

THE AFRICAN WOMAN’S PLEA IN HER OWN VOICE: CULTURE AND STATUS IN BUCHI EMECHETA’S *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD* (1979)**Dr. Bawa Kammampool**

Chef du département d’Anglais

Langue, Littérature et Culture

Université de Kara

Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines

Département d’Anglais

B.P.43, KARA-TOGO

Abstract

Discourse related to women’s image in African creative literature has been the subject matter of much scholarship in Africa today. A number of feminist/womanist studies have been unanimous in showing how all aspects of African culture are inherently patriarchal; and for that matter subordinate and subjugate women. This constitutes a serious stumbling block to their fulfillment as it shows in representations, discourses, signs and images. To break the fetters of tradition and make the quest for women emancipation in the religious, political, social and economic spheres meaningful, there is a need for paradigm shift as advocated by Buchi Emecheta, the Nigerian novelist in her novel, *The Joys of Motherhood*.

This article discusses the status of women in patriarchal social structures seen from a *female perspective* in a man’s world. Exploring from a reorientation of the feminist approach that disconnects it from its theoretical antecedents and grounds it in revolutionary thought and resistance, this article argues that the complementary relationship between men, women and their progenies should aspire for the wholeness of the authoress’ Igbo people to work towards opening of a fruitful dialogue.

Keywords: patriarchal, dialogue, stumbling block, break, emancipation.

INTRODUCTION

This paper identifies patriarchy as a social institution which functions according to the principle that “man shall dominate woman”. This is premised on the fact that women are on the receiving end of all activities. Issues relating to the status of women in a cultural bound society has raised much concerns never dreamt possible in contemporary African societies. Contemporary African scholarship tries as much as possible to re-assert the cultural, social, religious and political identity of the African women. Today these are legion in discourses by men as well as women on the continent. Some female writers like Flora Nwapa, Ama Atta Aidoo, Ama Darko and Buchi Emecheta, have gone many lengths to revisit women’s social status in their fictional works.

Susheila Nasta (1991) suggests that “the post colonial woman writer is not only involved in making herself heard, in changing the architecture of male-centered ideologies and languages, or in discovering new forms of and language to express her experience, she has also to subvert and demythologize indigenous male writings and traditions which seek to label her (Quoted in McLeod, 2010: 204).

The Joys of Motherhood (1979), written by the Nigerian female novelist, Buchi Emechetta discusses the status of women in the Igbo context with emphasis on the misconception and neglect of the girl child in the traditional society. In her own society, undue emphasis is placed on the male child simply because he is seen as the chain that would sustain the family lineage and assure the link and name of the family. Consequently, the birth of a male child is heralded with joy and happiness contrary to that of the opposite sex. More still the case of the woman becomes worse if she happens to be childless. In Emechetta’s world, the man is portrayed as one who is not only the head of the family but also as the owner of the family; he chooses husbands for his daughters and wives for his sons. The power he exercises makes his opinion final and he is not going in the process to brook any opposition from either his wife or children. He could marry as many wives as possible even if he has not got the necessary resources and means available to sustain them. *The Joys of Motherhood* portrays the African woman as one who suffers at the hands of cherished traditional norms and sacrifices all her life for her “ungrateful children and husband”.

With this novel, she advocates change in mentality and attitudes toward women. In this, the process of change is seen in the character of a widow woman called Adaku, who struggles as much as possible to liberate herself from the yoke of patriarchy - subjugation and oppression - inherent in the traditional form of education, marriage, motherhood, procreation, sex and language use and thereby advocates re-valorization, and re-appropriation of language. In this novel, she stands in opposition to a submissive and traditionalist woman, Nnu Ego, the protagonist of the novel. Through binary opposition in her depiction of both men and women in her text, I think this is the way through which society can view and correct misconception about the culture which has created the woman and expresses itself through customs, traditions, beliefs, language, work, morals, law and attitude to life among others.

In this paper, my aim is to examine how the issue of representation and self-representation, or in short, the discourse of power is handled with ambivalence by both male and female characters in the novel and show how the novelist attempts to subvert the self/other and center/periphery paradigm, and thereby empowers only one woman to do the job of change. This study illuminates the oppressive relationship between man and his womenfolk in many African households in such andocentric or male-dominated settings and for that matter calls for the redefinition of husband/wife relationships.

1-The Story of Enu Ego and the Tyranny of Patriarchy

The story of *The Joys of Motherhood* is about the female protagonist, Nnu Ego who, born and brought up in a traditional village setting, is humiliated every time and everywhere: first of all because her marriage was yet to yield a child and secondly for having many children she could hardly care for. Her first marriage ends up childless and as a result her father rearranged another marriage for her in the developing town of Lagos. There, she is caught up between two cultures: the traditional and the modern one. In the first one, children, mostly boys, are valued not only because they tend to define a woman’s identity but they also bring her happiness; in the second, much importance is laid on material things.

In fact, in African societies where much premium is laid on children as the means of ensuring the continuity of the family and the clan, a woman's femininity seems to consist precisely in her ability to bear as many children as her womb can afford her. The woman is significant to men as only a means by which the male line can be preserved. Thus, the Nigerian critic Oladele Taiwo (1967:21) makes this point clear:

West African society attaches much importance to fertility in a woman, and, because it is patrilineal society, male issue is absolutely necessary if the line of succession is to continue and the name of the family be perpetuated. A woman who has no issue is considered to be in a state of permanent disgrace and is jeered at by all her neighbours.

The book opens as Nnu Ego is running away from her husband's house in Lagos, where her first baby, Ngozi, has just expired. She has decided to commit suicide because she has failed. In a flashback, the narrator tells us the mysterious and ambiguous conditions under which Nnu Ego was conceived. Her father, Agbadi, the great chief and elephant hunter, though polygamous, is in love with the proud and haughty young woman called Ona. According to her father's desire, Ona refuses to marry him. But when Agbadi is nearly killed in a hunting expedition, Ona in her attempt, to nurse him back to health subsequently becomes pregnant. At birth, the daughter is named Nnu Ego and becomes Agbadi's favourite daughter. She grows up into a very beautiful young girl and is given into marriage to the son of a wealthy and titled family. Unfortunately, the marriage soon grows sour because Nnu Ego fails to deliver a child. So her husband takes a second wife, who quickly conceives. Since the child is considered to be a fundamental and worthier element in her society, she leaves her first husband to live in her father's house. With this the novelist wants her readers to understand that the primary motive of marriage in African societies is to produce children who will one day stand as signs of being real human beings and enable their mothers to be complete and fulfilled women in defining their own identity. In Emecheta's world, marriage is ratified if only the couple is lucky to bear offspring. An offspring cements the relationship between man and woman and gives the man his dignity. The child is at the core of life. In this traditional context, once a child is born in a family that family becomes respected and dignified. Therefore, the first value of a child within the family is to bring joy to his or her parents. A fertile couple swells with joy because, both parents see themselves as full human beings and become part and parcel of the society in which they live. It is this happiness of being fertile that brings the baby's parents to momentarily forget some of their problems or misunderstandings, if any, in which they were living and shares joy together.

