

وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي  
Ministère De L'Enseignement Supérieur Et De La Recherche Scientifique.

UNIVERSITE MOULOU D MAMMERI DE TIZI-OUZOU  
FACULTE DES LETTRES E DES LANGUES  
DEPARTEMENT D'ANGLAIS



جامعة مولود معمري - تيزي وزو  
كلية الآداب و اللغات

**Domaine** : Lettres et Langues Etrangères.

**Filière** : Langue Anglaise.

**Spécialité** : Média et l'étude des cultures des pays Anglophones.

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements**

**For the Degree of Master in English**

**Title:**

**Traditions, polygamy and  
Education in Buchi Emecheta's  
*The Joys of Motherhood (1979)***

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**Promotion: September 2016.**

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N° de Série: .....

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## ***Dedications***

*First of all I will dedicate this research paper to my sweet and loving*

*Father & Mother, Hacene and Djedjigha*

*For their understanding and their overwhelming support morally and financially.*

*To My Grand Mothers, Dehbia and Joher*

*Who inspired me to be strong despite of many obstacles in life.*

*To my Sisters & Brother, Ouiza, Kahina, Lynda and Idir*

*For their eternal love.*

*To my Best Friends Yasmine, Fetta, Samiha, lilia and warda.*

***Noura***

*To my mother,*

*A strong and gentle soul who taught me to trust in Allah, believe in hard work, and that so much could be done with little.*

*To my father,*

*Whose encouragement and love make me able to get such success and honor.*

*To my two lovely sisters,*

*Zahra and kahina who are my nearest surroundings.*

*To my lovely cousin Taous,*

*Who provides me guidance and support.*

***Sonia***

## ***Acknowledgement***

*We would like to thank our supervisor **Mr. Belaid Afettouche** for his useful suggestions and advice all along our research work. We would like also to express our deepest gratitude to **Mrs. Larabi Sabeha** for her encouragement and support in completing this work in time.*

*We are also sincerely thankful to the members of examiners, **Mrs. Larabi Sabiha** and **Mrs. Bensafi Hassiba** that kindly accepted to examine our work. A special thanks to all the teachers of our department English for their guidance all along the Academic years. We would like also to thank our families who encourage us whenever we needed moral support.*

## **Abstract**

*This research paper studies the issues of Traditions, Polygamy and Education in Buchi Emecheta's The Joys of Motherhood (1979). To achieve our goal, we have relied on Alice Walker's theory of Womanism. Our work is made up of three chapters. In the first chapter, we have studied the issue of the conservative nature of the Igbo traditional culture that discriminate women and oppresses them. We have then shown the conditions of women and how the author liberates them from all kind of imprisonment. In the second chapter, we have analyzed the issue of polygamy or multiple marriages and men's authority over women. In the third chapter, we have exposed the educational system of the Nigerian society that condemns women and how the author defy gender inequality and oppression. After the provided analysis of The Joys of Motherhood, we have attained a conclusion that it represents all the elements that oppress women. The author struggles for the emancipation to give them a self- fulfillment and rehabilitate their position.*

**Keys words:** *Traditions, Polygamy, Education, Womanism, Motherhood, Oppression, Patriarchy, Gender Inequality, Women, Struggle, Condemns, Imprisonment, discriminate, liberate, Nigeria, Self- Fulfillment.*

## Introduction

The present piece of research explores the issues of Traditions, Polygamy and Education as depicted in the Nigerian post-colonial novelist Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979). The novel seeks to speak for the position of women who are multiply marginalized first by race and then by gender. Buchi Emecheta aims to rewrite the position of women and resist against all the patriarchal oppression and domination of the Igbo Nigerian culture. She attempts to highlight Black women suffering by native patriarchy and she goes further to give voice to all African women through her novel.

Modern African literature was dominated by the male-authored writers, however, it was written by African women too. Despite of the stereotypes that women are silent and oppressed, they have always been engaged in African Literature cultures as producers and as interesting subjects. Ama Atta Aidoo, Flora Nwopa and Buchi Emecheta are the most important figures who attempted to give voice to women and expose the situation of women within the African Patriarchal society. Lloyd Brown points out in his book *Women Writers in Black Africa* (1981) that women are excluded from African Literature. In the first pages of his book he explains how women were neglected and overlooked:

The women writers of Africa are the other voices, the unheard voices, rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and the predictably male-oriented studies in the field. Relatively few literary magazines and scholarly journals, in the West and in Africa itself, have found significant space or time for African women writers. The ignoring of women writers on the continent has become a tradition implicit rather formally stated, but a tradition nonetheless and a rather unfortunate one at that.<sup>1</sup>

This quotation explains that African female Writers are ignored from self-definition and self-expression, they are voiceless. It explains also that in most western continents, people are even not aware that female writers exist in Africa.

