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Motherhood in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) and Buchi Emechita's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979): A comparative study

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Dedications

To: Our dear families , who supported us all along our studies .

Our dear teachers, who participated in the realization of our work.

Our dear friends.

Benelhadj Dyhia

Hachemi Djedjiga

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Abstract

This dissertation is a comparative study between *The Awakening* (1899) by The American writer Kate Chopin and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) by the African writer Buchi Emecheta. The central issue of this comparison is to show how motherhood is portrayed in relation to societal expectations by comparing mother figures in these two novels written in two different periods of time. The study focuses on the depiction of woman's oppression, and their physical as well as emotional suffering caused by the strict traditions and patriarchal regime in the American society of the late 19th Century and the African society of the late 20th Century. To accomplish our goal, we have adopted a feminist literary theory which is Adrienne Rich *Of Women Born : Motherhood Institution and Experience* (1976). The analysis shows that the two novels share many similarities and one common objective which is to reinforce and encourage women's creating new identities outside of social norms and patriarchal regime. Besides, it shows how two closer literature may produce similar production.

key concepts :

The Awakening , *The Joys of Motherhood* , Motherhood , woman's oppression, patriarchy, nineteenth century, twentieth century.

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I.General introduction

The nineteenth century American and twentieth century African societies were known by their male domination, which led these societies to stand as patriarchal ones. Therefore, women during this era were considered by their society as a possession to their husband. She assumes her womanhood, by providing her home and family with her body and soul. In both societies, patriarchy had an enormous impact on gender role, in the above mentioned periods. Unlike men, women are expected to marry in order to satisfy their husband's pleasure. Moreover, both societies view that rearing and nurturing children is only a woman's duty on which she has to sacrifice her life from marriage to death. The strict religious and traditional rules made divorce rare in both the Catholic Victorian society and the traditional African one. Consequently, the literature in both periods (the nineteenth century America and twentieth century Africa) played an enormous role for feminist activists to make their intellectual revolution against the injustice of the society on women.

This dissertation studies two novels produced by a nineteenth century American feminist writer, and a twentieth century African feminist author. The African novel is written by Florence Onyobuchi Emechita entitled *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), and the American one is written by Kate Chopin under the title of *The Awakening* (1899). The subject of our thesis consists of a feminist study of both novels, in terms of women's independence and motherhood, emphasizing the similarities that exist in both novels, despite their spatial and temporal differences.

Kate Chopin is a nineteenth century American novelist who criticizes the Victorian woman, whose role is reduced into marriage. Motherhood results in her resistance against the societal laws that oppress the American women of the nineteenth century. In fact, and restrict them in the traditional name of Victorian American woman originated from Great Britain. During the

Industrial Revolution, American authorities adopted the same ideology as Britain concerning women's role in society. Thus the American women as well as the European ones were destined to a single female role of motherhood in a time when they are able to perform many other intellectual and social tasks.

In her writings, Kate Chopin was influenced by her personal life as a girl who lost her father at the age of five and was raised in a family with feminine control. Her early life was later followed by a difficult experience as a mother. This experience pushed her to search an escape from that life, and deaden her pains through writings. Thus, Kate Chopin used to acknowledge the most unspoken taboos concerning women's rights in that period. Her literature focuses on women's revealing to their personal desires, especially that of her sexuality, it allows them to look for themselves and their happiness.

Oppression did not end with the Victorian American woman. African feminist authors who worked to vindicate African woman's rights in the twentieth century give an image about them that is not better than that of the American woman of the nineteenth century. Thus, many African authors gave voice to African women to detect the suffering of black women in a patriarchal society. Lola Shoneyin and Ayobany Adebayo are among these African feminist writers who refused to be spectators for the discrimination exercised over the African black women. Buchi Emechita, as another selected African feminist writer from Nigeria is an author known for her realistic fictions. Among her works we find. *The Second Class Citizen*(1974)*The bride price* (1976), *The Slave Girl*(1977)and other ones. Emechita's early life started in Nigeria, but she lived most of her life in London. She received her education there, and then married to a man who did not admire her ambition for writing. Therefore, she could not publish books until she left him.

Buchi Emechita believes that during the twentieth century, the life of African women in Nigerian Igbo society is cruel in their domestic sphere. The inequality between men and women that marginalized the black woman gives birth to a dark side for traditions in Igbo society. As a result, she decided to participate in the gender liberation of African women through the publication of different literary works. Different issues are discussed in her works including, education, marriage ,patriarchy and motherhood. Because of depiction of gender oppression in her continent, readers consider her as a western feminist.

The Awakening and *The Joys of Motherhood* share the same feminist perspective. To reveal the similarities between them with the subject of motherhood, we lent some theoretical concepts taken from the essay *Of Woman Born: Motherhood As Experience And Institution*. It is coined by the feminist activist Adrienne Rich. The latter claim they were submitted to the same oppression. Their oppressive way of life is in fact, due to the institution of motherhood. Which is defined according to patriarchal assumptions, In her essay, Rich criticizes the fact that rearing and bearing children in such societies is separated from father's duties and related to women's tasks that prevent her from self independence

The purpose in adopting this approach is the reconstruction of women's identity as mothers, by liberating them from the motherhood acquired from patriarchal discourse. enhance a motherhood of a feminist ideology. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Buchi Emechita's *The Joys Of Motherhood* illustrate both discourses. Thus both works could be studied in the light of Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born :Motherhood as Experience and Institutions* .

Review of the literature

This section is a review of the literature which synthesizes the findings of previous research studies about Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*. In essence, both novels deal with the institution of motherhood and challenge the patriarchal society and the traditional paths of their time. *The Awakening* and *The Joys of Motherhood* have received considerable interests and critics in relation to these issues.

In 1899, *The Providence Sunday Journal* called *The Awakening a Disgrace*¹. The argument is that it is filled with “language not fit for publishing”² and that the book “promoted unholy imagination and unclean desires”³. The critics affirmed that the theme that *The Awakening* explored are inappropriate to the nineteenth century Victorian society, as this illustrates modern women with free thoughts and behaviour which contradicts the Victorian standards and upset their expectations⁴. Additionally, according to some reviewers, this novel is a nauseating one which speaks freely about sexuality and marital infidelity. Therefore, it should not be published at all, because that may infect other women.⁵

Another critique of *The Awakening* during the late 19th and early 20th century is made by the *Public Opinion News* paper⁶ which argues, “We are well satisfied when Mrs. Pontellier deliberately swims out to her death.”⁷. This quotation means that *The Awakening* was rejected by readers, and they are well satisfied by Edna's suicide by drowning herself in the sea. In fact, Edna Pontellier's behaviour of committing adultery during her journey of self discovery was not acknowledged by the Victorian society⁸. For them, the death is better for her. So, we notice that the majority of critiques addressed the novel in the time of its publication are negative⁹.

The *St Louis Dispatch* wrote a positive review of the *Awakening* in an article written by the literary critic Charles Deyo¹⁰. He states, that *The Awakening* is a realistic novel which conveyed the social climate of nineteenth century victorian society and revealed its conditions and expectations toward women and mothers¹¹. Besides, he avows that *The Awakening* is an eye opener for hidden reality, “unpleasant truths”¹², which victimize women within a patriarchal regime. Moreover, *St Louis Dispatch*, in her review, states that the book

is for the seasoned souls, for those who have lived, who have ripened under the gracious or ungracious sun of experience and learned that realities do not show themselves on the outside of things where they can be seen and heard, weighted, measured and valued like the sugar of commerce, but treasured within the heart, hidden away, never to be known perhaps save when exposed by temptation or called out by occasions of great pith and moment.¹³

In the above quotation the writer confirms that *The Awakening* is dedicated to a specific category of audience only. For those with experience and those who are ready to perceive as well as to rebel against society and achieve emancipations for all women¹⁴. He concludes that *The Awakening* is a perfect production in its style and essence¹⁵.

In Buchi Emecheta's novel *Marie Umeh* is one of Buchi Emecheta's novel illustrative reviewer¹⁶. She states:

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, one witnesses the collapse of these glorifying images of the African mother. As a literary artist preoccupied with promoting change, an iconoclast, breaks away from the prevalent portraiture in African writing in which motherhood is honorific... The title of the book, which is taken from Flora Nwapa's novel, *Efuru* is then significant and bitterly ironic... Here Emecheta constructs a completely different set of economic socio-political and cultural imperatives which diverge from the existing literary models.¹⁷

From the quotation above, it can be deduced that the title of the novel is clearly ironic. Hence, the issue raised in it contradicts the content of the title that idealizes motherhood. The essence of the novel shows how motherhood is conditioned by the patriarchal society and

tradition¹⁸. In fact, being a mother is not a joyful experience for the main character Nnu ego but a sad and miserable one¹⁹.

