

Internalized Oppression as Vehicle for Womenpressionism in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*

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Abstract

*In Africa, power is believed to be concentrated in the hands of men who control the instrument of state, and to achieve gender equality and women's emancipation as required by the sustainable developmental goals of the United Nations in 2030, women have to work together and refrain from using power to oppress one another. In our analysis of Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, we focus on oppressive language and actions that women used to discriminate and oppress fellow women by applying "Womenpressionism" as a theoretical framework at the same time balancing our analysis with psychodynamic theory. We argue that the violence and abuse that Adah endured in the hands of her mother is as a result of internalized oppression on the part of the latter. The irony in *Second Class Citizen* is that Adah's mother who should know better is the same person who favours the boy child and relegates the female child to the background. It is also discovered that rather than working collectively to be a pillar of support for one another, certain women in the novel work against the aspirations of their own kind for daring to strive for emancipation from patriarchy.*

Keywords: Womenpressionism, Intra-gender Oppression, Internalized Oppression, Authobiographical Novel, Psychodynamic

Introduction

The Yoruba's aphorism *a re ma'ja kan k'osi* - conflict is inevitable among two friends, holds true in many regards. Therefore, it is commonly explored in Nigerian literature, especially in relation to gender discourse. According to Atoyebi "manner of discourse of gender issues in the African novel has demonstrated a sort of agenda setting. This set agenda demonstrates different ideologies that are projected by individual writers."¹ Therefore, the gender of the writer becomes important in the construction of the narrative and

¹ Atoyebi, A.O. (2019). *Gender Discourse Shift and Intra-Gender Conflicts in Contemporary African Novels* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Ibadan], 1
<http://repository.pgcollegeui.com:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/596>



characteristic of who wields power among the different characters. Atoyebi argues that,

At the commencement of modern literary creativity in Africa, being largely patriarchal, men had had domineering voice, writing with some degree of artistic liberty to create their characters in the way that is suggestive of reflecting patriarchy. In the creation of their characters, male writers engaged in what is considered by many scholars as jaundiced re-presentation of their female characters, defined largely by patriarchal cultural codes of women submissiveness, silences and invisibility.²

In order to balance the domineering voices of men in Nigerian literature, women writers began to raise the status of the female characters in their novel to the level that suggests matriarchy as opposed to patriarchy. In the words of Mirkin,

Males are seen as controlling access to institutional power, and it is argued that they mold ideology, philosophy, art and religion to suit their needs. The exercise of male power is viewed as at least somewhat conspiratorial, and women—whatever their economic status—are perceived as an oppressed class.³

It is difficult to view matriarchal society differently from that under patriarchy, because, both denotes control either by woman or man. In Jay views “matriarchy is that power and authority be exercised by the women in decisions concerning community and foreign relations, social standards and values, including the sexual conduct of the men.”⁴ We see this definition as the projection of shift in hegemony and not the balance of power between man and woman. Matriarchy will in any case entrench the culture of oppression and power wielding just as patriarchy that it aims to displace. From Göttner-Abendroth’s recognition of the Greek origin of the “arché” in matriarchy and patriarchy meaning domination⁵, only suggests that one can only replace the other in oppression. Therefore, matriarchy is domination of the mothers.

Within the different characters in Nigerian literature by women, there emerged strong women who wield power in order to oppress both their own sex and other sexes. Therefore, oppression is not just about the men domination

² Atoyebi, A.O. (2019). Gender Discourse Shift and Intra-Gender Conflicts in Contemporary African Novels [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Ibadan], 1-2

<http://repository.pgcollegeui.com:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/596>

³ Mirkin, H. (1984). The passive female: the theory of patriarchy. *American Studies*, 25(2), 41.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/amjs.v25i2.2566>

⁴ Jay, J.W. (1996). Imagining Matriarchy: “Kingdoms of Women” in Tang China. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 116(2), 220