In our dissertation, we are concerned with post-colonial feminist novelist Buchi Emecheta, a Nigerian Writer born in 1944 in Lagos. Her major novels including *The Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976) *The Slave Girl* (1977), and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979). Most of her works focus on the role of women in the traditional patriarchal society. Our concern is her famous novel *The Joys of Motherhood*. Buchi Emecheta is one of the first African Women to address the issue of women's conditions. She attempts to give voice to the ignored silent women within the Igbo patriarchal society.

The author has been seen as feminist writer as she wrote about women and their lives issues. But she does not see herself as a feminist writer she herself declared:

Being a women, and African born, I see things through an African women's eyes. I chronicle the title of happiness in the lives of African women I know I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist then I am a feminist with a small f.<sup>2</sup>

She refused to be called a feminist because it includes a western discourse; she preferred to be called a Womanist as it is a movement for Black women.

Emecha struggles for the position of women and tries to liberate them from all kind of oppression and domination including the traditional beliefs that discriminate women, the polygamous and the educational system of oppression.

## a. Review of literature

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) has received substantial consideration of literary criticism. Barbara Christian, in her book *Black Feminist Criticism 1985*, argues that the protagonist Nnu Ego lives in a society, in which woman's identity is depicted in accordance to her relation with man, and determined on being a mother of many children. For instance, Nnu Ego never considers herself as a woman until she gets married and gives birth to sons. Barbara Christian points also out that the female protagonist's voice is completely suppressed, since she is forced to be submissive to her father, or her husband.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike mother's protagonist, Ona tries to escape from the traditions and the rules that society imposes on her<sup>4</sup>. The critic says that she tries to liberate herself from the restrictions and oppression. However, she fell down. As the critic assumes, this was due to the patriarchal customs of the Igbo society which states that the identity of a woman is presumed on being a mother, and giving birth to sons. Motherhood pushes her to surrender. Christian asserts that everyone agrees that the role of motherhood should be the domain of woman, no matter the skills and the talents she has, her primary function is motherhood.<sup>5</sup>

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* is handled as an insight into Nigerian's Pre-colonial and Post-colonial society. In this context, Andrade states: "The *Joys of Motherhood* affirms Efurū's claim that pre-colonial Igbo women had more independence than their colonized descendants".<sup>6</sup> Here, the author asserts that the status of women before colonialism in Igbo society matched the status of men. Then, He argues that Emecheta depicts the way into which colonialism brought changes in the Igbo society. British Colonialism affected negatively on the natives, especially women who were victims of male exploitation. The critic adds that women are

oppressed and marginalized in a society which gives great importance to men and child bearing, and preferably sons because they are the descendents. However, daughters serve only to mothering sons<sup>7</sup>.

Palmer says: “there will be many who will find Emecheta’s representations of female situation controversial; her presentation may not be able to stand up to sociological scrutiny”.<sup>8</sup> It seems that Palmer’s criticism is limited to African women in Buchi Emechat’s novel as superficial and fictional.

## **b. Issue and Working Hypothesis**

From our review of some of the existing literature on Emecheta and her work, we have noticed that the novel have received considerable literary attention. It is also apparent that most previous criticism is basically from the feminist point of view. Our contribution is based on the Hypothesis and assumptions that Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* is also rich for the themes of Traditions, Polygamy and Education which though partly feminist, they remain social and cultural issues. Therefore, the aim of this analysis is to focus on Buchi Emecheta’s quest to give a voice to women by exposing their situation in society. It will, therefore, be our concern to expose the issue of traditional, male-oriented society.

Our task is to expose Emecheta’s depiction of the injustice of the traditional society, of child bearing and servitude. Besides, we are going to show the ways into which Emecheta raises her voice to combat these traditional beliefs including the system of polygamy by suggesting Education as a solution or remedy to get rid of the stereotypes that condemns women in the African society.



Accordingly, the author in her work gives voice to women; who are considered as the other. She elaborates a discourse of resistance to the Nigerian Igbo traditional beliefs, the patriarchal relation between men and women and the polygamous system of oppression. Buchi Emecheta works to put an end to the gender inequality and she claims to restore the position of women and give them a self-definition of their own.

Emecheta in the *Joys of Motherhood* uses the main character Nnu Ego as an example of any African woman who suffers from all kind of patriarchy and oppression. It is important to mention that despite the life of Nnu Ego, Emecheta gives her voice to her female character who sacrificed all her life for her children. Thus, her aim is to liberate women from all kind of oppression and patriarchy and give her a self-discovery and self-expression.