After the birth of Amatokwu's younger wife's child, the childless Nnu Ego, secretly takes to sucking the child at her breast when it cries. But when Amatokwu discovers this he beats her because she dares perform the task of a mother when she has failed to fulfill this role. Nnu Ego grows sad and thin because she fails to have a child. She goes back to live with her father, who, though very reluctant, to see his beloved child in this predicament, arranges a second marriage. The fact of the matter remains that he did not blame Amatokwu for beating his daughter but acknowledges that his own daughter, Nnu Ego, has brought shame on his family. Eventually another husband is found for her in Lagos. Luckily, Nnu Ego's second marriage to Nnaife Owulum, a man who works as laundryman in the nation's capital Lagos, for a white couple, Dr. and Mrs. Meers become fruitful.

Though Nnu Ego is disappointed with the physical appearance of her new husband, who is far from being her ideal man, she quickly becomes pregnant. This child dies and propels her to

almost commit suicide by jumping off a bridge into a lagoon. After this lagoon incident fails thanks to Nwakusor, a dock worker from the same village as her, Nnu Ego returns home and becomes pregnant again, a state that becomes a floodgate to her being joyous. Unfortunately, her joy is stopped abruptly. The Second World War interferes in Nnu Ego's and Nnaife's happiness. Nnaife loses his job because his master returns to Europe and he is out of work for months while Nnu Ego supports the family through petty trade. Nnaife eventually gets work on board a ship, which means he's going to leave for months and puts the burden of a breadwinner on the poor Nnu Ego's back. She struggles vainly to make both ends meet. Thus the narrator tells us how she manages the family:

Nnu Ego still sold firewood, garri and other foodstuffs. Every morning neighbours could hear her calling: "Oshia, Adim, twins, wake up and let us go to the waterside!" There she would buy the firewood for the day's sale and they would all carry it home. She normally left Nnamdio with Iyawo Itsekiri. As she looked at the children trooping in front of her with their little bundles of firewood, she used to say, "Thank you, my *chi*, that they are healthy and strong. One day, they will become people (174).

When her husband finally returns, he is greeted by the sad news of his elder brother's death and he, Nnaife Owulum, Nnu Ego's legal husband, has to inherit according to Ibuza tradition all his brother's wives and children. Though most of the wives remain in Ibuza, Adaku, one of them, decides to come to Lagos to live and share with Nnu Ego her husband, Nnaife. In this lamentable and discouraging situation, Nnu Ego learns to become the senior wife, and to share Nnaife's miserable and meager salary with Adaku and her children. In towns like Lagos, life is a constant struggle for survival and this is clearly showed when Nnaife is conscripted into the army and sent to war for four years. His wives have to wait patiently with no news and no money.

While Adaku takes up trading to support herself and her two children, Nnu Ego struggles to support her four children. Nnu Ego's father's death and funeral ceremonies kept her long in Ibuza. During her long absence, Adaku's trading business becomes very successful; but Nnu Ego has to start everything again and becomes jealous of Adaku's success. This situation develops into a physical conflict; what leads the family men settle the matter in favour of Nnu Ego even though she was wrong. For Adaku, it turns out that the men take side with Nnu Ego. This is so because her rival is not only the senior wife, but she, Adaku has only female children. According to cultural values inherent in the society, her position in the family is reduced into nothingness because girls have no value in the society. Frustrated, she decides to regard tradition no more and lives on her own. In the long run, she becomes a successful prostitute and decides never to submit herself to any macho man anymore. In the process, Adaku changes from her food stall business to become a merchant in clothing materials. Very generous, she hands all the commodities on her stall to her rival, Nnu Ego and leaves. The news of her acquired new social status spreads throughout Lagos. In this episode, Buchi Emechetta wants to show that marriage is a sacrifice. She carves Adaku as a housewife who breaks away from the fetters of marriage to live a new life. She is no longer to be someone's wife and is for that matter not to be controlled by traditions anymore, i.e., social norms and values. After many years, Nnu Ego discovers that she has been sent three years of Nnaife's salary. With this, she is able to finally pay her children's school fees and feed them well.

Meanwhile, on his return from war, Nnaife feels the absence of Adaku and decides to go the village and assert his rights of inheritance with his brother's eldest wife, Adankwo. In the

process, he impregnates and brings home another wife, a sixteen-year-old girl called Okpo. Thereafter, Nnu Ego is frustrated. The fact of the matter is that they can hardly sustain the children they have had, yet Nnaife keeps producing more children and looking for more wives. Fortunately, Okpo is as good as Nnu Ego: both of them have been educated in the same kind of traditional values. This has facilitated their relationship and mostly communication in bringing them together to live as mother and daughter. Nnaife surprises everybody when he offers the rest of his military money to pay for Oshia's, Nnu Ego's second child's expensive education. In so doing Nnaife's intention is that Oshia will graduate quickly, get a good job, help pay for his younger brothers' schooling, and provide for his parents in their old age. But Oshia has his own ideas and plans: he wants to polish his studies in an American university and live on his own.

He escapes his own duties as the first-born son and this causes his parents, Nnaife and Nnu Ego, great anguish and disappointment. Betrayed by Oshia, his first-born son, Nnaife is frustrated and becomes even more one when his own daughter, Kehinde, breaks his set-rules by running away with a Yoruba man. Overwhelmed and frustrated by her behaviour, he assaults the father of Kehinde's husband and was eventually jailed. His patriarchal thrust pushes him to blame Nnu Ego for all his problems because, for him, the woman has given her daughter a bad education. This has destroyed whatever love he once had for Nnu Ego, and turned to bitter hatred. Once again, Nnu Ego is depicted as a victim of patriarchal harshness.