⁵ Göttner-Abendroth, H. (2004). Matriarchal Society: Definition and Theory. Genevieve Vaughan (Ed.) *The Gift, A Feminist Analysis*. Roma: Athanor book/Meltemi editore Edition

women, it about power and the force attached to the use of it to suppress others. It also involves government stifling the aspiration of the citizens through the use of state power, empire depriving the colonies, masters stepping down on servants, the white supremacists or police officers standing on the necks of the members of the society that are shouting “I can’t breathe”, or in the case of black life matters. Oppression is visible in the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria which saw the military massacre of hundreds of youths who were peacefully protesting police brutality and extra-judicial killings on 20th October 2020 in Lekki, Lagos. These as mentioned, interrogate systems of oppression and domination. Nevertheless, when women who are fighting for liberation from male hegemonic order, breaks its own rank through the creation of hierarchical order of the privileged and starts to dominate the weak in the group, then we have a system of “Womenpressionism.” The system is more noticeable in many corporate and political systems across Africa where the term “Boss” or “Madam” is eulogised.

The concept of Womenpressionism, brings together two separate words “women and oppression.” While women are social and biological construct of sexes in terms of female anatomy, oppression relates to power and the application of it. Palmer, et al, states that “oppression is the social act of placing severe restrictions on an individual, group, or institution.”⁶ In this case, power and control becomes are what drive oppression. Omoruyi explains that womanpressionism “looks at the oppression of women with modest means of existence by women with influence (both in literary texts and in the larger human society) and authority”⁷. In relation to this paper, womenpressionism is explained from the purview of intra-group oppression which involves women with power, using their power to exploit and emasculate the women that are below in social and economic status by excluding them from the hierarchy of power. In terms of gender as used in this paper, we limit our application to the female and male. We are aware of Hardiman, Johnson and Griffith, argument that there exists the third gender which does not fit into the binary groupings, referred to as the border identities.⁸ Nevertheless, we are more concerned with interactions between the human’s female gender, and women in this case refer to the biologically recognized as gendered woman.

Buchi Emecheta’s Writings

Buchi Emecheta (21 July 1945-25 January 2017) was a prodigious Nigerian-British writer and teacher who wrote across different genres of literature – stage and television drama inclusive. Starting from her first printed novel *In The*

⁶ Palmer, G.L., Fernández, J.S., Lee, G., Masud, H., Hilson, S., Tang, C., Thomas, D., Clark, L., Guzman, B., Bernai, I. (2019). Oppression and Power. Leonard A. Jason, Olya Glantsman, Jack F. O'Brien, Kaitlyn N. Ramian (Eds.) *Introduction to Community Psychology: Becoming an Agent of Change*, 163

<https://press.rebus.community/introductiontocommunitypsychology/>

⁷ Omoruyi, E.A. (2019). “Womanpressionism” in Zulu Sofola’s *Wedlock of the Gods*. *EDE: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 13

⁸ Hardiman, R., Jackson, B., & Griffin, P. (2007), Conceptual foundations for social justice courses. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed.) New York, NY: Routledge, 47

Ditch in 1972, she published sixteen adult novels as well as four children's books, numerous articles, and produced televised plays. Her other novels include, *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Destination Biafra* (1982), *Double Yoke* (1982), *Naira Power* (1982), *Adah's Story* (1983), *The Rape of Shavi* (1983), *Head Above Water* (1986), *Gwendolen or The Family* (1989), *Kehinde* (1994), *The New Tribe* (2000). Emecheta's plays are, *Juju Landlord* (1975), *A Kind of Marriage* (1976), and *Family Bargain* (1987), while the children's literature includes, *Titch the Cat* (1979), *Nowhere to Play* (1980), *The Moonlight Bride* (1980), and *The Wrestling Match* (1981). In terms of culture portrayal, Buchi Emecheta's works are not different from the works of early Nigerian writers who write with their traditional cultural affiliation being visibly portrayed in character names and setting. She writes from within the Igbo cultural society, with emphasis on her Igbuza community, and when the setting is different, Igbo character(s) will be introduced. In many of Emecheta novels, intra-gender conflicts and oppression play significant role in the narratives.