### **c). Methodological outline**

Our work is undertaken using the IMRAD approach which is made up of four sections an introduction, Methods and Materials, Results and discussion sections. In the first one, we have introduced the general background about the topic, we have cited the literary review about the previous works then we have introduced the issue of our work which explains gender inequality.

In the second section, we have explained the theory we are going to apply in our research, which consists of Alice Walker's theory of Womanism. Then we have proceeded to the introduction of the Materials in which we have presented the general summary of the *the Joys of Motherhood* and the biographical background of Buchi Emecheta. The third section comprises the results of our finding. The discussion section is divided into three chapters; the first consists of the analysis of the traditional customs of the Igbo Culture. The second examines the

polygamous system of oppression and gender issue the last one explains the system of Education in Nigeria and gender inequality.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd Wellesley Brown, *Women Writers in Black Africa (Greenwood press, 1981)*, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Njoki Nathani Wane, *Indigenous African Knowledge production: Food processing practices among Kenyan rural women (University of Toronto Press, scholarly Publishing division, 2014)*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Christian, *Black Feminist Criticism: An angle of Seeing: Motherhood in Buchi Emecheta's and Alice Walker's Meridian (1984)*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 230-237

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 129.

<sup>5</sup> Remi Akujobi, *Motherhood in African literature*, "Comparative literature and Culture", vol 13, no.01, (2011), 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender: "Their New Sister" Buchi Emecheta and the Contemporary African Literature tradition (London: Routledge Press, 1994)*, 111.

<sup>7</sup> Z. Brafı, R Hamed and A. mMouhammedi, *A Study of Buchi Emecheta's The Joys Of Motherhood in the light of Mohanty: A Postcolonial Feminism Theory*, *European Online Journal Of Natural and Social Sciences*, vol 4, no 1, (2015), 28.

<sup>8</sup> Radha Chakravaty, *Feminism And the Contemporary Women Writers Rethinking Subjectivities: Hazardous Border Crossings (London, New York, New Delhi: Routledge Press, 2008)*, 129.

## II. Methods and Materials

### 1. Method: Alice Walker's Theory on Womanism

This section aims to highlight the theoretical basis of our work. In fact and for the purpose of relevance to the issues treated in our work, we intend to borrow Alice Walker's Womanism theory as expanded in her 1983 essay *"In Search of Our Mothers's Gardens: Womanist Prose."*

In the late of 1970s, a social movement appeared in the United States led by Feminist of color, based on the fight against women's sexual oppression, and female marginalization in political context caused by white women's oppression.

Alice Walker's Womanism Highlights the triple issues of gender oppression, race and class domination. The concept is derived from Womanist (opposite of girlish), according to Walker's own definition:

The black folk of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish", i.e. like a woman ...usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or willful behavior. Wanting more and in greater death than is considered "good" for one... [A womanist is also] a woman who loves another woman sexually and non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture... and women's strength... committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female, not a separatist... Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.<sup>9</sup>

Alice Walker introduces the concept to refer to black feminists, the one who are capable, courageous and independent. It is used to illustrate that black women's struggle is in contradiction to the white feminism. Thus, Womanism brings new dimensions that differ from the Western; it aims to deliver the social inequality, race, gender oppression and social injustice. Then, Alice Walker attempts to reconstruct the negative images associated to colored women; she

maintains creativity, the desire of learning and the pursuit of knowledge as part of black female's activities, and as a tool by which they could build a better future.

In addition, Alice Walker's Womanism includes women from all over the world and from different nationalities so as to intensify their power and achieve effectiveness, Ama Ata Aidoo states:

African women struggling both on behalf of themselves and on behalf of the wider community is a part of our heritage. It is not new and I really refuse to be told I am learning *Feminism* from abroad, from Lapland. Africa has produced a much more concrete tradition of strong women fighters than most other societies.<sup>10</sup>

So according Ama Ata Aidoo, Womanism or Black Feminist is not only different from the Western Feminism, but superior.

As well as, Alice Walker assumes that *Black Feminist* movement was set to differentiate it from the Western one. Despite their claiming for woman's place in their societies; white women in the West faced less oppression than women of color. The latter are doubly oppressed, that is what make their own struggle unique. Alice Walker says: "Black woman is oppressed beyond recognition- oppressed by everyone".<sup>11</sup> Then, Carole Boyce Davies maintains:

[T]he obvious connection between African and Western feminism is that both identifies gender-specific issues and recognize women's position internationally as one of second status and « otherness » and seek to correct that. An International Feminism to which various regional perspectives are contributed seems acceptable to African women while European/American model is not. The failure of the Western feminist to deal with issues that directly affect Black women and their tendencies to sensationalize others creates antagonism as does the fact that white women are often partners of both African women and men (South Africa as the most overt example). The term « Feminism » often has to be qualified when used by most African or other Third world women.<sup>12</sup>