Another critic is Anu Baisel, who describes Buchi Emecheta as “fiercely feminist”²⁰. She claims that :

a woman, a mother, and a sociologist, [Emecheta] advances insightful perspectives on social and political realities, their origin and change that are different from those of most male African writers who write in English and of the literary and cultural critics who ignore her and the subjectivity as well as historicity of most women in Africa.²¹

In the above quotation, Anu Baisel describes Buchi Emecheta as a brave writer, a mother who has struggled to achieve her position as an important African Igbo female writer within the African dominated literary men, who wrote in the English language, such as Chinua Achebe²².

As a feminist writer, she openly questioned the social norms and standards of twentieth century African society and the dilemmas of women at that time²³. Besides, she rebelled to reduce the stereotypical image of the woman, who is presented as weak and man's property²⁴.

Another criticism of the novel was addressed by Jonas Egbudu Akung²⁵, who quoted that *The Joys of Motherhood* limits women to the confines of marriage and motherhood for a meaningful contribution²⁶. According to Jonas point of view *The Joys of Motherhood* is regarded as a novel that depressingly restricts women to become more traditional and full women, since it deals with the main character Nnu ego who is confined by both marriage and motherhood. Hence, she becomes more traditional after her transition to motherhood than before²⁷. She sacrifices all her life only to have children (preferably sons) and gain the respect of her tribal community as a brave and true woman. That is why some critics argue that the joys of motherhood encourages women's limited life²⁸.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

From the review of the literature presented above on Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), we can argue that both novels have gained considerable literary critical attention. *The Awakening* was greatly criticized and seen as immoral, provocative book, since it deals with its controversial main character Edna who takes a journey to challenge the Victorian society and awaken her desire for love and freedom. *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta has also received negative criticism. *The Joys of Motherhood* is criticized due to its ironic title "*The Joys of Motherhood*" and its main character Nnuego who had bad fate with childbearing. Despite the negative reviews addressed to them, later on both novels earned a valuable position from a feminist perspective and movement. Both writers were regarded as symbols of female liberation.

In the present study, we compare for the first time between the selected novels that had never been compared before. Despite the fact that they are from different cultural, chronological and geographical locations, this fact does not prevent us to put them together in perspective and single comparative study. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to point out that both novels share some similarities and one common concern, which is to reveal the mother's oppression, and their physical as well as emotional suffering caused by the conflict with dominant values of their societies. To attain our goal, we shall rely, as previously mentioned, on Adrienne Rich's *Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976).

Methodological outline

Our work will be divided into three main chapters. The first chapter will consist of the analysis of woman's independence in nineteenth century America and twentieth century Africa in accordance to the issue of motherhood .

The second chapter , will provide some literary devices, including imagery and characters from both novels to show the abstract idea of motherhood oppression within two different societies. Finally, we will show how the power of father influence on mother characters in *The Awakening* and *The Joys of Motherhood* , The conclusion of our dissertation will be concerned with the restatement of the main issues that point out the major similarities that exist between the two novels. In addition, the result we will achieve after analysing *The Awakening* and *The Joys of Motherhood*, will show that different backgrounds may produce similar literary production .

Endnotes

¹Jessie Mizic, *19th CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN'S LITERATURE The Importance of Symbolic meanings in Kate Chopin's The Awakening* (University of Washington,2015), 25.

²Ibid

³Ibid, 26.

⁴Ibid

⁶Ibid

⁷Ibid

⁸Ibid

⁹Ibid

¹⁰Ibid

¹¹Ibid

¹²Ibid

¹³Ibid

¹⁴Ibid

¹⁵Ibid

¹⁶OmotayoFakayode. ObafemiAwolowo,*Translating Black Feminism: The Case of the East and West German Versions of Buchi Emecheta's The Joys of Motherhood* (University of Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa, July 2019), 133-134

¹⁷Ibid

¹⁸Ibid

¹⁹Ibid

²⁰Ibid

²¹Ibid

²²Ibid

²⁴Ibid

²⁵Lumumba. Ebony Olivia, "*Of Mules and Mamas: Four Women, Africana Mothering, and Resistance*"(University of Mississippi 2019), 134.

²⁶Ibid, 160.

²⁷Ibid, 134.

²⁸Ibid

II.Methods and materials

METHOD

In order to analyse the above mentioned issue and reach our purpose of comparing the *Awakening* by Kate Chopin and *Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta (1979), we will rely on Adrienne Rich's theory *Of Women Born :Motherhood as Institution and Experience* (1979) .

Adrienne Cecile Rich is an American feminist, thinker and theorist¹. She was born in Baltimore in 1929 and died recently in 2012 in California .Rich's book *Of Women Born: Motherhood as Institution and Experience* (1979) is one of her famous productions and among the major feminist works that deals with the institution of motherhood as a central point² . It shows how this institution determines women's motherhood experience. Through her feminist perspective, she aims to enlighten and empower many mothers to survive as well as rebel to achieve their freedom of thought and action³.

As the title of this book shows, Adrienne Rich distinguishes two meanings of the institution of motherhood, which are a form of patriarchal oppression for women and experience of mothering (relation between mother and child)⁴ . According to her ,the discourse of motherhood is dominated by society , culture and religion which bring women's lives and determine their experience of being mothers⁵. Rich states:

The institution of motherhood has been a keystone of the most diverse social and political systems. It has withheld over one-half the human species from the decisions affecting their lives; it exonerates men from fatherhood in any authentic sense; it creates the dangerous schism between private and public life; it calcifies human choices and potentialities...it has alienated women from our bodies by incarcerating us in them.... Under patriarchy, female possibility has been literally massacred on the site of motherhood. ⁶

Rich argues that through this institution, motherhood which could be a source of personal joy has instead become a painful experience and a source of anxiety and stress⁷.

Adrienne Rich highlights how woman's body is exploited by a patriarchal society which measures women through only their fertility. She states: “patriarchal thought has limited female identity to its own narrow biological specifications”⁸. In other words, men expected women to play maternal roles, including childrearing, nurturing, taking care of their children and fulfilling all their other duties over household and their husband. Thereby, woman's body and biological tasks are the thing which determine their presence within society. The fundamental condition to be seen as a true woman or even to be considered as human being⁹.

For Rich, the institution of motherhood is shaped also by woman's unconditional love toward her children. In fact, some women became more imprisoned due to their love toward their children¹⁰. Hence, they devote all their life financially and emotionally to handle their responsibilities as good mother. She notes, “as her body has undergone irreversible changes, her mind will never be the same, her future as a woman has been shaped by the event”¹¹. Thus, Rich insists that women must alienate themselves from such love and motherhood, which should be viewed as sublime experience and as part of their life not as a condition of their existence¹².

According to Rich, even though women gained strong power and higher status when they became pregnant and mothers, men try to become harder and stronger by imposing rules and expectations and manipulating their life¹³. The kingdom of father successfully turns women's power into a combination of stress and anxiety. Rich argues “The Kingdom of Fathers”: “Powerlessness can lead to lassitude, self-negation, guilt and depression”¹⁴.

Reading and studying the two novels *The Awakening* (1899) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) that we have chosen as an object study in this thesis, we notice that they share one universal reality and one common goal as that developed in Adrienne Rich theory, which makes it more appropriate to our work. As women writers in patriarchal society, they all draw on their personal experience as women as well as mothers and serve as an alert to the silence of many women, who are victims of subordination under male dominance.

Materials

This part of our work contains the brief summaries of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys Of Motherhood* (1979) and the biographies of the two novelists.

Biography of Kate Chopin

Kate Chopin's real name is Katie O'flaherty. She is an American novelist and short story writer. She is considered an essential American author who wrote during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries¹⁵. Kate chopin was born in ST Louis, Missouri, on February 8, 1850. She is the daughter of an Irish father (Thomas) and French mother (Eliza Faris). She was the only surviving child around five died children¹⁶. Her father died when she was five years old, and she grew up in a household of women including, her mother, grand mother, great grand mother who taught her to be an independent woman and to speak French and play piano¹⁷. At the age of five and half, she entered Hearth School Academy, a Catholic Boarding School in ST Louis, where she received the best education until the graduation at the age of eighteen¹⁸.