Baraza is of the opinion that each of Emecheta's novels is based on her life experiences, or that of her ancestors or people.⁹ Buchi Emecheta's *the Second Class Citizen* (1974), is a novel that employs intra-gender conflict and repression - as objects of our analysis - it is on this premise that we argue that woman to woman oppression exists as a source of conflict between women. One important theme that runs through *The Second Class Citizen* is internalised oppression. It is both complex and dynamic, nevertheless, it refers to a situation whereby people who have been oppressed develop similar attitudes and inflict the same oppression on people below their own level of achievement in the society which creates a cyclical mode of oppression if the process continues unabated. Examples are that of a servant or a slave oppressing other servants or slaves under their guidance or supervision, or a mother who was oppressed while growing up also making her daughter or child go through what she experienced. A good example in term of slave is "Stephen", a character played by Samuel L. Jackson in Quentin Tarantini's film *Django Unchained* (2012). However, this does not mean that there cannot be an exception to the rule, whereby a former oppressed woman treats others under her with respect as a result of complexity involved in internalized oppression. In this case, Harriet Tubman - the 19th century Afro-American abolitionist whose life was made into the movie *Harriet* (2019) by Kasi Lemmons and acted by Cynthia Erivo is a good example. When a woman who suffered from wound inflicted by her mother did not heal, then community and loved ones internalize oppression occurs. This is because; the wound is consciously or unconsciously passed on to a new victim by the former through abuse. Williams is of the opinion that the "idea of internalized oppression is most useful when it is placed within the context of systems of domination and subordination, advantage and disadvantage."¹⁰ In the novel *Second Class Citizen*, the older women and the privileged women

⁹ Baraza, A. (2017). Biography of Buchi Emecheta by Alphonse Baraza. *South African History Online*. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/biography-buchi-emecheta-alphonse-baraza>

¹⁰ Williams, T. K. (2012). Understanding Internalized Oppression: A Theoretical Conceptualization of Internalized Subordination. [Doctoral Dissertations, University of Massachusetts Amherst], 19 <https://doi.org/10.7275/3527678>

consider it as normal to oppress the less privileged ones. Rosso argues that “research has extensively shown that most people who experience maltreatment in their childhood develop mental disorders, psychosocial adjustment problems, and, in many cases, become maltreating adults themselves.”¹¹ Since violence causes trauma which in-turn affects the human relationships and personal development in some cases, the action which caused the trauma will likely lead to the employment of violence as a means of personal protection. These patterns of trauma induced violence in human behaviour falls under Freud’s psychodynamic. It is a theory that attempts to explain human behavior in terms of intrapsychic processes and the repetition of interpersonal patterns that are often outside of an individual’s conscious awareness and have their origins in childhood experiences.¹² This experience leads to Kellerman’s argument that, in psychodynamic models, parents who are survivors of traumatic experiences unconsciously transmit their experiences to their children through every day familial contact.¹³ Therefore, in order to achieve a reorganisation of the event in the victim’s memory towards positive thoughts, it is necessary for the person to accept that there is a challenge, we need to understand the cause in order to effectively manage the trauma which is the outward manifestation if the inner pain. In the words of Mackay, “psychodynamic understanding and management of a trauma case therefore allows for a subjective reconstruction of the memory that has adversely affected the survivor’s inner sense of self”.¹⁴ This reconstruction will allow for conscious control in order to make sure it does not manifest in ones behaviour to others. Williams observes that experience of oppression is internalized and becomes both multigenerational and cumulative because the pain and trauma from the soul wound is left unhealed.¹⁵ This leads to the development of patterns that can be characterized as manifestations of internalized oppression.