Womanism, thus was used as a political tool so as black women get able to confront and challenge the abused practices made by Western feminists, black females were considered as "other", uneducated and lower. So Womanism contributes to challenge the issues that are admissible to black women, and which are notably proper to them. Furthermore, it invests to allow black women to honor their culture and colored skin in a way that differs from the Westerns. Walker characterizes black woman's tradition of courage under the brutal conditions of slavery and racism. She says: "Womanist...tradition assumes because of our experiences during slavery, that black women already are capable".<sup>13</sup>

In fact, Alice Walker highlights women's sufferance from the subjectivities performed by male exploitation. Black women are doubly marginalized, they suffer from sexual oppression since they are male's opposite, and as an African, is the opposite of white, they suffer from racial oppression. Gender issue makes them marginalized socially, culturally and sexually. Alice Walker quests for women's strength of women, liberation and self-realization. Thus, Womanism rescue and protect women from being victims of male submission, from forms of sexism and violence, and then empowers them to achieve equality through education and employment to get better perspective. Alice Walker states: "I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the whole survival of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women".<sup>14</sup>

The impact of Womanism goes beyond the United States to Africa. Emecheta is an African feminist writer, her works are not extremely feminist in the western sense, she says:

I have not been concerned with Western feminists (...) they are related to themselves and transplant those onto Africa (...) they think that by focusing on exotic issues in the 'Third World' they have internationalized their feminism.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Materials

This part of our work contains the summary of Emecheta's *the Joys of Motherhood* and the Biography of the novelist with regard to its relevant to the issue under study.

### a. Synopsis of *the Joys of Motherhood*

Buchi Emecheta's *the Joys of Motherhood* (1979) tell the story of Igbo Nigerian women, Nnu Ego, the daughter of Nwokocha Agbadi and Ona. Agbadi is a local chief in a village of a colonial Nigeria called Ibuza. Ona, his mistress is a beautiful and strong woman who is not allowed to marry him as her father feels that she should not "stand to any man", but this will not prevent her to have a lover. Nwokocha Agbadi has many wives but he prefers the only woman who is enamored with, his Ona. They come to an agreement once she becomes pregnant, if it is a girl, the child will belong to Ona's father, but if it is a boy, Agbadi will accept her as his own daughter. Ona gives birth to a baby girl named Nnu Ego (a precious jewel). When she is born, Medicine men conclude that her Chi (personal God) is the slave girl who was forced to die with one of Agbadi's wives. A few weeks later, Ona dies. Nnu Ego grows up and becomes beautiful; she is now at the marrying age. Agbadi marries her with Amatokwu who is known for his harshness in the tribe. When she cannot become pregnant, relationships between them became worse. Her husband decides to leave her and brings new women that will give him children. As a matter of fact, Nnu Ego returns to her father's house.

Nwokocha Agbadi arranges another marriage to his daughter, this time he will send her far from Ibuza. Nnu Ego will marry to a man who lives in Lagos named Naife Owulum. The latter works as a servant for a British family, the Meers. Happy in her marriage, Nnu Ego becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son, Ngazi. Unfortunately, he dies a few days after his birth. In fact

Nnu Ego falls to despair, sadness and loneliness that she tries to commit suicide by throwing herself from a bridge. Few months later, she becomes pregnant again and gives birth to baby boy Oshia .

The British couple that employed Naife returns to England. As a matter of fact the family find themselves in a bad financial condition .while Nnu Ego returns to sell Cigarettes; Naife was obliged to go far from home and work for a group of Englishmen. Nnu Ego then gives birth to another male child, Adim. Lives go from good to bad, Naife's eldest brother dies, and he inherits all his wives. However, only one will come to live with them. Adaku arrives with her daughter as Naife's second wife .the matter that Nnu ego refuses to accept. Relationships grow increasingly worse between the two women.

Both wives become pregnant at the same time, Nnu Ego gives birth to two daughters while Adaku's son dies after birth. The Second World War begins and Naife was obliged to join the Army and goes to India to fight there. Nwokocha Agbadi's health becomes bad that his daughter was obliged to take her family to Ibuza and take care of her father. After his father death Nnu Ego refuses to return to Lagos. Nnu Ego makes sure that all of her children have a better life; she sends two of her children abroad. On the one side, both Oshia and Adim want to carry their studies abroad; Oshia wins a scholarship to Study in the United States of America .On the other side, the two daughters will marry hopefully in order to have a good pride price. Naife then is put in a jail for five years as he committed a murder as a matter of fact Nnu Ego returns to Ibuza where she dies a tragic death, she dies alone at the roadside. Oshia returns from the United States and all of her children come to honor their mother's death.