With Oshia now in America and Adim Nnu Ego's third child, working and paying for his own education, and her two oldest daughters well-settled in their marriages, Nnu Ego moves back to Lagos and to her amazement, she is not welcomed in Nnaife's family's compound. Finally, she decides to settle in her father's own old household with her numerous children, the ones she longed for, and lives out the rest of her days. When she dies, all her children finally come home; Oshia from America and Adim from Canada to make an expensive funeral for her and thereafter decide to build a shrine so that her impotent descendants can pray to her and ask for children.

The novelist presents to the reader all the different episodes of the story in a detached manner. Detached in the sense that for most of the parts, she does not put her fingers on the issues or pass judgment or even express opinions, but takes a middle line, and leaves the reader to make his/her own judgment from events unfolding in the novel. Thus, Nnu Ego remains with her husband and gives birth to nine children of whom seven are alive; three boys and four girls. The first time she felt like a mother is when Oshia was born. This episode best illustrates this: "She was now sure, as she bathed her baby son and cooked for her husband, that her old age would be happy, that when she died there would be somebody left behind to refer to as 'mother'" (54). After experiencing more or less the pains and joys of motherhood, both Adaku and Nnu Ego realize bitterly at long last that children do not bring the fulfillment longed for.

2-Socialization as a Conspiracy against Womanhood

The Igbo society as any other African society is largely and essentially patriarchal in nature. For this reason, men are understood to be more privileged than women. Such a society is described as "that which is characterized by male super ordination and female subordination". Thus, men show superiority over their women counterparts, who are usually relegated to the background. Therefore, socially, politically, economically and religiously women are to a larger extent, disadvantaged since decisions were taken mostly by men. This has consistently manifested in various ways as McLeod (2010:204) aptly puts it, "Nnu Ego's plight is culturally

and historically specific”. For him, “women in other countries with a history of colonialism could recognize her subservience to indigenous forces of compulsion”.

Adetundji (qtd in O.O. Familusi, 2012) believes that the cultural and gender problem, which African women have been facing dates back to their birth as in many homes the birth of a baby girl does not receive the kind of enthusiastic reception that is usually given to that of baby boy. Emecheta’s contention is that African culture is replete with language that enables the community to take for granted the humanity of women. The novelist discusses some aspects of African culture which restrict women from attaining equal status as men. The manifestation of gender discrimination in *The Joys of Motherhood* is seen in the portraiture of Nnu Ego throughout the novel. The novel reflects the condition of a woman who is unfortunately saddled with the responsibility of taking care of her own progenies. With her marrying Nnaife, Nnu Ego, is faced with the burden of taking care of the children. Thus, the narrator puts this burden in the following terms:

In Lagos, a wife would not have time. She had to work. She provides food from her husband’s meager housekeeping money but finding the money for clothes, for any kind of comfort in some cases for the children’s school fees (53).

Right from childhood, a woman is made to understand that she is inferior to a man and for that matter consider him as a master. Her duty is to obey and fulfill man’s needs. In an instance, Nnu Ego repeats this several times to her twin girls. She and tells them that their brothers are boys and cannot, at whatever means, help in the household chores. Moreover, the girls are not to be seen and heard in society for they are appendage to men. Her brothers’ opinion on any issue is final and cannot be challenged. This is exemplified in the character of Nnu Ego and shows clearly in her relationship with her husband, Nnaife. On one occasion, she is not consulted when her husband decides to take another wife and on the other, her father does not even ask for her advice before giving her into her first marriage to Amatokwu and to Nnaife, her present husband. In any case, in that patriarchal society her consent did not matter. When her father decides that Nnaife, one of the Owolums, should be her second husband, there is no appeal. The only thing she remembers is that one day Agbadi told her: “you will be leaving next Nkwo day, then the first son of the Owulum’s family will take you to his brother in Lagos” (p.38). The question of her marriage is thus settled.

On seeing Nnaife, her new husband, which the narrator presents to us as a “stout, fat, stocky man whose body almost crushed hers”(p.43) in Lagos, it can be inferred from her response that had she been given the opportunity to choose a husband she would not have chosen her present “ugly” husband, Nnaife, as her companion for life. She cannot dare run back home to Ibuza to tell her father that she does not love the man he had chosen for her. Tradition forbids it. Once married, a woman cannot escape from male dominance and this marks the beginning of all her troubles; she submits herself to tortures of all sorts. In fact, Nnaife’s physical appearance is repulsive to Nnu Ego. She had thought that Nnaife was a handsome man and reflected the beauty of his brother who is going to be her future husband. Unfortunately, her husband is a complete opposite of Nnaife’s brother in appearance. Nnu Ego is a beautiful girl and this is seen in the nickname “Mami Water” (p.43) given to her by all the stewards, cooks and all the people living in her area. All of them come to terms on her beauty. Her behaviour dawns on her husband that she does not approve of his physical appearance. Therefore he “demanded his marital right as if determined not to give her a chance to change her mind” (p.44).

Brought up under patriarchal tyranny, she bears and endures her predicament with dignity and determination. In Emetcheta's phallogocentric society a woman like Nnu Ego accepts established mores and assumptions and gets married at an earlier age without having the time to mature mentally, psychologically and physically. In fact, she is given into marriage at the age of 15 without even knowing how to cater for the family. Immediately after Nnu Ego's marriage she becomes, just like many women, a domestic servant. For instance, in the absence of her husband who goes to Ferdinando Po to fight on behalf of the British, she would toil from morning till evening buying cigarettes from the sailors at the wharf and when the opportunity for selling cigarettes stops, she starts selling firewood to provide food and take care of the children. On top of all this, society blames her for failing to give her children decent education. She finally dies a mere pauper after wandering out one particular night with no child holding her hand and with no friends talking to her. She does not have time to make friends because "she had been busy building up her joys of mother" (224). For the narrator, "the joy of being a mother is the joy of giving all to your children" (224). When Nnu Ego leaves for Ibuza, her twin children namely Taiwo and Kehinde together with their husbands come to say good bye to her. At Iddo Park, the driver looks carefully at Nnu Ego, her well married children and their husbands and observes, "mothers come first"(222) and again says when he starts his engine "it is nice to have daughters"(222).