Synopsis and Analysis of *Second Class Citizen*

The novel *Second Class Citizen* is an autobiography of Buchi Emecheta - set partly in Lagos, Nigeria and the United Kingdom, and told through the lens of Adah. It tells the story of Adah’s dream of travelling to the United Kingdom because she believes that all of her suffering will be over when she gets there. She is finally able to travel to the UK to be with her husband, Francis, but is disappointed when she arrives and discovers that the streets are not paved with the proverbial gold. Adah is appalled when she sees the apartment she will live

¹¹ Rosso AM. (2022). Psychoanalytic Interventions with Abusive Parents: An Opportunity for Children’s Mental Health. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(20), 1. <https://doi.10.3390/ijerph192013015>

¹² Deal, K. H. (2007). Psychodynamic Theory. *Advances in Social Work*, 8(1), 184-195

¹³ Kellerman, N. (2001). Transmission of Holocaust trauma - An integrative view. *Psychiatry*, 64(3), 256-267.

¹⁴ Mackay, J.L. (2001). A Psychodynamic Understanding of Trauma and Adolescent: A Case Study Exploration [Master’s Dissertation, University of Cape Town]. <https://open.uct.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/da479d68-3a74-4e95-9015-f076428e929b/content>

¹⁵ Williams, T. K. (2012). Understanding Internalized Oppression: A Theoretical Conceptualization of Internalized Subordination. [Doctoral Dissertations, University of Massachusetts Amherst] 627. <https://doi.org/10.7275/3527678>

in with her husband and two children, and disappointed more by the strange behaviour of her husband in England. She finds out that life in the United Kingdom is not what she dreamt it was going to be. She has to struggle to work in order to feed her lazy husband and children even when she is pregnant. In the end, she decides to divorce her husband and in retaliation, he tears up their marriage certificate and denies the paternity of their five children.

From birth, Adah is prejudiced by her parents through their failure to record her birth, simply because she is not a boy. Eze and Chigbo give reasons why male child is accorded more reverence among the Igbo,

The reason for the vantage position of the male gender in Igbo Society is not unconnected to the patriarchal nature of that Society. Being a patriarchal society then, the males are groomed from their early stage in life to assume a position of importance, honor, and authority over and above their female siblings. Moreover, women gain and maintain their husbands' love when they deliver male children.¹⁶

As a girl child, Adah is given little consideration by her people and community, because she will get married and belong to another family. Being a girl when a boy was being expected meant, "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."¹⁷ Therefore, as a disappointed woman, Adah's mother becomes the first antagonist to her daughter's aspiration as she discourages the father from enrolling her in school because she is a girl and will be more useful at home. It is noted that,

Every Ibo family saw to it that their children attended school. 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. "A year or two would do, as long as she can write her name and count. Then she will learn how to sew." Adah had heard her mother say this many times to her friends.¹⁸

Adah's mother denies her daughter what she ought to get as being part of an upward mobile environment, and advocated for the role that will confine her to a domestic life and that of a seamstress – a genderised vocation. The mother denies her the opportunity of moving up in life to compete with men for position in the corporate sector of the society. On the oppression of daughters by their mothers, Mohammed states that,

¹⁶ Eze, O.E., Chigbo, K. (2018). Cultural Practices of Male Child Preference as a Determinant of Psychological Trauma among Women in South Eastern-Nigeria. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 6(2), 90

¹⁷ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 7

¹⁸ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 9

One of the recurrent themes that expose mothers as oppressors of their own sex is that of male preference... That a mother deprives her girl child the same opportunities that she allows the boy child are enough oppression to the girl to cause her unhappiness, besides thwarting of her ambitions.¹⁹