Kate Chopin married at the age of twenty with the son of a wealthy cotton growing family Louisiana Oscar Chopin. The couple moved to New Orleans and gave birth to five sons and a

daughter¹⁹ . Sadly , Oscar died of Malaria leaving her a widow at the age of thirty- one²⁰

Few moments later, she moved back with her children to ST Louis, and shortly after her arrival, her mother passed away . All these tragic events, made her feel stressed, depressed and upset. For that reason, doctors advise her to begin writing seriously as a therapy to feel better²¹ .

It is at the age of 39th that Kate commenced her career as a writer .She was inspired in her style by Guy De Mau pass²² , a French writer. Her works have been translated to many languages, including Turkish , Polish and Vietnamese²³ .

Among Chopin's important works , a short story collection : *Bayou Folk* (1894),*A Night In Acadie* (1897) ,and novels :*At Fault* (1890) and *The Awakening* (1899) the famous controversial book²⁴ .

Biography of Buchi Emecheta

Buchi Emecheta's full name is Florence Onye Buchi Emecheta. She is a late twentieth century Igbo writer ,who was born in Yaba near Lagos Nigeria on July 12,1944²⁵ . She wrote stories, novels, plays, essays biographies as well as children's fiction .As a writer ,she seeks the liberation of women²⁶ .

Buchi Emecheta is a daughter of Jeremy Nwabun Drinke and Alice Okuekwuhe Emecheta. She became an orphan at the age of nine, when her father was assassinated as a soldier. Her mother was inherited by her uncle²⁷ , and she was sent to live with her mother's cousin in Lagos²⁸ .

Buchi 's education was neglected due to the custom of her time .She was confined at home while her younger brother went to school .She persuaded her parents to allow her attend schooling²⁹. Finally, she was sent to an all girls education missionary school and Methodist girls h school in Yaba³⁰.At the age of sixteen, she married with Sylvester and gave birth to two children. As her husband travelled to London to pursue higher studies in accounting, she joined him after two years³¹. While in London, Emecheta beer three other children and worked as a librarian at the British Museum, but her marriage seem to be unhappy and sometimes a violent one as depicted in most of her biographical works, such as *Seconde Class Citizen*(1970)³².

Emecheta decided to divorce with Sylvester and begin a new life with her children . She continued her work as a librarian officer in order to support her family³³. At the same time , she entered to the university of London and of course took up writing seriously. In fact , the manuscript of her first writing novel was burned by her husband . She earned a degree in sociology in 1972. From 1982 until 1983, she became a Member of home secretary's Advisory³⁴. Following her success as a great author who wrote more than 20 books, she had won many prestigious prizes, among which Jock Campbell Prize for her novel *The Slave Girl* (1977). She died of Dementia in London on 25 January 2017 ,at the age of 72³⁵.

Among Emecheta's major works, *In Ditch* (1972) *Seconde Class Citizen* (1974) *The Bride Price* (1976) *The Slave Girl* (1977) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979)³⁶

b- summaries of the novels

summary of *The Awakening*

The novel centres around Edna Pontellier Creole, a young women vacationing with her husband Leonce and two boys Etienne and Raoul at Grand Isle ,Louisiana , to spend time with other upper class Creole families ³⁷. Edna's husband is a business man, always preoccupied by his work, which makes her feel unhappy and sad³⁸. Although on vacation, he leaves them, and during the time of his absence ,Edna spends most of her time with her close friends Madame Ratignole (ideal victorian woman) and Mademoiselle Reisz (independent women)³⁹. While in the sea, Edna meets a young handsome man Robert Lebrun (her first awakening), the single son of a house owner Madame Lebrun⁴⁰. As summer progresses, this relation turns into a forbidden love affair. Consequentl , Robert decided to leave Grand Isle to Mexico in hope of forgetting his love, which causes Edna depression. Back in New Orleans, she starts acting differently, first by ignoring all of her social responsibilities and following her own interests⁴¹. Then, she made another relationship with Lore Seduce (Alcee Arobin), and abandoned her husband and children . Finally, she left her family home to be more independent and to spend all of her time with her close friends⁴². Mademoiselle Reisz always encourages her awakening by providing her letters from Robert. Whereas, Adele Ratignole advises her to think about her children⁴³. After few months away from Robert , they meet each other and express their love freely. But, one day while Edna is called to follow Adele's childbirth , Robert for the second time abandoned her forever, since she refuses to divorce her husband and marry him⁴⁴. In the end, Edna draws herself on the sea, when she fails to find her true role within the society ⁴⁵.

Summary of *The Joys of Motherhood*

The story revolved around a girl named Nnuego, the daughter of Agbadi a great Nigerian chief and Ona One da, when Agbadi is nearly killed in a hunting accident, Ona nurses him back to health⁴⁶. After a period of time, she becomes pregnant with his baby. The Chief and beautiful mistress arrived to an agreement that if she gives birth to a boy he will belong to Ona's father, and if she gives birth a girl, she will belong to Agbadi⁴⁷. After nine months of pregnancy, Ona delivers a baby girl named Nnuego then she died some weeks later. Nnuego grows up into a beautiful woman and married to Amatokwo. But, this marriage ended with divorce, since she is unable to bear children⁴⁸. Nnuego's father arranged her second marriage with Nnaife Owlume, and she delivers a boy named Ngozy, who brings her joy. But one month later, she finds her baby died. In that event, she attempted to jump off a bridge, but immediately stopped by Nwakusor (an Igbo man from Ibuza)⁴⁹. Through time, Nnuego recovers and got pregnant several more times. She delivered sons and twin girls. Nnaife, by customs, inherited all her dead brother's wife and children including Adaku, the oldest wife, who later became a prostitute⁵⁰. During the Second World War, Nnaife was forced to join the army. Meantime, Nnuego travelled with her family to Ibuza, as her father passed away⁶. But later on, she refuses to come back to Lagos⁵¹. Unfortunately, Nnuego's journey with her children seems to be very difficult, she provides for their oldest son Oshia and Idim to study abroad. Kahine, her third child girl runs off with a Youba man. Her fourth child Tiawo has an arranged marriage to an Ibo clerk⁵². In her old age, she died alone and her joy of mother became a disillusionment⁵³.

Endnotes

¹Araştırma Makalesi, A Comparative Analysis of Motherhood Concept in World Literature.Vol 4.Accessed on September 2020

²Ibid,p 06.

³Ibid

⁴Ibid

⁵Ibid

⁶Ibid

⁷Ibid

⁸Katherine Arnup Ontario. Adrienne Rich: Poet, Mother, Lesbian Feminist, Visionary Institute for Studies in Education Atlantis,1982. Vol. 8 No. 1,p .102

⁹Ibid

¹⁰Ibid

¹¹Ibid

¹²Ibid

¹³Ibid

¹⁴Ibid

¹⁵Laouamri Samia, “Audacity”in the Representation of “Intimacy”in Malika Mokaddem’s *The Forbidden Woman and Kate Chopin’s The Awakening* (Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou, December 2017), 13.

¹⁶Ibid

¹⁷Ibid

¹⁸Ibid

¹⁹Ibid

²⁰Ibid

²¹Ibid

²²Ibid

²³Ibid

²⁴Ibid

²⁵Ibid

²⁶Ibid

²⁷Ibid

²⁸Ibid

²⁹Ibid

³⁰Ibid

³¹Ibid

³²Ibid

³³Ibid

³⁴Ibid

³⁵Ben Mohammed Noura. Matmer Samia, *Tradition, Polygamy and Education in The Joys of Motherhood* (Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou, September 2016), 06.

³⁶Ibid

³⁷Ibid

³⁸Ibid

³⁹Ibid

⁴⁰Ibid

⁴¹Ibid

⁴²Ibid

⁴³Ibid

⁴⁴Ibid

⁴⁵Ibid

⁴⁶Ibid

⁴⁷Ibid

⁴⁸Ibid

⁴⁹Ibid

⁵⁰Ibid

⁵¹Ibid

⁵²Ibid

⁵³Ibid

III.Results

In this part of our work , we have shed light on the results achieved from our comparative study of the two novels Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) and Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) , in which we explored the issue of motherhood as a case study

This comparative study have revealed that although the two novels were published in distinctly different times ,cultures and nations ,they share common objectives. Both of them aim at the rejection of all those traditions ,norms and cultural practices which are prejudiced toward women, and effect the patriarchal domination which violates women's rights. Moreover , both of them refuse the discourse of motherhood, which is seen as a condition of woman's existence. More precisely, both authors repudiate the stereotype that women achieve their full position only when they become mothers

In addition, Emecheta's and Chopin's novels were driven through their own experiences as women and mothers under harsh societies. Hence, they have devoted her works to the idea of empowering and enlightening women, and revising and re-examining the way history portrays them . In addition, they transmit all their liberal thoughts to help women in general and mothers in particular assert their individuality and find true liberation.For this reason ,we find that the feminist theory of Adrienne Rich developed in her book *Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976) is adequate to our study, since it reveals all forms of discrimination against women and mothers and eliminate those bad pictures assigned to them .