Another patriarchal instance featured in the novel is Nwokocha Agbadi's lifestyle. He is described as one who has many wives; but this does not, like all the men featured in the novel, prevent him from bringing many mistresses into the matrimonial home and sleeping with them on the same bed. He is presented to the reader as the novelist's ideal of polygamist: very handsome, amiable, a wealthy local chief, and a brave hunter. He is a tyrant because he does not consider the feelings of others and rules his household with an iron fist. By showing how his wealth attracts women, the novelist once again, with a feminine sensibility, reveals the power rich people have in society. It is even believed that Agbadi abandons his own wives for his mistresses. Agbadi's womanizing ability also applies to Amatokwu, Nnu Ego's husband. To her amazement, he forgets that she is his senior wife and therefore need respect from her. But the second husband she marries gives her the status of father. She provides everything for the family while her husband is out busy drinking in bars with prostitutes. At home, he tries to find an alibi in beating and ill-treating her. In fact, he can afford to beat her because of the bride price he had paid on her back. This entitles him to use her as an object.

The phenomenon of the bride price entitles the man to beat her at will. In this case, it goes without saying that men ill-treat their womenfolk and consider them as chattels that can be sold and bought at will by suitors and parents. Thus, women in Emecheta's society have the status of market commodities whose value is measured in terms of their beauty and skills. The bride price degrades the woman and pushes her into a slavish condition. Once the terms of the price is agreed upon, Nnaife Owulum, has been quick in paying the price because he was suspecting that Nnu Ego would probably change her mind. Once the price is paid Nnu Ego is now in chains and cannot escape from her husband. On the contrary, if she refuses to marry her suitor, her relatives will have to pay back all that her husband has paid. This is sustained when Nnu Ego's father, Nnaife, is informed about the problems his beloved daughter is encountering. Her first husband, Amatokwu, chooses the bride price as a strategy to release her for he needs it to pay for another woman who can give her children. He thinks that the repaying of the bride price will be welcomed so as to enable him solve his problems of having another woman. The

feminist approach to the bride price is that men use it to insult, degrade and “thingfy” the woman: she becomes his own property.

Traditional education has had an impact on Nnu Ego’s husband. As tradition and custom may have it, Nnaife has to inherit his brother’s wives, his property and children after the burial of the deceased and become polygamous. Nnu Ego is shocked and surprised when the news of her husband’s inheritance reaches her. In a polygamous family in which she is compelled to live, she has to fight first for her husband’s attention when Adaku her husband’s inherited wife comes and secondly, against her new bed mate, thirdly for preparing food, fourthly for the rights to sleep with her husband and finally the right to exist and to breathe in a house of her own.

Buchi Emecheta takes the pain to show how women undergo sexual abuses physically as well as psychologically. The fact of the matter is that they do not have the right as was the case of Nnu Ego to choose their mate and are forced into sexual intercourse without their consent. Nnu Ego’s first day in Lagos is a case in point. On the day she arrives in Lagos to join her “ugly” husband whose physical appearance displeases her, Nnaife forces her into sex despite her fatigue of a four-day journey and despite the fact that she is not prepared for either marriage or sex. In Nnaife’s household, he does not care if the woman is nursing a baby, is sick, or pregnant: the only thing that matters for him is sex and no woman is ready to refuse. At this point, it is clear that women like Nnu Ego are used for sexual pleasure and nothing more else. The novelist uses the character of Nnaife to show the animalistic nature of man. The Meers call him a baboon. His statuses as a soldier, a washerman, and a worker in Fernando Po and his living in the town have not changed him. This only accentuates his bestiality with Nnu Ego, his own children, the butcher who tries as much as possible to break all remote ethnic barriers in marrying his daughter, Kehinde.

In African fictional works, the woman is given the status of a reproductive tool of the family and has the responsibility of giving birth to mostly male children for the perennity of the family in which she is married. The author of the novel uses it to challenge the assertion that men are more important or superior to their female counterparts. To put her message across, women like Adaku and Nnu Ego are used to drive her point home: the predicament of being a girl child. Adaku does not have a male child and is therefore written off by the society in which she is living. If a woman has children, it is preferable these should be boys. A woman is not important until she becomes a mother and a woman is valueless until she has many boys. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Adaku has two girls and because of that she is moaning just like Nnu Ego who is tired of being mocked by other women, throughout the novel. For her, having a baby is no longer happiness; but a source of worry. With her numerous children, she is happy that the tag of barrenness on her is removed.

When Nwakusor and Ubani are invited by Adaku to settle the matter between her and Nnu Ego, because she behaved like an uncivilized person towards Igbonoba’s wife, i.e. Adaku’s own cousin, Nwakusor unexpectedly reminds Adaku disdainfully that her children are girls who “will go and help build another man’s immorality”(166). When the novel closes although Nnu Ego has many male children she dies like a mad woman on the road side while Adaku who is less successful in marriage than her, remains fulfilled and happy. Nnaife is happy because having children is a proof of his manhood. Buchi Emecheta believes that domination, subjugation and oppression are noticeable through the usage of language. This bears the connotation of men’s possession of women. Religion is used as a myth to oppress women. This is an important theme tilted in the novel.

In Igbo cosmology, Enu Ngo is depicted as the reincarnation of the slave girl who was brutally killed by the eldest son of Agwunwa, the chief wife of Agbadi, during the latest burial rites for having died a “complete” woman (she gave birth to sons). The problem of the protagonist’s supposed infertility can be traced as far back as this unfortunate incident. To understand the problem of incarnation is to look for the origin of Nnu Ego’s predicament and understand how this affects her and appears as a punishment, not from her own deeds but from her parents’. In fact, the protagonist’s coming into being is mysterious. Nnu Ego is the fruit of the relationship between Nwekocha Agbadi, her father and Ona, her mother who was one of his numerous mistresses. Agbadi who is described as a wealthy traditional chief with many wives and mistresses called her “Ona”, meaning a priceless jewel. We are told that on the day he impregnated Ona, his chief wife Agunwa, became very ill and died some days afterwards. According to customs and tradition, Agunwa was to be buried in her husband’s compound with a slave girl because she gave birth to sons who will no doubt, immortalize the family name. On her burial day, a beautiful slave girl was ceremoniously pushed to jump into the grave to accompany her mistress.

The slave girl refused and requested that she should be allowed to stay against the will of tradition. Not only was her request refused but she was also given blows with the head of the cutlass and eventually killed and buried in another grave. Then, the slave girl turned her eyes, now glazed with approaching death towards Nwokocho and claimed: “Thank you for this kindness Nwokocho, the son of Agbadi. I shall come back to your household, but as a legitimate daughter. I shall come back...” (23). Though Ona was impregnated by Agbadi, she would not marry him. Nevertheless, she managed to reach a compromise with Agbadi. In the following statement she declares: “Since my father will not accept any bride price from you, if I have a son he will belong to my father, but if a girl, she will be yours” (25). To show his love for Ona, he often slept in her hut until she was delivered of a baby girl who was to be called “twenty bags of cowries”; which in clear terms mean: Nnu Ego. After the birth of Nnu Ego, Agbadi meets Obi Umunna, Ona’s father, to show him the terms of their contract. After much disagreement, he accepted the compromise.