In many societies in Nigeria, especially, the Igbo society, preference for male children, is hinged on cultural, environmental and protective reasons. It is expected that being an agrarian society, the male child will hold and protect the family land from falling to the hands of another, will continue the family lines for posterity, and will keep the family together and provide for the parents at their old age, since girls are expected to marry into another family. Adah's mother's preference for Boy, Adah's younger brother, makes her try to repress her daughter's growth. Her mother's refusal to allow her go to school and her apathy towards Adah makes her become rebellious; therefore, she repeatedly looks for ways to defy her mother. In order to achieve her aims against the "supposed adversary" who did not let the father send her to school with her brother, "She would lie, just for the joy of lying; she took secret joy in disobeying her mother."²⁰ Adah not only dislikes her mother for refusing to enrol her in school, but also because of her method of punishment. She believed that if her parents come to the knowledge of her learning privately with Mr Cole, "Pa would be all right: he would probably cane her, you know, just a few strokes – six or so, not much – but Ma would not cane, she would smack and smack and smack, and then nag and nag all day long."²¹ Instead of finding affection in her mother, Adah, prefers her father even if he punishes her.

The oppression that Adah experiences from her mother shapes her adult life as she finds out later on that she cannot rely on fellow women for support. Her mother built in her a negative psychological effect, as it "had given her such a low opinion of her own sex."²² Adah became traumatised and developed a sense of nervousness around women because they "had a way of sapping her self-confidence."²³ Although Adah made casual friendships with one or two women whom she discusses unimportant things with, but "when in trouble, she would rather look for a man because in her words, "Men were so solid so safe."²⁴

The oppression of Adah by her mother becomes a vicious cycle when Adah does the same thing to her daughter, Titi. When a co-Nurse inquired about her children, she replied enthusiastically in relation to the son, victor, but referred to the other, Titi, as only a girl. According to Ajakor, it is erroneously believed in some quarters that in the pre-colonial Igbo society "women do not play significant roles in the production of wealth in the family. They depended on

¹⁹ Mohammed, R. (2010). Maternal Oppression of the Girl-Child in Selected Novels by Buchi Emecheta. *African Research Review*, 4(2), 463

²⁰ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 9

²¹ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 11

²² Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 11

²³ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 11

²⁴ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 11

their husbands for their economic welfare.”²⁵ Off course women have always been in-charge of carrying the farm produce to the market to sell, fixing the price and thereby become the determinant of the societal economy. In *Second Class Citizens* Adah’s mother downplayed the importance of her daughter because of her sex. Adah has imbibed the culture of a society where a woman “could only be sure of the love of her husband and the loyalty of her parents-in-law by having and keeping alive as many children as possible.”²⁶ She lives in a society where her happiness depended so much on her son staying alive. In *Second Class Citizens*, men and women are not counted equal as the value placed on male child is overwhelmingly more than the female child, “though a girl may be counted as one child, to her people a boy was like four children put together? And if the family could give the boy a good university education, his mother would be given the status of a man in the tribe.”²⁷

Adah’s mother’s preference for her brother is the basis for the disagreement between herself and her mother but at the end, Adah’s attitude towards her own daughter reveals that she has imbibed some of her mother’s characteristics. Also, due to her inherited cycle of dislike towards her sex, she does not consider the female child as being of value like the male. Ajakor, captures the difference in the treated of boys and girls among traditional Igbo society, thus,

The traditional understanding about women stresses submission and dependence. A woman’s role in relation to home, church and society is to be in submission to her husband (or to male leadership) and dependent upon him/them. She has her own sphere and freedom to exercise her spiritual gifts; but it is ultimately under the leadership of the male, who takes the lead in the home and in the church.²⁸

When Adah relocates to the United Kingdom, her landlady and female co-tenants continue the discrimination and oppression she thought that she had left behind in Nigeria. Her most daring foes in England are the Nigerian neighbours with whom she did everything to avoid clashes with. She draws their enmity for daring to have the job that they were unable to get – “the white man’s job.” In fact, to the Nigerian neighbours, Adah’s sin is seeing herself to be better than them by rising above their own status in the white man’s country. For example, she and her husband would not send their own “children to be fostered like everybody else; instead they were living with them, just as if she and Francis were first-class citizens, in their own country.”²⁹ Adah refuses to work as a cleaner, but instead secures a job at the local library to the consternation of her co-tenants and they become jealous of her as a result of this. To the other tenants, Adah is a reminder of their failures so they do not want her living amongst them, and the landlady asks her and her family to leave