IV. Discussion

The following section of this paper involves three chapters that extend the issue of our research. Motherhood in *the Awakening* and *the Joys of Motherhood*. The first chapter consists of a brief analysis of the issue of motherhood in term of women's independence in relation to the two novels. The second one is about the analysis of different literary devices that reveal the issue of motherhood in both novels, including, characters and symbolism to highlight the impact of motherhood's institution in patriarchal societies on women. The last chapter of our thesis explores the influence of the father's power on mother characters in the *Awakening* and *The Joys of Motherhood*.

Chapter one: The Effects of Patriarchy on Motherhood in The Nineteenth America and Twentieth Africa in *The Awakening* and *The Joys of Motherhood*

This chapter deals with the influence of patriarchy on motherhood in both American and African societies as it is presented in both novels. It is about the way the institution of motherhood influences American and African women's lives, mother women's identity in the nineteenth century American society and twentieth century African society affects women's independence. In *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin and *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emechita, it reveals how motherhood affects women's role in society.

1. The Effects of Patriarchy on Motherhood in *The Awakening*

In the following section, we study the way in which patriarchal system influences mothers lives of twentieth century America, and the way Kate Chopin through her novel *The Awakening* could illustrate the negative effects of patriarchy on the experience of motherhood including women's loss of independence during the late of nineteenth century, and the way mothers of this era react, either by obedience or resistance to the institution of motherhood.

a. Women's Loss of Independence in *The Awakening*

The late of nineteenth century in America was characterized by the emergence of a new category of women, known by their feminist ideology about the role of American women in society. This category of women which Kate Chopin highlights in her novella *The Awakening* is named 'the new woman'.

Kate Chopin, in her novella, portrays the two categories of women in the nineteenth century America (the traditional and the new woman). Her aim is to reject the ideas of the Victorian patriarchal society, that impose on these women to perform a single female role under the mother women identity. In fact, Edna Pontellier is presented in the beginning as the obedient mother wife. However, she was quickly inspired by Mrs Reitz who is childless and single, spending her time in enjoying her artistic life. Therefore, Edna admires the independent life of Mrs Reitz and her early rejection to her role as mother. She decides to let her emotions and desires guide her actions to follow her personal destiny in life, which her children had prevented for her before. It is said by the author that "The children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her; who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days"¹ In this quotation, Kate Chopin through Edna illustrates the way motherhood enslaved and muffled the Victorian woman. Thus, the characters search for a self liberation from Victorian

motherhood. The rejection of the Victorian ideas Make Edna as well as her friend Mrs Reitz adhere to the category of new women;The New woman is a term used by the Irish writer Sarah Grind in 1894 to refer to a group of American women, who reject the traditional Victorian ideals toward women's role in society. They seek for a radical change and the independence of women². These women claim the equality of man and women in all fields. The aim of this movement is to set a new ideology that supports women's independence from male authority and Victorian ideals. Among the ideas they pointed out, the right for women to refuse and abandon marriage and childbearing, with having a complete freedom concerning their bodies and souls.

The second category of the nineteenth century American women is the traditional women. This type of women had a complete adaptation from the Victorian ideals, to perform their womanhood in a time when it is limited by the fact of being obedient mother women. That is the only quality which defines the goodness of a women. Kate Chopin's distinction between her characters Adele Ratignolle and her protagonist Edna, she gives an image which highlights this category of the traditional Victorian woman. Unlike Edna pontellier, Adele Ratignolle is presented as a woman who chose to live her life as a traditional woman. This is by puttig herself in the service of her children. The author says in the novel " even in Grand Isle, when Edna convinces Adele to leave the children behind for a walk on the beach, Madame Ratignolle cannot be induced to relinquish a diminutive roll of needlework"³. From this quotation we learn that Adele Ratignolle is faithful to her role as a mother. It proves that her children are the most important element in her life.

In the novel, these two characters representing two different types of women in nineteenth century America, can provide the reader with a deeper understanding about these categories. Kate Chopin writes:

In short, Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman. The mother-women seemed to prevail that summer at Grand Isle. It was easy to know them, fluttering about with extended, protecting wings when any harm, real or imaginary, threatened their precious brood. They were women who idolized their children, worshiped their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels.⁴

Mrs. Pontellier in the above quotation opposes the Victorian ideals about motherhood. While at the Grand Isle, she did not seem like those Victorian women who idealize their children, she is rather an independent woman, who refuses to subordinate her womanhood to motherhood.

The above quotation is used by Chopin to demonstrate the two categories of women during the nineteenth century, and say that the category of independent women are marginalized by the nineteenth American society, this is illustrated by the case of Edna, who refuses to sacrifice herself to gain her “mother-woman’s identity”⁵. Moreover, the excessive care of traditional women for their children could be seen through Chopin’s choice of words such as, religious words “worshiped”, that is used to portray the enslavement of the Victorian women by their husbands. Furthermore, the description of women as “angels”, is used to highlight the way in which the Victorian society of the late nineteenth century glorifies women, who sacrifice themselves to serve their children and cherish them.

Additionally, Ratignolle, in *The Awakening*, is used by Kate Chopin to show the other category of Victorian women, who chose to live within social codes imposed on them. Chopin writes “Madame Ratignolle had been married for seven years. About every two years she had a baby. At that time she had three babies, and was beginning to think of a fourth one. She was always talking about her condition.”⁶ This quotation, reflects the significance of giving birth for women during the nineteenth century in America. As Jennifer Gray explains, “Adele’s identity immersed not only in marriage but also in motherhood”⁷. Chopin’s illustration of Adele’s marriage, is made to criticize the influence of traditional women under patriarchal ideas about

marriage during the nineteenth century America, In a period when marriage is considered as a tool to become mothers and preserve their identity as mother women. Thus Madam Ratignolle is used as a sample of these women . Her marriage should be followed by childrearing, in order to assume the Victorian assumptions ,that say that a good woman is the one who marries to have children to serve them .Consequently, according to her, women in this way are considered as machines for reproduction, regardless of their feelings and emotions. In other words, she considers the marriage under the Victorian assumptions as discrimination against woman's rights. because they had no choice, which results in the absence of independence.

Through the protagonist Edna. Chopin describes the transitional process of an emancipated woman, who reconstruct their identity from mother woman to independent ones. Chopin writes:

Edna tried to appease her friend, to explain. "I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I a beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me."⁸

The category of new women during the late of nineteenth century reappears in the above quotation. Edna reveals that her love her children is undoubted, but different from that of the other women of her society. She loves them in a way she desires and not in a way that society imposes on her. Chopin ,in this quotation, wants to say that the independent women during the nineteenth century in America , refused to provide of their children the “ unconditional love”⁹ which results a total abandonnement for themselves. These new women start to understand that the fact that they care about their happiness more than their children is an every woman's right, rather an error to lose their only identity .