In a society which believes in the potency of *Dibias*, medicine men as well as fortune-tellers, Nnu Ego is believed to be the fulfillment of the slave girl who promised to come back as a legitimate daughter of Agbadi. Tradition has it that she would not have lived; but due to the proper burial rites given to the “slave girl” after the birth of Nnu Ego and to the discovery that the slave girl was rather her “*chi*”. This delineates the belief that the dead in Africa are not dead. They either protect the living or haunt them according to the norms under which they die. In this context, it goes without saying that if the slave girl had died peacefully her spirit would have protected Agbadi’s family. But due to the dangerous circumstances of her unfortunate death, her spirit haunts and plagues the family. The *dibia*’s call for the appeasement of the slave girl’s spirit reinforces the belief that an aggrieved dead member of any family in that society needs to be really appeased.

3- Buchi Emecheta’s Strategy for Societal Transformation: New Vistas

Interest in the promotion of the Africa woman’s predicament as a theoretical practice as well as a social strategy for change and reform has intrigued some *Eurocentric literary scholars* and critics. Alice Walker (1983) is one of the pioneers to coin and incorporate the *African feminist paradigm* in literary interpretations so as to show how women participate in and experience their own oppression. She conciles feminism with the concerns of her own black community. She

argues that a feminist approach to literature should promote a dialogue between men and women so as to solve the question of gender contrariness which contributes largely to women's oppression and subordination. These are some major issues in need of further explorations in this paper. It is in Alice Walker's context of the feminist approach that I am reading Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1997) as a work which shows that women have the responsibility to cross-examine and problematize issues such as a woman's place and her objectification in traditional African cultures before writing her own narrative of resistance from her own experience. I would like to begin by briefly contextualizing Nnu Ego's and Adaku's life experiences in the novel, *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), as an attempt to fight and be recognized by the phallogocentric society in which they live.

With this novel, Buchi Emecheta suggests that women and gender cannot be studied in isolation, especially in what I call "transitional" feminism typified by African feminist discourse. In her critique of Eurocentric definitions of feminism, she has always pointed out that African and third-world women are usually made to play a fixed stereotypical role, in which they act as passive victims, lacking any form of agency which aspires toward a real change. By critiquing Western radical feminists' failure to envision African feminist aesthetics as part of a feminist theory and praxis that can bring man and woman closer, she calls for a focus on reading gender through a *neo-feminist* (Umeh 1982:1,8) perspective and historical specificity so as to better understand self-reflexivity and self-growth in women's texts. Buchi Emecheta's female characters try as much as possible to both shed light on and denounce the conditioning process which forces them to accept and act unconditionally in their endless and longstanding submission to patriarchal social structures. Through the character of Adaku who acts as a foil to Nnu Ego the protagonist, Buchi Emecheta the novelist manages to endow her with "some radical feminist ideologies in their quest for abundant life" (Umeh 1982:41). After fulfilling their mission of bearing children and experiencing physically and psychologically the "joys" and "pains" of being mothers, motherhood in one word, they unfortunately realize that children, in reality, do not bring fulfillment in the true sense of the word.

From this argued point of view, Buchi Emecheta's refusal to be labelled "feminist" with western connotation, makes a lot of sense. She is not arguing for equality between the male and female principle but she is advocating collaboration. This approach seeks to redirect the African woman toward a better way of life for it explores issues like the brutal nature of polygamy and arranged marriage, the unreasonable expectations of mothers who cannot bear to see their daughters choose different lifestyles, the inability of the modern African woman to make up her mind about feminist ideas and attitudes in the society. Using the consciousness-raising approach, Buchi Emecheta evokes the need for an African feminist approach to African culture. With *The Joys of Motherhood* Buchi Emecheta's writing shows how African women are incapable of seeing the extent of their own oppression and subjugation. Thereafter, she makes herself as a female novelist their mouthpiece. The point she is making here is the (re)presentation of traditionally established strategies for a continued exploitation of women.

For Nnu Ego, if marriage meant sacrifice and one-sided, then she will withstand this with the hope that one day she will reap the fruits of her efforts. Unfortunately, on her return from Izu to Lagos, she is frustrated by her husband's people to the extent that she has to go back to her father's house. Adim, one of her sons, also disappoints her as he goes to Canada and refuses to be in touch with her. Adim is not different from his brother, Oshia. Finally, she dies as a result of her emotional and psychological stress: she had been abandoned by both her husband and children. Both physically and figuratively, she becomes a woman who remains true to herself

and breaks away from the double bondage of being a “worthless” woman living with neither a husband nor children. It is also significant to understand how some female writers depict or view their own oppression and subjugation. All African societies are now striving for harmony between the ancestral world and the world of the living; but still they create or sustain rifts between these two worlds. This is a recurring theme titled by Buchi Emecheta.

The novelist suggests through myths that the African traditional society believes in the philosophy of life after death. Thus Nnu Ego is depicted as an incarnation of a slave girl who is brutally killed by the eldest son of Agwunwa during the latter’s burial. The slave girl’s promise comes to be with the birth of Nnu Ego. Throughout the novel, this idea of life after death has a choice place and haunts all the characters in their contact with the rest of the other characters. For instance, Nwakusor appeals to Nnu Ego to respect her father’s honour even in death. Agbadi’s second burial, for him, is meant to send him “finally to his ancestors”(154). Her child which was delivered only weeks after her father’s death is seen as Abadi in person; that is “Agbadi come back to life”. He is therefore named Nnamdio meaning “this is my father” (p.155). Every success or misfortune is ascribed to supernatural forces. Thus, Enu Ngo’s slavish condition of life is said to have something to do with the sad fate of a slave girl. Throughout her life time, Nnu Ego has had two important “dreams” about babies. In the first one, before Ngozi is born, her *chi* (a personal god) offers Nnu Ego a beautiful baby. But as Nnu Ego tries to cross the stream to get the baby in her arms, the stream starts to swell and rise while her *chi* mocks her. Nnu Ego gives birth to Ngozi soon after, but he lives for only two months as a result. Before she becomes pregnant with Oshia, Nnu Ego has another dream. This time, she sees a dirty baby abandoned by a stream. He’s so dirty that Nnu Ego shudders. She nevertheless picks him up with the idea that she’ll wash it in the stream. To her amazement, this time, her *chi* tells her to take this baby. According to her *chi*, Nnu Ego can have as many of these dirty babies as she likes. Her *chi* laughs again and disappears on the scene.