²⁵ Ajakor, E.I. (2019). Girl child development in the traditional Igbo society: Model for Contemporary women empowerment. *Preorcjah*, 4(2), 49. <https://ezenwaohaetorc.org>

²⁶ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 63

²⁷ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 63

²⁸ Ajakor, E.I. (2019). Girl child development in the traditional Igbo society: Model for Contemporary women empowerment. *Preorcjah*, 4(2), 48. <https://ezenwaohaetorc.org>

²⁹ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 69

the apartment.³⁰ According to Liebow, this kind of discrimination exhibited by the neighbours is a form of internalised oppression and can lead to physical violence, depression, and intragroup discrimination.³¹ Adah is oppressed and discriminated by her landlady because the latter is childless, and is jealous of Adah as she already has two children and is pregnant with a third. The other female neighbours are also jealous of her because she has the kind of job that they can only dream of getting.

Since Adah is different from them, they hate her and make life unbearable for her. The landlady, having no child of her own even when she wants one, “complained to her husband that Adah was bringing them [her children] downstairs to distress her.”³² Apart from the constant complaints about Adah by the landlady, the other female tenants also continue the psychological attack by throwing verbal and lyrical insults at her. Verbal and lyrical insults are traits of Nigerian women, and this cuts across different ethnicities, most especially, the Yoruba of the Western part of the country. In the words of Emecheta,

One of the peculiarities of most Nigerian languages is the fact that one could make a song of everything. Native housewives used this method a lot. If an older wife of a polygamous marriage wanted to get even with a younger rival who was the favourite of the husband, she would make up all sorts of songs about the younger woman. Many women will go as far as to teach their children these songs, which were meant as a kind of psychological pressure on the young woman. Of course, at Ashdown Street, neighbours would start singing as soon as they saw Adah coming. Most of the songs were about the fact that she and her husband would soon have to make their home in the street. What use would her education be then? The songs would ask? To whom would she show her children off then? It was all so Nigerian. It was all so typical.³³

Since Adah does not give away any clue that the psychological pressure is affecting her, the taunting songs is intensified. Before long, the psychological effect of the lyrical and verbal assaults from the women around her began to take effect on her as she, “would laugh loudly at nothing, just to show her neighbours how happy she was”.³⁴ After a while, Adah starts to doubt her own senses.

The oppression and humiliation that Adah encounters from her landlady and her fellow female tenants almost drive her crazy. In the novel, Adah’s fellow women are the perpetrators of this oppressive treatment towards her. When Adah secured an appointment to view another apartment, she finally thought

³⁰Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 70

³¹Liebow, N. (2016). Internalized Oppression and Its Varied Moral Harms: Self-Perceptions of Reduced Agency and Criminality. *Hypatia*, 31(4), 713-729. <https://doi:10.1111/hypa.12265>.

³²Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 71

³³ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 72

³⁴ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 73

that the continuous psychological torture from her Nigerian neighbours will be over, only to face discrimination on racial grounds. Emecheta describes the encounter between a heavily pregnant Adah and the white landlady thus,

At first Adah thought the woman was about to have an epileptic seizure. As she opened the door, the woman clutched at her throat with one hand, her little mouth opening and closing as if gasping for air ... She made several attempts to talk, but no sound came. Her mouth had obviously gone dry. But she succeeded eventually. Oh, yes, she found her voice, from wherever it had gone previously. That voice was telling them now that she was very sorry, the rooms had just gone. Yes, both rooms.³⁵

Contrary to Adah's expectations that the white landlady will show a measure of human compassion because she was pregnant, the reverse is the case. She lies to them that the apartment had already been given to another person. These experiences truncated the idea of perfect land of dream that Adah had of England and also negatively affected her belief in many things. In the words of Segzi,

It is easily noticeable that Adah, ... is attracted by the exaggerated stories about Britain, which has created a false perception of Britain as well as a temptation to go to Britain. In this respect, her decision to go to Britain is evidently stimulated by the influence of the British missionaries on Adah at the Methodist Girls' High School in Lagos; that is the Anglican belief and teaching, together with the influence of colonialism.³⁶

Survival and emancipation in a strange land become the motivation for Adah, as the notion of a perfect Britain and Christian religion fade. In spite of her circumstances, Adah's determination prevails against all the odds, especially racial, cultural, marital, societal and professional obstacles.