Andrienne Rich, in her book *Of Women Born Motherhood As Experience And Institution*, criticizes the fact that childrearing in both societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is

destined only for women. She argues, “the nineteenth and twentieth century of mother and children immured together in the home, the specialization of motherhood for women, the separation of the home from man’s world.”¹⁰ She assumes that motherhood in these societies has two meanings. The first is the biological relationship which consists of that natural bound between the mother and her children. Whereas the second is institutionalized by male domination, who relates motherhood to a set of oppressive acts ,which prevent women’s self independence .She says:

Throughout this book I try to distinguish between two meaning of motherhood, one superimposed on the other :the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and children and the institution which aims at ensuring that potential and all women. shall remain under male control.¹¹

The above quotation shows that Andrienne Rich shares the same critical view with Kate Chopin as well as Buchi Emechita, about the institutionalization of mother by patriarchal ideas.

b.The Power of the Father in *The Awakening*

In the *Awakening*, Kate Chopin introduces her male protagonist Pontellier as a perfect husband in the Victorian era. That is to say that Leonce Pontellier performs certain different behavior in the way he treats his wife Edna, comparing to the other husbands of nineteenth century America. Leonce Pontellier is a worthy man who offers a comfortable life for his wife and children. He loves his children ,and he is kind with his wife Edna, as it is mentioned in the novel:

By the standards of his day, Leonce Pontellier is the perfect husband. This guy makes a good living and is a popular figure in society. He gives Edna plenty of money, indulges her hobbies, and even sends her care packages packed with goodies¹²

The kindness of Leonce Pontellier does not prevent him having have a position of power over his wife Edna, whom he considers as his property. Kate Chopin writes:

He reproached his wife with her inattention, her habitual neglect of the children. If it was not another's place to look after children, whose on earth was it? He himself had his hands full with his brokerage business. He could not be in two places at once; making a living for his family on the street, and staying at home to see that no harm befell them. He talked in a monotonous, insistent way¹³

In this quotation Leonce Pontellier's reaction when he discovers that his wife Edna shows a certain neglect for her children, illustrates his dominance over her. When he finds that his wife did not perform her motherhood in a way he expected, he does not ask her for the reason she could not take care of them, as she had done in the past, but he directly judges her with an expression which shows his disregard for her. The above quotation could be also considered as an evidence which demonstrates that Leonce Pontellier's power over his wife allows him to evaluate and control Edna's motherhood.

Kate Chopin aims in this quotation to illustrate the "powerful and powerless"¹⁴ dichotomy of Adrienne Rich during the nineteenth century America. She shows that the patriarchal views about motherhood make even the kindest of the Victorian fathers feel this power over the mother of their children, and that women are enslaved by motherhood due to this power. Leonce Pontellier's reaction towards Edna's neglect of her children shows her powerlessness caused by motherhood within patriarchal society. She is presented as a weak human being with one single job. That of taking care of children.

The negative reaction of Edna does not just prove the power of Leonce Pontellier over her, but it proves also the way this power is harmful on her. Chopin writes:

The tears came so fast to Mrs. Pontellier's eyes that the damp sleeve of her peignoir no longer served to dry them. She was holding the back of her chair with one hand; her loose sleeve had slipped almost to the shoulder of her uplifted arm. Turning, she thrust her face, steaming and wet, into the bend of her arm, and she went on crying there, not caring any longer to dry her face, her eyes, her arms. She could not have told why she was crying. Such experiences as the foregoing were not uncommon in her married life. They seemed never before to have weighed much against the abundance of her husband's kindness and a uniform devotion which had come to be tacit and self-understood¹⁵

The author, in this quotation, describes Edna's shock after her husband's blame to her by the lack of responsibility towards her children, because Edna does not wait such a reaction from her husband, who is often kind and lovable with her "such experience as the foregoing were not uncommon in her married life"¹⁶. After the tragic scene Edna experienced, she does not answer her husband. Rather, she has chosen to cry in loneliness and try to deaden her pains by these tears. Thus, Chopin, refers to the words 'cry and tears' to show Edna's weakness in front of her husband's power.

The purpose of author's description for the emotional state of Edna is to illustrate the deep effect of the power that fathers in a patriarchal society have towards their wives and that. Motherhood becomes oppressive from this power that the father gains from patriarchal assumptions about the issue.

In the third chapter of her essay entitled "the kingdom of the father"¹⁷, Adrienne Rich criticizes the power of man over women. She argues that this power is attached to men's fatherhood, and that this power enslaves women. She claims, "However the man first have obtained power over the woman as mother, this power has become different through our society in terms of that first sexual enslavement"¹⁸. According to her, the male dominance over women is created from the patriarchal assumption, which in turn, results in the weakness of the mothers. This is shown through her limited role of bearing and rearing children. She declares :

“power is both a primal word and primal relationship under patriarchy, through the control of the mother, the man assures himself of possession of his children; through control of his children he assures the disposition of his patrimony and the safe passage of his soul after death”¹⁹ In this quotation, Rich means that without the institutionalization of motherhood by patriarchal ideas, the power of the father would never exist.

2.The Effects of Patriarchy on Motherhood in *The Joys of Motherhood*

The second section of the first chapter is about the way in which patriarchal system influences mothers lives of twentieth century Africa, and the way kate chopin through her novel the Awakening could illustrate the negative effects of patriarchy on the experience of motherhood including the loss of independence and the power of the father during the late of twentieth century, and the way mothers of this era react , either by obedience or resistance to the institution of motherhood.

a.Women's Loss of Independence in *The Joys of Motherhood*

The Joys Of Motherhood, as an autobiography of the Nigerian writer Buchi Emechita portrays the life of African woman in the Igbo traditional society of twentieth century. The novel emphasizes the value of childbearing and motherhood at a time when gender roles were determined by traditions and patriarchy. In *the Joys Of Motherhood*, Nnu ego reflects the way in which the Igbo society venerates the fertile woman, especially those who have boys. Thus, giving birth to a male child makes the twentieth century African woman considered luckier. Adaku said to Nnu ego “I see you have given your husband a son. It's not very common for people to have sons for the first baby. You are very lucky.”²⁰ Whereas the barren ones symbolize a incomplete woman, who is symbol of immodesty for her family and society.

Nnu ego is a submissive women who relates her Joys to motherhood .She refers to it as “the greatest joy of my life”²¹ as the majority of twentieth century African women in general and the Ibo ones in particular .Nnu ego during her first marriage did not succeed to assure her role as an Igbo women because of her failure to be pregnant.Emechita writes “Nnu Ego was surprised that, as the months passed, she was failing everybody. There was no child”²² this results in her

separation from her husband. Her nightmare of bareness has continued in her second marriage. When she eventually becomes pregnant, she unfortunately loses her baby Ngozi after few days of his birth. This tragic incident created in her terrible emotional pains. The author said “She had not felt inclined to do any kind of trading after Ngozi's death”²³, her dream is later on realized by giving birth to her first son and many other children. Emechita writes:

"When a woman is virtuous, it is easy for her to conceive. You shall soon see her children coming here to play," Agbadi said with assurance. Nnu Ego and her new husband Amatokwu were very happy; yet Nnu Ego was surprised that, as the months passed, she was failing everybody. There was no child. "What am I going to do, Amatokwu?" she cried to her husband, after the disappointment of another month. "Just make sacrifices to that slave woman, and pay your father a visit"²⁴

In this quotation, Emechita was attentive to illustrate the importance of fertility of women in the eyes of the people in the Igbo traditional society. After her first marriage, the protagonist Nnu ego was expected by her family and family in law to become pregnant as soon as possible. She says: “but with the time passed she became worry as she said face my father and tell him that I have failed? I don't like going there these days because his wives always rush out to greet me hoping that I am already carrying a child. You can see the disappointment on their faces”²⁵. She knew that without this pregnancy, her identity would be in danger, because according to Igbo a real woman is only the one who can have children, so she began to lose her happiness. Emechita, in this quotation, highlights the enormous impact of Igbo tradition on gender roles and women's identity, which is determined by her ability to conceive and become mothers. She criticizes the Igbo tradition that led twentieth century African women to relate their joy and happiness to motherhood. For instance, while Nnu ego waiting for her happiness from her pregnancy, she said, “God, let this child stay with me and fulfill all these my future hopes and joys”²⁶. her identity of mother woman is considered as the only goal to be accomplished in the Igbo society.

The twentieth century African woman was also the victim of unwilling marriage. Hence, in patriarchal societies the husband is chosen by the girl's father without asking for her decision. After the marriage, this woman belongs to her husband, as the case of Nnuego, who after her marriage to Nnaife, she becomes his property. She said, "He owns me, just like God in the sky owns us. So even though I pay the fees, yet he owns me"²⁷. Women's happiness is not taken into consideration by her society. Whereas, their fertility and motherhood represent the most important issues after their marriage. In the novel Buchi Emechita writes:

Nnaife laughed cynically and remarked: "I wonder what good father would take his pregnant daughter back into his home, just because his son-in-law's job doesn't suit her? Your father is well known for his traditional principles. I'd like to see his face when you tell him you don't like the second husband he has chosen for you, especially since your *chi* has consented to the marriage by making you pregnant. If you were not pregnant, it might be more understandable."²⁸

The author, in this quotation, depicts the importance of marriage in the twentieth century African patriarchal society. She denounces the oppression caused by the 20thC African society that prohibits for women all kinds of self independence, including their choice of marriage. In fact, when the main character Nnu ego had her second husband Nnaife, it was her father's choice which she had to accept without her willing. The limited choices that the twentieth century African women had could be seen also in Nnu ego's concretization of her dream to become pregnant with a husband she didn't love and find unsuitable for her. Nnaife himself confesses it. He says: "Oh, my God! Poor woman. She endures me only because of this child, you know. She thinks I'm ugly. She hates me, she has always hated me."²⁹ Despite the fact that Nnu ego marries a man she does not like, she thought that it is her duty to accept him, because thanks to him she can succeed in realizing her identity as a mother woman. Nnu ego said "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?"³⁰. The author's aim to highlight this idea is to say that the twentieth century African

women are not just obliged to be mothers, but also to have children with husbands they didn't chose.