## **b. Buchi Emecheta's Biographical Background**

Buchi Emecheta is an Igbo Nigerian woman who was born on 21 July 1944 in Lagos. Since 1962, she moved with her husband and children to live in London where she worked as a Librarian. Because of poverty and the harshness of living as a single parent and as a black Women living in Britain, she decided to work hard. In 1970, she joined the University of London where she got a high degree in sociology. She then became an influential writer, focusing on the role of women in traditional African Cultures.

Many African writers rejected her writings as they thought that she shares the same feminist View of the westerns. In fact, Buchi Emecheta states that she refused to be called a feminist writer and her type of feminism is an African feminism called Womanism .She once insisted "If i am a feminist", "I am an African feminist" or in another occasion "A feminist with a small f"<sup>16</sup>. Her master piece document *The Joys of Motherhood (1979)* highlights gender oppression, gender inequality and sexual differences within the Igbo patriarchal society. Therefore, it is said that the conflicts that Nnu Ego faces in her life are likely similar to the conflicts that Buchi Emecheta faces during her journey in London. Buchi Emecheta other important novels are: *In the Ditch (1972)*, *The Pride Price (1976)*, *The Slave Girl (1977)* *The Wrestling Match (1980)*, *The Moonlight Bride (1980)*, *The Family (1990)*, *Second Class Citizen (1994)*, and *Kehinde (1994)*. Buchi Emecheta wrote also a number of children's book *the Nowhere to Play (1980)*, *The Moonlight Bride (1980)*, therefore, she published a volume of autobiography. *Head above Water in 1986*.Her television play was first screened by BBC in 1976.In 1983 she was selected as one of the twenty 'Best of Young British Writers '. She then became a lecturer at the United States University. In 1980 she returned to her motherhood country where she became a member of the Home Secretary's Advisory Council on race.



## Endnotes

<sup>9</sup> Obioma Nnameka, *Womanism-Bibliography* (Containers Hebo YAPIA.S).

<sup>10</sup> Julia Makuchi, *Gender in African Women's writing: Identity, Sexuality and Difference* (Indiana University Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Torfs, *Alice Walker's Womanism: Theory and Practice* (Leuven: Katholieke university Leuven, 2007.2008), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Layli Phillip, *the Womanist Reader* (New York: Routledge Press, 2006), xxii.

<sup>13</sup> Goda Baltrusaityte, *Breaking the Boundaries of Masculinity: Men and Woman in Alice Walker's novel the color Purple* (University of Amsterdam: Faculty of Humanities).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid 10.

<sup>15</sup> Radha Chakravaty, *Feminism and Contemporary Women Writers: Buchi Emecheta: Hazardous Border Crossing* (London, New York, New Delhi: Routledge Press, 2008), 124.

<sup>16</sup> Juliana Makuchi, Nfah Abeniyi, *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity Sexuality and Difference*(the United States of America: Indiana University Press,1997 ),7.

### III. Results

This section of our piece of research contains the main findings we have reached after our investigation of

The issues of Traditions, Polygamy and Education. Our research paper focuses on gender inequality and male authority in the *Joys of Motherhood*. To realize our task we have applied Alice Walker's theory of Womanism which aims to rehabilitate the statue of Black female by giving them a voice of their own. To achieve our findings, we have discussed three important themes in the discussion sections.

In the first section of our discussion, we have analyzed the Traditional customs of the Igbo Culture which oppresses women and make the women inferior to men. It is well demonstrated through the character of Nnu Ego who suffered from all kind of oppression because of the traditional believes that regulate women into child bearing. The aim of Buchi Emecheta corresponds to criticize the traditional Igbo culture and liberate women oppression and patriarchy which corresponds also to Walker's revolutionary theory.

In the second section, we have dealt with the Polygamous system of oppression in Nigeria. We have shown how multiple marriages led to despair and disillusionment. Then, we have explained male supremacy over women. Buchi Emecheta uses different male character to show how polygamy oppresses women. We have shown how Nnu Ego struggles against these patriarchal rules to release women from men's subordination and achieve liberation. These ideas are supported by Alice Walker's concepts of Womanism since she advocates for women's rights and independence.

In the third section, we have explained how the system of Education marginalizes women from public sphere. We have demonstrated this with Nnu Ego children whom the opportunity to carry on their studies is given only to the boys. The girls have received a little Education. Buchi Emecheta tries to show that Education is the only tool to free women from oppression and patriarchy. In addition, Alice Walker emancipation of the Black women is also shown in her theory to encourage women for Education and build their self-confidence and self-identity just like them.