Conclusion

Second Class Citizen as a literary work gives an account of Adah's life and the socio-political challenges she encountered as a migrant. Serisier, is of the opinion that the, "communication of experience similarly cannot be transparently "recounted" but must be narrativised through a process."³⁷ As a survivor, Emecheta narrativised the oppression that she experienced through the literary genre of prose where she appears as Adah. In the words of Williams,

³⁵ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 78

³⁶ Segzi, O.H. The Double Otherness of Black Women: Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 10(53), 51-56

³⁷ Serisier, T. (2021) Reading survivor narratives: literary criticism as feminist solidarity. In: Hewett, H. and Holland, M.K. (eds.) *#MeToo and Literary Studies: Reading, Writing, and Teaching about Sexual Violence and Rape Culture*. London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2

the oppression and related traumatic events that were experienced by the parent are transmitted to their children who internalize this material, using it as an unconscious organizing structure for their relationship with the outside world.³⁸ In the novel, Adah's mother who was denied education, determines how far the daughter can go in school, as she states, "a year or two would do, as long as she can write her name and count. Then she will learn how to sew."³⁹ In this case, it is preposterous for a woman, to conclude that female education should be limited to a girl's ability to write and do calculation in order to buy and sell in the market. Adah's mother tries to mould her daughter's life according to the one she had when she was a slave. Her decision however, turns Adah against her throughout the course of her life. In another case, Adah is betrayed by her mother who joins with other women to oppress her.

In this novel we have analysed how women discriminate and oppress fellow women by using condescending and vile language, psychological and physical abuse to stimulate mental torture on their victims. In some instances, people who grow up under such circumstances often consider themselves worthless as their self-confidence is non-existent due to constant abuse. Adah is abused emotionally by her mother, her landlady in the UK and other female co-tenants simply for having her own children live with her rather than putting them into foster care. The other women cannot afford to have their children live with them, but Adah works at the library so she earns just enough to take care of her children by herself. Since the other women are not as educated as Adah, they cannot afford the "luxury and privilege" that she enjoys, for this, they envy and dislike her and the result is discrimination and constant abuse from them. Adah also undergoes racial prejudice when she is denied an opportunity of renting an apartment from a white landlady on the grounds of race.

In this work, we have been able to argue that patriarchal power is also exercised by women discriminating and/or oppressing other women. The oppression of women by women occurs in the society when women become the vessels of patriarchal values that they have internalised in their previous experiences and Nigerian women writers through their literature are beaming the searchlight on the actions of women that have become inimical to the aspirations of other women. Women's oppression expatiates on the different faces of oppression that Adah experiences because it emphasizes the fact that the forms of discrimination and oppression are interlinked and, in a way, cannot be addressed alone. Adah and the white landlady are both women but one cannot say that they experience discrimination and oppression the same way. Adah faces discrimination on more than three levels; she is oppressed as a woman, as a wife, as an African woman and as a mother. She faces discrimination from the Nigerian co-tenants because her children live with her, something they cannot afford to do. She is oppressed and humiliated at every turn by her husband Francis who subjugates her by force because of her gender and she undergoes discrimination from a prospective house-owner because of

³⁸ Williams, T. K. (2012). Understanding Internalized Oppression: A Theoretical Conceptualization of Internalized Subordination. [Doctoral Dissertations, University of Massachusetts Amherst] 627. <https://doi.org/10.7275/3527678>

³⁹ Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. New York: George Braziller, 9

her race. All these confirmed her status as second-class citizen in a foreign land which she was able to surmount at the end of the day.

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