In other words, Emechita portrays the way motherhood in the nineteenth century African society is more important than women's happiness, and in which the traditions are the source of these patriarchal laws which make motherhood as an oppressive institution during this period.

b. The Power of the Father in *The joys of Motherhood*

Buchi Emechita, in the *Joys Of Motherhood*, portrays the way in which the man's power over his wife increases when he becomes a father, whatever his job is. While, the hardships that Igbo women experience during their motherhood are extremely ignored. His children became not just a source of his pride and honor, but they are also symbols for his kinship in his family. The character Nnaife represents this powerful father in Igbo. Nnaife's shameful job did not prevent him to remain in a higher position of power over his wife Nnu ego, who works hard for her children. Emechita writes:

deas, the power of the father would never exist.

"And what of Oshia? Do you want to lose him as you lost Ngozi, while you're looking for money? Who is going to take care of him when you go out to sell your stuff?" "Listen, Nnaife, at times I don't know what to make of you ..." "We've heard that too often, so don't say it again. I'm not an ideal husband, I am not like your father, I am not like your former husband. Oh, I know all about that. But, woman, you have to look after your child. That at least is a woman's job."³¹

The father Nnaife in this quotation confesses by himself that he is not an ideal husband, "I am not an ideal husband, I am not like your former husband. oh I know about that"³². Yet, he does not hesitate to disgrace his wife by addressing her an expression which proves his patriarchal view of motherhood "you have to look after your child". This expression is not just an evidence of Nnu

ego's meprise from her husband, but it is a proof that the latter's fatherhood veiled his bad qualities as a man. Eventhough Nnu ego is the one who cares and works for their children ,Nnaife is still the head of the family. This means that the power of men in the Igbo patriarchal society depends just on his fatherhood, and not on the way he cares for the children.

Buchi Emechita in the above quotation criticizes the way the Igbo patriarchal society glorifies the man just because he is a father, and marginalizes the efforts of African women .

The father's power and the powerlessnessness of mother in the Igbo society as well as the effects of this power on women's role is again shown by Emechita. She writes

In Ibuza sons help their father more than they ever help their mother. A mother's joy is only in the name. She worries over them, looks after them when they are small; but in the actual help on the farm, the upholding of the family name, all belong to the father ...³³

In this quotation, the author highlights the way mothers lived under the repression of their husband's authority. She argues that this repression affects even their children. Thus, in this quotation she depicts the possession of their husband to everything from the family, including their children. These children, who have been the only hope and joy for women in ibuza "Amother's joy is only in the name"³⁴ belong no more to their mother, who sacrificed themselves for them Emechita says about Nnu ego "she worries over them looks after them when they are small"³⁵. That is to say there is no reward from children to their mothers, due to the power of their fathers.

The aim of the author in highlighting the influence of patriarchal ideas on man's authority in Igbo society is to give an image of the negative effects of the father's power on Igbo women's motherhood in the twentieth century Africa. Emechita purpos in illustrating the ignorance of the Igbo patriarchal society of mother's sacrifices for their children. Moreover, the children are prevented by patriarchal system to glorify their mother's suffering for them during their childhood, Rather, they belong to their powerful fathers. This father's power is than another evidence of African's woman discrimination under the patriarchal system .

Kate Chopin and Buchi Emechita, referring to the negative effects of motherhood during the nineteenth century America, and twentieth century Africa respectively to illustrate the way in which motherhood has taken the primary place in patriarchal societies. Women's right within this kind of societies come always at the end. The great importance attributed to mother women identity, led women of nineteenth century America and twentieth century Africa to neglect their independence, in addition to the place of father as the powerful member in the family regardless his role, which create different emotional and physical pains on women in general and mothers in particular. Thus, the next chapter will be an illustration of these sufferings.

Endnotes

¹ *New woman* ,retrieved from https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Woman. Accessed on 6 December 2020.

² *The Awakening* ,retrived from <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/awakening/quotes/character/edna-pontellier/>. Accessed on 10 December 2020.

³ Matić Marina, *The idea of womanhood in the contemporary American literature*. Josip Juraj Strossmayer (University of Osijek, 2012) . 07.

⁴ Öznur Yemez, *Loss of Self and the Struggle for Individuality in Kate Chopin's The Awakening* (Selcuk University, 2013). 04.

⁵ Matić Marina, *The idea of womanhood in the contemporary American literature*. Josip Juraj Strossmayer (University of Osijek, 2012). 07.

⁶ Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Other stories* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003). 08-09.

⁷ Ibid, 09.

⁸ Matić Marina, *The idea of womanhood in the contemporary American literature*. Josip Juraj Strossmayer (University of Osijek, 2012). 20.

⁹ Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman born :Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (W. W. Norton Company, 1996).

¹⁰ Ibid, 46.

¹¹ Ibid, 13.

¹² Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Other stories* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003). 06.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman born :Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (W. W. Norton Company, 1996).

¹⁵ Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Other stories* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003).

¹⁶Ibid

¹⁷Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman born :Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (W. W. Norton Company,1996). 62.

¹⁸Ibid

¹⁹Ibid

²⁰Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (London: Heinmann,1979). 86.

²¹Ibid

²²Ibid

²³Ibid

²⁴Ibid

²⁵Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (London: Heinmann, 1979). 53.

²⁶Ibid, 50.

²⁷K. S. Nithiyaa, *A Study on the Irony of the Title: The Joys of Motherhood by Buchi Emecheta*. Accessed on (June 2018.www. language in India.com). 04.

²⁸Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood. London* (Heinmann, 1979). 80.

²⁹Ibid, 31.

³⁰Ibid, 52

³¹Ibid, 127

³² K.S. Nithiyaa, *A Study on the Irony of the Title: The Joys of Motherhood by BuchiEmecheta*. Accessed on (June 2018.www.language in India.com). 04.

³³Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (London: Heinmann, 1979). 50.

³⁴Ibid, 71.

³⁵Ibid, 53.

Chapter two : Literary Devices Illustrating the Issue of Motherhood in *The Awakening* and *The Joys of Motherhood*

The second chapter of our thesis involves the analysis of literary devices, within both novels in relation to motherhood. In this chapter, we tend to examine characters that are developed in a same way by both authors. The purpose behind it, is to extend our understanding about the common meaning that could exist in both novels about the motherhood in both the American and African societies, and to show how characters could be an useful for better exploration to the issue of motherhood in Chopin's *The Awakening* and Emechita's *The Joys Of Motherhood*. It is also about the analysis of the symbolic imagery that exist in both novels. Through these literary devices our work could be analysed by a hidden study to the issue of motherhood, and the way it is developed by both the American and African authors Kate Chopin and Buchi Emechita.

1. Characters in *The Awakening* and *The Joys of Motherhood*

Kate Chopin, through Adele Ratignolle in *The Awakening*, and Buchi Emechita through Nnu ego in *The Joys of Motherhood*, represent the degree of love that women in the Victorian American society and the Igbo one have towards their children. These characters show the way this love could cause negative effect on their lives, because of their exaggeration in taking care of their children. This love, in fact, results to a total abandonment of themselves.

a-Adele Ratignolle in *The Awakening*

In *The Awakening*, Adele Ratignolle is presented as a woman whose love for her children is unconditional. Her role in the novel is static, she is presented as mother women, who spends her time to assure the safety of her children. She considers the fact of taking care of her children as

her only calling, or work . her body is designed for child rearing and bearing, which make her different from the protagonist Edna despite their friendship , Chopin writes:

I don't know what you would call the essential, or what you mean by the essential", said Madame Ratignolle, cheerfully, but a woman who would give her life for her children could no more than that your bible tells you so I am sure I couldn't do more than that.¹

In the above quotation ,Adele's answer to Edna shows the way she cannot understand her friend's language, because of the difference in their way of thinking. When Edna says to her, that she would no more give her life for her children, Adele finds it not normal ,because her life belongs to her children ,which means that Adele represents the ideal of nineteenth century womanhood in performing and maintaining unconditional love towards her children.