These two dreams, in all fairness, symbolically suggest that her *chi* was willing to give Nnu Ego children only if she struggles her entire life to keep her children clean, well-fed, and well clothed. This is precisely what happens. The more children Nnu Ego has, the harder it is for her to feed them. The dreams reveal the kind of life Nnu Ego will live, and suggest that her *chi* is not generous in giving her babies, even though Nnu Ego, for a time interprets her having many children as a blessing.

In Nnu Ego’s traditional vision of the family, individual concerns are secondary to the livelihood of the group. Several times in the novel, Emecheta portrays the family as a small corporation, each member contributing to the success and well-being of the “company” as a whole. But the younger generation, views the family arrangement differently. Oshia’s love of learning and desire for an education take him the farthest from the family fold. He makes a severe break with tradition when he accepts a scholarship to study in the United States, where he eventually marries a white woman. Adim, in his own right, retaliates against the strict hierarchies implicit in the family structure. Traditionally, as the second son, his own interests and desires are squelched so that the eldest and the family as a whole can be supported and lifted up. Adim similarly throws off the mantle of tradition and pursues a path much like Oshia’s. The change appears just as dramatically in one of Nnu Ego’s daughters, Kehinde, who decides on her own to break with traditional and societal taboos. Rather than accepting the course that would be best for her family, she asserts her individuality or right to happiness and her right to select a mate of her own choosing. She goes on to marry a man from a different ethnic group. She is questioning the patriarchal order because she thinks that that is the only way as a woman to assert her right. She

is not ethnicist and does not find anything wrong to marry a Yoruba man. Her father, Nnaife's arrest, detention, and subsequent imprisonment are products of Kehinde's decision to marry on her own.

In the rapidly changing world of Lagos, traditional Igbo culture struggles to survive; Nnu Ego has to find a new and different form of pleasure in her honoured new status as a mother. Her children's education and achievements are now becoming the benchmarks of good parenting rather than threats to the repressive traditions that required the next generation to forge their own goals in service and respect for the family. The traditions and rituals of the past provide balance, order, and security in a changing world, but those unwilling or unable to compromise or to accept change end up broken and alone. Nnaife is literally punished with imprisonment, when he cannot accept his daughter marrying into a Yoruba family. His hatred is such even when police arrests him, he continues to threaten the Aremu family: "I shall kill you". "No child of mine is going to marry a tribe that calls us cannibals" (210). Nnu Ego's punishment is more psychological, emotional and physical; culminating with her dying alone at the side of a road.

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, the ironic title of Emecheta's novel, motherhood is the source of not only Nnu Ego's greatest joys but also her greatest pains. As a girl, she is taught, just like all the girls of her age and village that her sole functions are to bear and raise children. So her initial struggle to conceive and her virtual and utter self-defeat when she is unable to exemplify how strongly she believes in this bitter female destiny that her culture has prescribed or ascribed her. The idea of motherhood informs her fantasies and her dreams. Yet when Nnu Ego actually becomes a real mother and struggles to raise her growing family, her idealism begins to change. The novelist makes Nnu Ego ultimately regret having so many children and investing so much of all her life in them since the children themselves seem to have little concern for her well-being. She forces herself to accept a vision of a type of motherhood that has been radically modified from the ideas she once cherished. Instead of an honored and revered figure, Nnu Ego becomes a sacrificial lamb on the ancestral god, one who gave all to her family selflessly while receiving little, if not, nothing in return.

Both Nnu Ego and Nnaife, who embody the stereotypical roles of Igbo men as well as women, represent the traditional thought of their own society and their generation. Yet their world is in flux. The old order, formerly unquestioned attitudes have begun to change at an unprecedented speed. Boys do not necessarily serve as their family's main support. Girls gain respect and power for their skills and education, not just an increased bride price. For the older generation, these changes in perception are often startling and unsettling, as once-solid gender definitions become more fluid, as can be observed in Adaku's advice to her two daughters. On her part, Nnu Ego reacts unfavorably to the fact that her husband is employed to wash the personal garments of a woman. She feels that that kind of job is subservient and "[robs] him of his manhood." At the same time, Nnu Ego herself is not untouched by the transformation and blurring of gender roles. While her identity is almost entirely dependent on her status as a mother, she occasionally assumes the traditionally male role of provider and breadwinner to support her family.

All the characters featured in *The Joys of Motherhood* often have difficulty understanding one another. These communication barriers suggest a world of division and separation, where English, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, and the various other native dialects of Nigeria intersect. Mrs. Meers and Nnaife are deeply connected in their relationship as employer and employee; yet language separates them as much as race and class do—they cannot even pronounce each other's names correctly. When soldiers enter the Yaba compound to evict Nnu Ego and her son Oshia,

the sharp, foreign words they shout at her are as frightening and daunting as the yelps of snarling dogs. Language divides and alienates individuals as well as families, communities, and the nation as a whole. In the novel, language barriers and lapses in communication suggest a deeper problem infecting modern Nigerian society: they indicate an inability to connect to and understand the outside world. Even when characters speak the same language, they still fail to fully comprehend one another's actions and intentions. For example, Nnu Ego has no idea that Oshia does not plan to stop his schooling so he can return to the family and support them.

By that time, Nnu Ego's vision of the world in which she lives, is mired in illusions. When Nnu Ego gets married, her vision is distorted by the unrealistic ideas she has about motherhood and her duty as a woman. During Nnu Ego's desperate attempt to kill herself, Emecheta reminds the reader about her distorted or blurred vision of the world. When Nnu Ego first appears near the bridge, she is stumbling about blinded with grief and looking into the vacuum. To make her situation clear, Emecheta equates Nnu Ego with the blind Hausa beggar whom she nearly knocks down in her hasty retreat from her household. The narrator tells us that she runs straight into the man "as if she too was without the use of her eyes." Nnu Ego's impaired vision suggests her lack of insight into some matters. By the end of the novel, it finally dawns on her, for better or worse, what her life means for.