### **III. Discussion**

This section of our work is the most expanded as it discusses in depth the issues of tradition, polygamy and education. The opening chapter centers on the issue of traditions in the African traditional society. The second chapter investigates in the illustrations the issue of polygamy while the third discusses the ways into which Emecheta suggests education in her novel as a remedy to the oppression Igbo society.

#### **Chapter One: Traditions in Africa in *The Joys Of Motherhood*:**

During the 20<sup>th</sup>c, black feminists started to write by focusing mainly on black women's experiences, they used their autobiographical voice to show the stereotype, patriarchy and male domination among their society. They explored the deficiencies of traditional culture which negates women's identity and forces them to be submissive to male figure. In fact, black feminists fought against the denial of women's position, and rebelled against sexism and gender oppression within their agenda.

In his book *Contemporary African Literature and Politics of Gender*, Florence Stratton highlights the essential role of African women's writing in changing the African traditions. "Uncovering gaps and silences, exposing bias and prejudices..."<sup>17</sup>. Buchi Emecheta was one of the prominent African writers who succeeded in the revolution of women. She is an African feminist; whose majority of her works tends to give voice to the silent and neglected women by male figures; and assimilate liberation from cultural tradition's pressure. She states in an interview: "I work toward the liberation of women, but I'm not feminist, I'm just a woman"<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, she put her attention to portray the status of women in a patriarchal society and forecast a positive image of womanhood. She asserts that women are not given a reasonable treatment; she opposed the negative ideas and attributions given to motherhood, female subordination, enslavement. So, the author tends to search for women's identity within the Nigerian and British societies, and struggles for bringing back their rights which is caused by the negligence of both societies. She declared in an interview:

And that was one of the big misconceptions about Mother Africa: because she did not write down her stories and her experiences, people of the West are bold enough to say that she has no history. I must not fall into the same trap.<sup>19</sup>

Buchi Emecheta's most prominent novel *the Joys of Motherhood* is about what Nnu Ego going through due to the Igbo traditional beliefs and their survival. The author identifies within her novel several cultural, societal norms and religious traditions made against women that downgrade their status. Emecheta asserts: "In all my novels, I deal with many problems and prejudices which exist for black people in Britain today."<sup>20</sup>. For instance, African culture had given great importance to male's child bearing, which is considered as a fundamental aspect in African social norms. Institutions such as polygamous marriage, bride price, woman's

subjugation to male figure, and other various forms of discrimination led to regard traditional African community as sexist and oppressive. She maintains that women's rights have been denied in religious societies, and female's opinion is not given any importance. Umeh pointed: "theme is that Igbo women are enslaved to Igbo traditions."<sup>21</sup>

In fact, this part handles the explanation of African customs and religious rituals which are discussed in details by the author. The first passage introduces the issue of motherhood and childbearing, whereas the second exposes the maltreatment and disrespect of females, and then, the third speaks about women's sacrifices and difficulties that the protagonist confronted.

#### **a. Motherhood and Childbearing:**

Alice Walker shows her critical view about motherhood in her novel *The Meridian*, she depicts the experiences of black women, her enslavement under the sexist rules and world male domination to create a new feminist perspective based on the fight against patriarchy and seeking for freedom and human rights. Su-li Yu says:

At the beginning of her career, *Meridian* addresses Walker's conflicting emotions toward motherhood. Through *Meridian* resistance to the conventional prescriptions of motherhood and through her actions in the role of other mother, Walker attempts to challenge the traditional concept of black motherhood.<sup>22</sup>

Buchi Emecheta criticizes the fact that the myth of motherhood is imposed on Nigerian women, and the way in which the Igbo patriarchal society defines motherhood. In Igbo society, the dream of every woman is not only to get married, but also to become a mother because it is essential for her personality and her social status. Das Gupta stated: "A woman's place in her new

[husband] family is often not secured until she produces a male heir”<sup>23</sup>. So it is through motherhood that African wives feel their womanhood.