In The quotation, Chopin, through her character Adele, wants to say that the unconditional love for children is part of the mother women's identity in a patriarchal society .Furthermore, the author highlights women's lack of self independence because of motherhood under the patriarchal assumptions.

The unconditional love is again shown by Adele Ratignolle ,from her reaction, while giving birth to her baby, Kate Chopin writes

She was stunned and speechless with emotion when later she leaned over her friend to kiss her and softly say good-by.Adele, pressing her cheek, whispered in an exhausted voice, "think of the children, Edna,oh think of the children! Remember them!"²

In this quotation, Adele is giving birth to her baby with her friend Edna next to her. The enormous physical pain which every woman experiences during the delivery, does not stop her to think about children, as she orders her friend to think about them .This proves that the unconditional love of Adele for her children steal not just her body but even her mind.

Chopin ,in this quotation, refers to Adele in order to illustrate the enormous influence of the

Victorian patriarchal ideas on women's mind concerning their children. The aim of the author is to criticize the influence of Victorian patriarchal ideas on women's mind, this influence according to her, drives women of this era to give an excessive love for their children which in turn results in a complete neglect of themselves.

Andrienne Rich, In her book *Of Women Born: Motherhood As Experience and Institution*, shows her Feminist ideology about the type of love which women in patriarchal societies have towards their children which she calls "The unconditional love"³ The later means the love without boundaries. For her, mothers love for their children is considered as a normal subject in human nature. However, the abusive unconditional love is beyond this human nature .It is rather conventional by the patriarchal society ,which typically results in a loss of self . She points out

"Mothers are the causes of each other suffering.Iwas haunted by the sterotype of mother whose love is unconditional;and by the visualand litrary images of motherhoodas a single-minded identity.if I knew parts of my self existedthat would never coher to those images."⁴

In This quotation, Rich argues that she regrets giving the unconditional love for her children ,because she thought that all her sufferings were due to this love.

b-Nnu ego in *The Joys of Motherhood*

In *The Joys of motherhood*, Nnu ego represents the African woman in Igbo society , "Nnu ego in her first marriage ,failed to accomplish her joy of being a mother in a society"⁵where women could not be considered complete ,until they had have children.When her identity of a mother women is eventually realized, after her second marriage, her soul and body become the property of her children. Emechita writes, "She was not only the mother of her boys, but the spiritual and the

natural mother of this household”⁶.She spends her time in rearing and bearing children and forgets to take care of herself. This excessive attention to her children come from her love to them ,as she wants to reward all that emptiness she experienced during her infertility. The author says “On her way back to their room, it occurred to Nnu Ego that she was a prisoner, imprisoned by her love for her children”⁷.It is, then, noticeable that Nnu ego has that unlimited love for her children which Adrienne Rich called the unconditional love. Buchi Emechita writes:

promptly Madam brought out a lot of old babies' clothes which she had brought with her from her last visit to England. Nnu Ego was grateful, for even though they were old they were clean, and so beautiful and soft were they that she forgot her pride and accepted them gladly. She forgot that in her culture only slaves accepted worn⁸

The above quotation shows the way Nnu ego loves her children. When the English woman provides her by baby clothes ,Nnu ego did not hesitate to accept them, because she knew that her children are in need of these clothes. Even though her culture considers such incident as a decline for woman’s pride, and make her dignity in question, she accepts to sacrifice all her values for her children’s comfort. Nnu ego thinks only about her children’s needs and forget her pride which proves her unconditional love toward her children.

Emechita uses her character Nnu ego to portray that motherhood in Igbo society characterized by the unconditional love of women for their children. This unconditional love, created by patriarchal assumptions, makes the women in such societies care about their children more than themselves.

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nnu ego represents the Igbo women, who considers motherhood as the greatest achievement in their lives . Her children are the only reason of her existence. Hence, the birth of her first child Ngozy, creates on her a great emotion of joy, which raises in her soul an abnormal love towards him ,the birth of Ngozy makes her feel as a real woman for the first time in her life , “the name of Nnu Ego’s first child, *Ngozi*, meaning “blessing’ reflects in part Nnu Ego’s appreciation of her good fortune at having escaped the infertility that plagued her in her first

marriage”⁹. Her joy even creates a certain love to the father of Ngozi whom she had never loved before. She says “He has made me into a real woman---all I want to be, woman and a mother. So why should I hate him”¹⁰. Unfortunately, Nnu ego’s joys of motherhood is interrupted by the death of Ngozi. Thus, all the positive emotions she had have on him become a huge disillusionment which led her to try suicide, Emechita writes:

Nnu Ego pulled herself out of her negative thoughts. She must go and put her house in order, prepare the midday meal. Three months after Nwakusor had rescued her from the Carter Bridge, she found it so much easier to dream of all that might have been than of what might still happen. Many a time she regretted being saved: "If only that wretched beggar-man had not stopped me, I would have been under the Lagos waters long before Nwakusor showed up." She had to face the fact that not only had she failed as a mother, she had failed in trying to kill herself and had been unable even to do that successfully¹¹

In this quotation, Nnu ego is still thinking about her dead son Ngozi. Even after three months of his death, she cannot forget him. She wishes she could jump from the Carter Bridge before Nwakusor arrives to save her. Her unconditional love for her son makes her a weak woman. His birth is for her the beginning of her existence. Whereas, his death represents the end of her hopes because of her belief that this child is the only sense for her identity.

Buchi Emechita, through Nnu ego illustrates the negative effect of unconditional love. The author agrees with Adrienne Rich concerning her view about the negative effects of unconditional love for children on women’s psyche which she adopts from motherhood defined by patriarchy. Emechita used her main character to illustrate the negative effect of this unconditional love on Igbo women’s life.

2-Imagery in *The Awakening* and *Joys of Motherhood*

In addition to the female characters Adele in *The Awakening*, and *The Joys of Motherhood*, imagery has significance in the two novels in describing the life of women under the institution of motherhood. The bird and the sea in *The Awakening*, the breast milk and the child in *The Joys of Motherhood* are literary devices used by Chopin and Emechita respectively to give an image of the physical and emotional pains caused by motherhood to women of patriarchal societies.

a-The Significance of the Bird and the Sea in *the Awakening*

The bird and the sea are two repeated symbols in *The Awakening*, used by Kate Chopin to represent the oppression of nineteenth century American women under patriarchal laws. The role of women in this society has been determined as mother woman. Chopin's imagery could depict the real feelings of these women towards motherhood. In this novel, the bird and the sea reflect Edna's situation within her role as a mother for her two children, carrying her hope for freedom and self realization. The sea represents Edna's rebirth to a new life of freedom, and independence far from social instructions. Moreover, it symbolizes her discovery of her new strength. The bird symbolizes the unspoken and the veiled psychical situation of Edna, while, performing her motherhood as the Victorian society expects on women. Chopin writes:

A green and yellow parrot, which hung in a cage outside the door, kept repeating over and over: "Allezvous-en! Allezvous-en! Spirits! That's all right!" He could speak a little Spanish, and also a language which nobody understood, unless it was the mocking-bird that hung on the other side of the door, whistling his fluty notes out upon the breeze with maddening persistence¹²

Chopin begins her novel by the above quotation, in which she describes a bird jailed in a cage repeating an incomprehensible language. Through the bird, she gives an image of her main character's situation. She is imprisoned and muffled by societal laws, that provide her by a limited

role as a mother, enslaved by her children for the rest of her life. The parrot's incomprehensible language symbolizes Edna's feelings about herself. She feels oppression that no one in her surroundings can see on her, because unlike her, they are submissive to social codes. For this, she is considered by her society one of those privileged women who is a wife for a wealthy man and a mother for three children. However, Edna's status prevents her from happiness. She feels that she is an encaged woman inside motherhood, a woman who is in search of a self-independence. Chopin uses this imagery in order to illustrate the silent oppression felt by women of nineteenth century America.

The bird is again used by Kate Chopin to symbolize the way in which Edna has to be strong in her struggle against the societal laws. She writes, "The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings. It is a sad spectacle to see the weaklings bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth."¹³ In this quotation, the author uses the bird as a symbolic imagery to describe the need of Edna for a great strength to escape her identity as a mother, and find her independence, she is in need of force to liberate herself from motherhood. Like the bird needs to have strong wings in order to fly.

This imagery is used by the author to portray the oppression that women of Victorian era faced when performing motherhood in the patriarchal society. In fact, She is against the inequality between men and women that led nineteenth century American woman to have limited choices concerning their independence.