The pervasive image of the child in *The Joys of Motherhood* represents the destiny and supposed common goal of all Igbo women. Children represent a complement to a woman's identity, and her life is viewed as "incomplete or unjustified" unless she has had children. The child is consistently and idealistically portrayed as an image of completion and female self-fulfillment. These abstract notions of motherhood and its attendant joys inform Nnu Ego's early years. Her dreams are haunted by visions, including images of babies in peril or a child being taken away by her "chi". As the story unfolds the iconic significance of having a child changes in the process. In this fictional work, children are depicted as a delight as well as sources of agony and emotional and psychological pain, and mental breakdown. When Nnu Ego slowly strips away her illusions about motherhood and her unrealized expectations, she is left with the unadorned reality of her life as it is, not as she wants it to be.

Buchi Emecheta has succeeded in using alcohol as an escapade when problem occur. Thus, in *The Joys of Motherhood*, drinking "palm wine" suggests Nnaife's failure to confront reality by being an active force in giving shape to his own family. On the one hand, palm wine represents the negative influences and societal ills of life in the city. On the second, it also stands for a shirking of men's responsibility in society. Thus, Nnaife's drunkenness puts an end to his becoming a father. He prefers drowning the living reality of his family in intoxication. In an instance, Nnaife states that the wine in the glass, he is going to drink, is the only truth he knows in the world. He has become a liquor slave and this only masks some of his problems. This abuse plays an important role in sealing his fate during his trial for an alleged attempted murder of his own daughter's husband.

In addition to the account of Nnu Ego's actual suicide attempt, numerous references to "Carter Bridge" appear in the novel both explicitly and teasingly in Nnu Ego's random thoughts and memories of the past. In this novel, the bridge stands as a double symbol: it stands for various impressions as well as emotional states. On the one hand, Nnu Ego sees the bridge as salvation, i.e. a gateway to freedom. For her, suicide is the only way she can express the pain of losing her longed-for-child and is also her frantic response to the predetermined role in which she finds herself playing in her Igbo claustrophobic society. The same bridge stands for an emblem of shame in her irrational response to the death of Ngozi and in her desire to use death

as a means of accepting her “failure” as a mother. For Nnu Ego, the edge of the bridge represents the precarious intersection of failure and freedom, life and death.

3- Narrative Strategies: A Catalyst to Achieving Vision

Scholars, male as well as female ones, have expressed much concern about the status of women in traditional Africa. Through many literary devices, they tried to illuminate the oppressive relationship between man and wife in many households. Through their eyes, readers have begun to understand the vast cultural differences that separate Western women from African ones and the gradual imbalance that is growing between man and his female counterpart. With the omniscient point of view to tell her own story, Buchi Emecheta compares and contrasts events in her novel to show the predicament of women. Thus, the character of Adaku contrasts with that of Enu Ngo, the protagonist in upholding traditional societal norms. While the former is presented to the reader as one who is not ready to compromise with culture; her counterpart or co-wife, Enu Ngo, is a believer of male hegemony as enshrined in cultural values. Whereas Adaku challenges phallogocentric values in having many men, Nnu Ego embraces traditional values skewed to reinforce patriarchy. When she is first presented to the reader, Adaku is depicted as a woman who is different from submissive African wives. In stark contrast, Adaku is more independent than Enu Ngo.

Enu Ngo symbolizes the marginalization policy of patriarchy and men’s chauvinism against women: she is conceived out of wedlock; her death in poverty and the standard of living expected of by her father, children and the different men she got married to as husbands, show that she is a mere commodity. The novelist starts the novel from the middle to make the reader eager or itchy to know why a woman will be running towards the Carter Bridge with a view to committing suicide. The novelist has used irony to suggest an indirect evaluation of the materials she has used to construct her novel. This arouses and compound thought in the reader. For instance, the title of novel is ironical for the things that should normally make her a fulfilled woman tended to be a nightmare. She was on the verge of killing herself because she lost her child Ngozi and when the children came in great numbers they abandoned her instead of being for her a pillar to lead on. Thus, the narrator tells us that: “she did not make many friends as she had been busy building up her joys of a mother” (224). The essence of the novel is to show the travails of women as wives, daughters, and mothers. The theoretical assumptions inherent in this juxtaposition are articulated in the fact of creating women who suffer various forms of marginisation because of their sex. Ona suffers because of her being a woman. The fate that befalls the protagonist is the result of her sex. All the female characters suffer one form or other of marginalization or disadvantage. Although Nnu Ego does all within her capacity to make her male children successful, she is caught up with the dictates of patriarchy. Oshia and Adim, her two sons suffers for abandon her at the time she needs them most. Through dialogue the principle of mutual exchange surfaces and makes the reader visualize the story as revealed to him through direct contact with characters. Thus, women’s oppression is delineated through language use throughout the novel. In an instance, the protagonist, Nnu Ego, is close to being beaten by her husband when she attempts to reason. It should be emphasized that it is through language use that the novelist articulates all the different forms of authoritarianism and marginisation on basis of sex. This is a telling example as she says “my sons you will all grow to be kings among men”.

In traditional Africa, a new-baby is said to have an ancestor taken as a personal god that can protect, punish or destroy him/her according to the cases. Thus, Nnu Ego’s “chi” or personal

god is said to be the slave woman buried with Agbadi's wife Agunwa. This signifies according to tradition that if Nnu Ego has a problem she will inevitably get solutions from that "chi" of hers. Rumours have it that her husband's people are already looking for a new wife for him because his people want an heir from him as soon as possible. In this perspective, Emecheta makes her narrator give us the following clarification: "When at home, Nnu Ego would take an egg, symbol of fertility, and kneel and pray to this [woman she incarnates] to change her mind. Please pity me". (31-32). This value of a son or a daughter is highlighted by Buchi Emecheta through her female protagonist Nnu Ego, who expresses her exhilaration when she has her first son as follows:

I know what you mean. Girls are love babies. But, you see, only now with this son I am going to start loving this man. He has made me into a real woman –all I want to be, a woman and a mother. So why should I hate him now?"(53)

Another aspect the novelist depicts is that, in a polygamous family, the woman who produces children for her husband becomes the chief wife and every decision comes from her even if the barren one was the first to be married. This means that an offspring gives a better position to its mother within the family. The next lines tell us about the first stage of Nnu Ego's barrenness which come as a support to this idea: "Father, my position as senior woman of the house has been taken by a younger woman. Nnu Ego lamented on her visits to Agbadi's courtyard, after she had filled his pipe for him as she used to" (33). This also shows in the way Adaku was scolded.

