected. Adah did not escape the pressure of the traditions of her village; she was taught how to behave as a woman (Emecheta, 1974, p.13). In her case, she was

certainly taught how to owe respect to her husband. Indeed, tradition teaches women how to behave vis-à-vis their men or husbands (Jomo Kenyatta, 1938, p.179). It is the tradition that "instilled into the children what the Gikuyu call" otaari wa mocie" or "kerera kia mocie," namely, educating the children in the family and clan tradition." (Jomo Kenyatta, 1938, p.99).

For Katherine Frank, such behaviour is nothing but "the enslavement of women by traditional society and its rules and taboos." (Frank, 1982, p. 483). It is certainly the main reason why "many Luo Widows are still in a state of dilemma as to whether to continue with the traditional practice of widow Care or to abandon it completely." (Miruka Philip, Nathan Joshua, Jack Obongo, 2015, p.241). Like these widows, some people from the new generation are compelled to reject some of these habits, not all but some because, in Lame Maatla Kenalemang's words, these ones are "inappropriate and unacceptable" (Lame , 2013:8) due to the wrong they did and continue to do in people's lives. These "negative aspects of tradition (...) narrowed to the term of traditionality" (Fouad Mami, 2011, p. 120) are what weaken our society and need to be denounced for a better practice of our traditional values.

Buchi Emecheta, through this novel, wants to show the place of women in postcolonial African society. They are not considered. The examples of Adah herself (Emecheta, 1974, p.23) and her mother after Pa's (Adah's father) death (Emecheta, 1974, p.12) are examples of the misery in which African women are. As a postcolonial writer, Buchi Emecheta wants to denounce this fact and thereby expose the changes that have occurred since colonization. Indeed, according to Afisi Oseni Taiwo, the situation was different in precolonial Africa. For him, "Records of history have however shown that there existed no gender inequality in traditional African society rather, women's role was complementary to that of men." (Afisi Oseni Taiwo, 2010, p.233). For Afisi Taiwo: Each gender had its traditional role in the development of the society. In other words, the position of women was complimentary to that of men. There was the non-existent of gender inequality. Each role, regardless of who performed it was considered equally important because it contributed to the fundamental goal of community survival. (Taiwo, 2010, p.230).

This shows how well organized and structured the African society used to be before colonization. Unfortunately, with the advent of modernization, things have changed. Phil E. Okeke shares this point of view when he argues: "In fact, the last three decades of development initiatives in the continent have witnessed the continual decline of African women's status, and the worsening economic climate only reinforces an already established trend." (Okeke, 2000, p. 52). Women's situation has so declined that they have lost their first position and this is strengthened by the economic climate.

Adah's mother's case is very interesting. Referring to her, the narrator says: "Ma was inherited by Pa's brother" (Emecheta, 1974, p.12). The use of the past tense of the verb "to inherit" means that Ma has become an object. She is no more considered a human being. She has lost her human value and has been granted that of an object. Katherine Frank was right to say that: "When women are not inherited or sold, they may become stolen goods" (Frank, 1982, p. 484). The same idea is confirmed by Michael Dottridge for whom "A woman on the death of her husband is liable to be inherited by another person." (Dottridge, 2002, p. 6). They have lost their position of

“complementary and help to men” (Afisi, 2010, p. 230) to hold that of a vulgar object that can go from one hand to the other.

Adah’s plight is sad. In fact, although she is said to be literate, the people of her village, particularly men, would not care what she is or which level she has reached. What they know is that Adah is a woman and as such, she must abide by the traditional rules and be treated as such. What matters for them is that she is a woman and as such, she has to be treated the way her kinds are treated in the society, that is relegated to the second position or be a second class citizen. This attitude is better explained by Francis’s father’s attitude, her father-in-law, who does not find it necessary to associate her in important decision even when she has to pay for the expenses: because “as most young African wives know, most of the decisions about their own lives had to be referred first to Big Pa, Francis’s father, then to his mother, then discussed amongst the brothers of the family before Adah was referred to” (p.23).

Adah has a rebellious attitude. She refuses to conform to the tradition (Emecheta, 1974, p.14). This attitude demonstrates that she is fed up with men’s supremacy and wants to see things changed. Through her behavior, one can see a woman who is challenging men’s authority in a patriarchal society. She is also rejecting her tradition.

Through this novel, one clearly sees the desire of the writer to denounce African tradition through elders’ indifference vis-à-vis women. They do not care whether she is a civil servant or not, they do not care her social, professional or whatsoever status. What they know and see is Adah’s genre: as a woman, her fate is sealed. In other words, she has to conform and adjust to the way her kinds should be treated which is according to the traditional values.

Conclusion

At the end of our work, we notice that women's anguish derives from firstly, boys preference, secondly traumatic experiences and body aggression, thirdly, confinement to procreation and at last, class discrimination. In the process of rethinking gender, sisterhood plays a catalytic role in the building of a sturdy solidarity among women. Thus, they can fight back oppression. In the last part of this research paper, Emecheta's call to female awareness clearly testify that women’s condition described in her novel *Second Class Citizen* requires serious attention. Being woman in Africa was not an easy task. In fact, owing to their gender and tradition, they were victim of injustice and violence in their different homes. Unfortunately, they could not voice their sufferings because the former society based on patriarchal system condoned such treatment on the basis of the tradition. This is what Buchi Emecheta is depicting through her novel. Today, with the different NGOs that defend women’s rights, things seem to be changing. She does not forget workers who are maltreated and who undergo humiliation because of poverty. She is calling to awareness the whole world to cast a glance at their situation. Modern slavery has so flourished nowadays that the question one can ask is will slavery under its different forms end one day?

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