In addition to the bird, the sea is another repeated literary device, which illustrates Edna's attempt to remote from the oppressive motherhood, she had experienced in her society. For this, She writes:

A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before.¹⁴

The sea is a major symbol in *The Awakening*. It reflects Edna's search for independence as Edna says "The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft"¹⁵. The quotation shows that, the sea symbolizes Edna's discovery of her body and soul. Thus, she considers the sea as a refuge to escape the repression of society. In the sea, she is no longer that woman enslaved by her children. Her body and soul belong no more to her children. "With swimming she could feel the depth of the universe"¹⁶, which no woman in this era could realize. Chopin says, "she wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before"¹⁷. That is to say Kate Chopin refers to the sea in her novel to highlight the importance for the Victorian women to seek their freedom to have their place in society by reconstructing their identity as normal human, not object, with limited options in a society ruled by patriarchy. Similarly, Adrienne Rich believes that women who lived in societies where motherhood is performed according to patriarchal expectation, make them suffer from pains. This is due to different women belong to these societies different physical and psychological suffering due to the hard responsibilities they have toward their children and their lack of self independence. She states:

The physical and psychic weight of responsibility on the women with children is by far the heaviest of social burdens. It cannot be compared with slavery or sweated labor because the emotional bonds between a woman and her children make her vulnerable in ways which the forced labor does not know.¹⁸

The psychic pains from motherhood created by patriarchal ideas, was studied by Adrienne Rich, which Kate Chopin illustrates through her symbolic imagery of the bird and the seas, similarly, Emechita highlights the physical pains of the institution of motherhood.

b-The Significance of The Child and Breast Milk in *The Joys of Motherhood*

The significance of the child and breast milk in *The Joys Of Motherhood* are symbols of the daily suffering of African women .Buchi Emechita, in her novel, emphasizes, these symbols to give a better exploration of the major theme of motherhood in the eyes of her readers. Hence, both symbols illustrate the suffering that the African women in general and Igbo ones in particular experience under their motherhood ,and the way the latter is important for them, even though it is the source of their sacrifice.

When reading *The Joys of Motherhood* attentively, the child could be seen as a reflection of Igbo women's hardships in the eyes of the reader. It reflects the way that the Igbo society appreciate the woman who give birth to many children , Buchi Emechita writes:

When Adaku had her own baby weeks later, Nnaife was happier because the new wife gave him a son. Unfortunately for everybody the baby boy did not live for more than a few weeks. He died of convulsions. The death of the baby sent Adaku into deep depression. She became almost impossible to live with. She blamed everybody and everything for her loss¹⁹

In this quotation, the child symbolizes the value of women that is almost absent in the Igbo society. Women in this African tribe are considered useful only for delivery and giving birth to an enormous number of children, especially male ones .Moreover, the child symbolizes the common destiny of Igbo women in Igbo society. Children represent a complement for women's identity. their life is viewed as unjustified, unless they have had children. Thus, these abstract notions of motherhood influenced Nnaife's second wife ,who is supposed to have a baby boy. Yet, the death of her son creates on Adaku a deep emotional pain that results in her depression .Emechita referring to this symbol, highlights the negative effects of motherhood in Igbo's patriarchal society on women's psyche .

In the book's early chapters, the breast milk is another imagery. This symbol drives the reader's attention to recognize the degree of suffering that the African women experiences due to motherhood in a period when patriarchy had a remarkable influence on women's role in society. Emechita writes:

baby ... her baby! Nnu Ego's arms involuntarily went to hold her aching breasts, more for assurance of her motherhood than to ease their weight. She felt the milk trickling out, wetting her buba blouse; and the other choking pain got heavier, nearing her throat, as if determined to squeeze the very life out of her there and then²⁰

The above quotation contains the breast milk symbols that give the image of the Igbo women experiencing a harmful motherhood. Nnu ego in this quotation feels her breast paining because of the milk that is not released to feed her baby. For her, it does not matter that she feels such pains. What is essential for her is that she guarantees her motherhood. The aim of Buchi Emechita in using this imagery is to depict the physical pains that women in Igbo society suffer from. Buchi Emechita, then, wants to say that the physical sacrifices that these women offer to their children is another form of female discrimination in the Igbo patriarchal society that defines motherhood as the most important phase in women's life. Their body belongs only to their children.

After the analysis of the literary devices of both novels, we notice that both authors were attentive in the development of their characters and symbols, and that the difference of literary devices from a novel to another did not prevent as to notice the likeness in the messages that both authors wanted to transmit through characters and imagery. In fact this resemblance consists of, the hard experience of women for motherhood under patriarchal ideas which is illustrated by both characters, Adele Ratignolle in *The Awakening* and Nnu ego in *The Joys of Motherhood*, in addition to the imagery as the bird and the sea in *The Awakening*, illustrate the emotional suffering. Whereas the child and the breast milk in *The Joys of Motherhood* illustrate the physical pain, the women experienced from motherhood of patriarchal discourse, we learn mainly that these sufferings are due to the power of

the father that he gains from patriarchal assumptions .For this ,the last chapter of our work consist of the depiction of the effect of the father's power on motherhood throughout both novels *The awakening* and *The Joys of Motherhood*.

Endnotes

¹<https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/awakening/quotes/character/adle-ratignolle/> Accessed on 2020

²Matić Marina, *The idea of womanhood in the contemporary American literature* (JosipJurajStrossmayer University of Osijek,2012). 15.

³Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman born :Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (W. W. Norton Company,1996).

⁴Ibid, 23.

⁵Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (London: Heinmann ,1979). 123

⁶Ibid, 137.

⁷Ibid, 57.

⁸ Buchi Emechita, *The joys of motherhood*, retrieved from <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/joys-motherhood> Accessed on 10 December 2020

⁹Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (London: Heinmann,1979). 35.

¹⁰Ibid,p 72.

¹¹Zoila Clark, "*The Bird that Came out of the Cage: A Foucauldian Feminist Approach to KateChopin's The Awakening*" (Stony Brook University, 2008) Accessed on 21 October 2014

¹²ÖznurYemez, *Loss of Self and the Struggle for Individuality in Kate Chopin's The Awakening* (Selcuk University,2013). 01.

¹³Matić Marina, *The idea of womanhood in the contemporary American literature* (JosipJurajStrossmayer University of Osijek,2012). 21.

¹⁴D. M. R. BENTLEY(Oxford University Press , 2011). 04. Accessed on may 16,2015. [http://HYPERLINK \"http://nq.oxford/\"](http://HYPERLINK \)

¹⁵Kate Chopin,*The Awakening and Other stories.* : Cambridge: University Press,2003. p 06.

¹⁶Ibid

¹⁷Ibid

¹⁸Andrienne Rich. *Of Woman born :Motherhood as Experience and Institution.* W. W. Norton Company,1996.

¹⁹Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*. London: Heinmann, 1979. p 86.

²⁰*Ibid*

V. General conclusion

The Awakening By Kate Chopin and *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emechita, are novels in which the same critical view about the issue of motherhood is shared by both authors, despite their differences in historical, geographical and cultural context . *The Awakening* is a novel written by an american author ,which took place during the late of the nineteenth century in Louisiana. Whereas *The Joys of Motherhood* in a Nigerian Igbo society in the late 20thC 1989, it is written by an african author Buchi Emechita. However, the feminist perspective which links between two novels allowed us to discover numerous similarities which help in the study of both works.

Among the similarities between the two novels, that were helpful to extend the study of the major theme of our work is, is the patriarchal assumptions imposed on women to perform their motherhood, the latter led to a loss of self independence . Either in *The Awakening*, or *The Joys Of Motherhood*, women's body and soul are expected by both patriarchal societies of nineteenth century America and twentieth century Africa for childrearing and bearing. Furthermore, according to both authors the american as well as the african woman during these periods experienced the same oppression, because of their limited identity as mothers.

Another common point in *The Awakening* and *The Joys Of Motherhood* is the different physical and emotional pain that both American and African women experienced due to motherhood within patriarchal society. Moreover, both authors give image, of these sufferings throughout the use of imagery and the development of characters .

The last similarity that exists in *The Awakening* and *the Joys of Motherhood* is the father's power that men acquire from the patriarchal ideas. Thus, in *The Awakening* and *The Joys of Motherhood*, the authority of husband make the mother characters marginalized .This

discrimination performed against these female characters is an evidence of women's oppression in patriarchal societies.

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