Don't you know that according to the customs of people you, you Adaku, the daughter of whoever you are, are committing an unforgivable sin? Nwakusor reminded her: "our life starts from immortality and ends in immortality. If Nnaife had been married to only you, you would have ended his life on this round of his visiting world. I know you have children, but they are girls who in a few years' time will go and help build another man's immortality. (166)

So the first oral humiliations begin in her won household. Emecheta moulds this verbal tension when she has her male character Amatokwu address his wife in the following way:

"What do you want me to do?", Amatokwu asked. I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line. If you really want to know, you don't appeal to me any-more. You are so dry and jumpy. When a man comes to a woman he wants to be cooled not scratched by a nervy female who is all bones" (32)

In addition, Amatokwu believes: "she is as barren as a desert" (39).

The above statements shed more light on the verbal violence addressed to a barren woman in the household. Nnu Ego's husband talks to her, not like a woman but like something which is harmful; harmful in the sense that she is not able to ensure the continuity of his family name. Therefore she is a "half" woman and cannot enjoy herself in the hearth. So one of the problems that can be derived from barrenness is the unstable state of marital life.

Just like the protagonist, Nnaife's sixteen-year-old wife tolerates all the excesses of her husband's language. Nnu Ego is not even given the status of a senior wife by her own husband, Agbadi. Most of the exchange in the novels, that is to say, the dialogue between the two opposing sexes in the novel shows that the woman is relegated to the position of an inferior being. Through language the novelist shows us how far male dominance is all pervasive in the

society. Frustrated by men's language in the male dominated society; Adaku finds her salvation or way out through prostitution. Buchi Emecheta's philosophy in writing this novel is to subvert the stereotypical role of women which merely consists of cooking, providing comfort for her husband's bed and bearing children.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it must be retained that although male writers are criticized for not allocating some dignifying place and a realistic representation of women in African fiction, many female writers namely Ama Ata Aidoo, Ama Darko, Nawal El Saadawi to mention just a few, demonstrated that it is high time men stopped ill-treating women and empowered them. In their fictional works, they give women a place of pride and dignity which outdo the portrayal of women in male writing. In using the Igbo people and their culture as a backdrop for her critique of the obscurantist part of African ways, the female novelist shows that in traditional Igbo society, women are considered as commodities that can be bought on a market stall. By the same token and by showing certain sexist and masochistic aspects of her own society through the predicament of the protagonist of her novel, she offers to militate for the reversing or better sharing of some roles. The revolutionary tone of Buchi Emecheta vindicates those who in real life believe that women have their share of responsibility in history: social change has now become the matter of both sexes; not only for one.

The Nigerian female novelist Buchi Emecheta and many other female writers have encouraged women to vie for a voice and power in patriarchal zones where they are often relegated to second citizens. With a firm grip, she believes they can seize the weapons that words constitute and them their own. In order to be heard, they have to speak up for themselves. For the African woman to achieve self-fulfillment she needs to redefine her blind or unconditional adherence to oppressive male rules and practices which degrade her. This can push them to improve the conditions and situations of future generations of African women. In this patriarchal world, even though Adaku has been depicted as a successful woman by establishing or displaying her independence through the acquisition of material wealth through some "devious" ways; this is considered abnormal because she has not been able to give birth to a baby-boy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. San Francisco, Spinsters/Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
- Awori, Thelma. "The Myth of Inferiority". In *The Civilisation of African Women*, Présence Africaine, 1975.
- Ballotin, Scott. (ed). *Population, Development, and the Role of Women: In Search of Concensus*, The USIA, Washington D.C. 1994.
- Cury, James. *In Their Own Voices*, Heinemann: London, 1990.
- Culler, Jonathan. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- . *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976/1975.
- Darko, Amma. *Behind the Horizon*, London: Fontana, 1995.
- Emechetta, Buchi. *Kehinde*, London: HEB, 1985.
- . *Second Class Citizen*, London: Fontana, 1977.
- Familusi, O.O. "African Culture and the Status of Women". In *The Journal of Pan African Studies: The Yoruba Example*, 2012.

- Foeline, Water and Gender-From Action to Vision, *An Environmental Magazine of Friends of the Earth-Ghana*, 2000, 10(14).
- Friedman, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*, Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1963.
- Humm, Maggie. *Feminist Criticism*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1986.
- Khors-Amissah, Edith. *Aspects of Feminism and Gender in the Novels of three West African Women Writers (Aidoo, Emechetta, Darko)*, Heidelberg: Books of African Studies, 2002.
- Kolawole, Modupe E. *Womanism and African Consciousness*, New Jersey, Africa World Press Inc., 1997.
- Kumah, Carolyn. "African Women and Literature". In *West Africa Review*: 2, 1 [1 uicode: <http://www.icaap.org/iuicode?101.2.1.15>], 2000.
- Lunsford, Andrea. A., Helene Molgen and James Slevin, *The Right to Literacy*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990.
- Mosadomi, Tola. "Marriage, Women and Tradition in Guillaume Oyôômô Mbia's *Three Suitors: One Husband*", *West Africa Review*: 2, 1 [iucode: <http://www.icaap.org/iuicode?101.2.6>]. , 1990.
- Miller, Casey and Kate Swift. *Words and Women*, Garden City: Anchor Press, 1976.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West Africa novel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Treton, New Jersey, Africa World Press, 1975.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, Molar. "Recreating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformation", Trenton, New Jersey, Africa World Press, 1994.
- Okome, Olufunke. A Paper presented by Mojumbaoulu entitled "*African Women: Reflection on Their Social, Economic and Political Power*" at Lehman College, CUNY, May 2, 1999.
- Owomoyela, Oyekan, "Discourse on Gender: Historical Contingency and the Ethics of Intellectual Work", *West Africa Review*, 3, 2.
- Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist. "Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview". *Women, culture and Society*, Michelle Rosaldo Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. Standford, C. Astanford University Press, 1974, (17, 42).
- Stratton, Florence. *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, London: Routledge, 1994.
- Umeh, Marie A. *The Joys of Motherhood: Myth or Reality*, Colby Library Quarterly, 1982, 18 3(39, 46).
- Umfota, Titi. "Women in Africa: Their Sociopolitical and Economic Roles". In *West Africa Review*: 2, 1.(iucode: <http://www.icaap.org/iuicode?101.2.1.4>).
- Oladele Taiwo. *An Introduction to West Africa Literature*, London: Nelson, 1967.
- Omojola, Bode. *Songs of the King's Wives: Women, Power and Performance in the Yoruba Public Sphere*, *Africa Development*, XXXIV, 2009, 2(47, 57).
- Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mother's Garden*. London: The Women's Press, 1983.