*The Joys of Motherhood* consists of a story of the protagonist who dreams to have a lot of children and have a comfortable growth. In Ibuza, Nnu Ego’ first marriage to Amatokwu was unsuccessful due to her inability to conceive children, she said:

I am sure the fault is on my side. You do everything right. He can I tell him that I failed? I don’t like going there these days because his wives always rush out to greet me hoping that I am carrying a child. You can see the disappointment of their faces.<sup>24</sup>

Nnu Ego considers herself incomplete and failed in her mission as a mother, she wanted exclusively to experience the joy of motherhood which consists on bearing children especially male one and feel herself authenticated, and then guarantees her security compared to childless married African woman. She cries day and night begging her personal God to give her a child like her co-wife and change her miserable fate? She said:

Why don’t you let me have my own children? Look I am full of milk. I can’t be barren or juiceless as my father said why you are so wicked to me? Why did you not come to me? I cried in the night and longed for a child like you- why did you not come to me?<sup>25</sup>

Another aspect which Emecheta put emphasis is that any married man whose wife is childless is subjected to cultural and family pressure. The parent and relatives of the Igbo society strives his mind with negative ideas on the consequences of dying without having an heir. Nnu Ego said:

Please pity me. I feel that my husband's people are already looking for a new wife for him. They cannot wait for me forever. He is the first son of the family and his people want an heir from him as soon as possible. Please help me.<sup>26</sup>

As a result of cultural pressure, Nnu Ego runs the risk of losing her husband to a fruitful woman. It is shameful for an Igbo man to die without a descent. Amatumkwu in his turn layed the blame for her inability to have children. So, Emecheta portrays the injustice suffered by black women in patriarchal society comparing to the Westerns. She chastised the African idealization of motherhood, and requests for going beyond the traditional view of mothering. As Walker's theory main goal is to liberate women from gender oppression and prove their identity within their society.

Moreover, Emecheta has well demonstrated the traditional belief of the African Society (Igbo) on the value of male children. As H. Okeke said: "The value of children in marriage continues to be such a dominant one that the fortunes and fates of many African marriages hang on its fruitfulness".<sup>27</sup> According to Okeke, the primary reason for marriage is to conceive children and particularly sons. In fact, they form a source of power and they validate the inheritance of a family. So, African women are considered incomplete or barren for having only female children. Emecheta rejects the Ibuza belief that woman's inability to conceive a baby boy is considered as a fatal disaster. Agbadi's senior wife Agunwa is seen as a complete woman, and she is well respected by her husband and others because she gave birth only to sons.

However, Naife's second wife Adaku was looked down and alienated from society because she has only female children. She is suffering by the fact that she is not able to produce sons, and how embarrassing the situation is put in. As a result, Naife's attention is removed to

Enu Ego, and she was rejected by the whole community. Emecheta said: “But that childish remark set Adaku off. She started to cry afresh for her dead baby, certain that people were mocking her because she had no son”<sup>28</sup>. Adaku said: “You are worth more than ten Dumbis adaku snapped at the boy”<sup>29</sup> According to Emecheta, women without male child share the same fate as the one who is childless; as if it is in their power to choose their children’s sex. So, Womanism attempts to highlight the way society treats women and struggle against any form of stereotypes that downgrade women’s status. Montelaryo says: “Womanism allows women to weave together their maternal identities and histories in order to revise their oppressive circumstances and to rewrite more acceptable scripts for themselves.”<sup>30</sup>

Another point which Emecheta highlighted is that Nnu Ego is continuing to conceive children even their bad economic situation, because children are considered as a future investment and through them she fulfills her joy as a mother, she said:

My own reward, the joy of knowing that at this age I can still have children for my husband. The joy of making the world know that while some of our friends and their wives are at this moment making sacrifices so that they may have children, I can have one without any effort at all.<sup>31</sup>

Buchi Emecheta presents the control of male over females, motherhood centrality in women’s life to establish a notion of liberation from male subordination. As Alice Walker’s Womanism, seeks for women’s identity and independence.

### **b. Disrespect and Maltreatment of Women:**

Alice Walker is one of the prominent writers who use Womanism in her writings. She opposed submission and subjugation to man, and fights against traditional rules and patriarchal



culture to bring back woman's identity. Melda points out:

Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* uses dimensions of black women's oppression, racism and sexism to show a young black women's fight against domination in order to find her own independence.<sup>32</sup>

In the *Color Purple*, Alice Walker introduces the subordination and the victimization of female in patriarchal society; she presents her protagonist Celie as a victim of racial and sexual oppression, and subjected to physical and mental abuse from her husband and father. However, she eventually started to learn how to survive and achieve her self-fulfillment.

Buchi Emecheta shows within her novel various forms of discrimination and gender oppression to use it as a literary voice to convey women's liberation. In fact, she made surface to cultural norm that is much known in tribal traditional groups which is the bride price. *The Joys of Motherhood* is a vivid illustration of cultural discrimination made against women. Moreover, specific marriage choices and agreements are made by the parent. The later oblige young females to marry at an early age so as to get their pride wealth. For Emecheta, it is a kind of buying a wife by giving a certain amount of money to value a woman. Unfortunately, this shows dominance over females, and the buyers feel themselves superior. Naife arranged for a marriage to sell his daughters as a gift to unknown and to a man chosen by him, he doesn't even care about their happiness, he said:

You don't even have to know him in advance. You just marry him. You are lucky you already know this one, and that know what job he is in. Things have changed. Before you might not have known him at all. Anyway what is bad in his being born in Ibuza? Are you not from Ibuza?<sup>33</sup>

From this, we understand that girls are sold to their spouses without any claim, since they belong to their father; they are determined to accept without contradictions. Girls were not allowed to break the traditional laws or decisions taken by their fathers. As a matter of fact, Emecheta pictures the sovereignty of male over female and oppression made against them. Naife is decisive of killing his daughter in the case of refusing the man chosen to her, because he would not pay a huge wealth. He said:

Why, a good husband is expected to pay well for a good girl. That is the way to prove his manhood. If he cannot afford to pay, then he does not deserve a wife. But the Yorubas, they don't do anything like that. They just give the father a bowl of drink and buy the bride a few lappas... no, not enough for all the food the child has eaten since she was born. And her mother has trained her to be a good trader.<sup>34</sup>

Naife knows that the Yoruba did not pay the same pride price as the Ibuzas, it is a means of salvation for Naife by which he could regulate his economic downfall situation. Emecheta raises attention to this issue, where a man pays for the bride's family to own their daughter. Consequently, this act reduces the woman to objects, and their dignity is lost.

Another point which Emecheta mentioned in the novel is the fact that in African traditional society, virginity is given higher esteem to which if a girl gets married virgin, the bride wealth given to the bride and her family increased. Idayi declared:

There is nothing that makes a man prouder than to hear that his daughter is virtuous. I don't like visiting families where the wedding kegs of Palme wine are half filled, telling everybody that the pride has allowed herself to be tampered with.<sup>35</sup>

In Africa, ancestors had a common belief of life after death, and this was described clearly in Buchi Emecheta's novel. Inhuman practices forged in Ibuza's town. Within the novel, a slave girl was killed like stray dogs, and forced to be buried with Agbadi's first wife.

However, Ibuza's people believed in the fact that if someone dies, he should be buried with his objects and a slave girl, this because such things would be needed in the other world.

According to Agbadi's son: "So my mother does not even deserve a decent burial? Now we are not to send her slave down with her, just because the girl is beautiful? So saying, he gave the woman a sharp blow with the head of the cutlass he was carrying. Go down like a good slave."<sup>36</sup> Emecheta chastised the traditional custom, and the cruelty of male gender, by burying the slave girl alive just to honor the dead, and to preserve the sacred traditional belief. This shows the brutal practices and discrimination of male's gender against female slaves. Indeed, Women's freedom is taken; they did not have the opportunity to express their rights. Slave women are treated as inferior human being so they are subjected to any form of abuse or cruelty.

As a result, the slave girl wanted to revenge by returning back as the dead spirit of Nnu Ego, and be responsible for her failure to conceive children. So, prayers and sacrifices are among the sacred traditional religious form to please their Chi in Igbo society.

Widow's rituals and practices are considered dehumanized. They suffer from exclusion and neglect due to the cultural beliefs and traditions of the Igbo people. Emecheta discusses in her novel about the suffering of widows in terms of social and economic hardships. As well as, she portrays widows as silent victims whom cruel cultural practices minimized their status as women and wives. In Igbo tradition, when a woman loses her husband, she is entitled to marry to

the oldest brother or to a nearest male relative of her husband. Naife's brother deceased, so he is sentenced to leverage custom. It is said:

Leverage marriage is considered a custom of the Yoruba, and the Hausa-Fulani... .. leverage marriages... are commoners among the [I]gbo ... .. Under customary law among the Yoruba, A brother or son of the deceased husband... was traditionally allowed to inherit the widow as wife.... ...Under Igbo customary law, a brother or a son of the deceased Igbo husband...was traditionally allowed to inherit the widow as a wife.<sup>37</sup>

So, Naife's oldest brother is died, and traditionally he is allowed to inherit his brother's wives. Emecheta said:

Adaku, the new wife of the dead brother, would be coming to join them in Lagos, and after some time the oldest wife Adankwu, who was still nursing a four-month old baby, might come too.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, Adaku and Adankwo did not deserve to begin their life by their own with their little child, looking for better life far away from her family's husbands. Traditional customs violate their liberty and restrict them from going beyond; the only thing left to do is to obey the rules dictated to them. They accept to be owned as a property to their husband's brother.

In addition to this, Emecheta gives us an insight into the violence and men's savage behavior against the widow's inherited. Lasbikane observed: "In Africa, the widow is oppressed, suppressed, afflicted, suspected and insulted"<sup>39</sup>. In some ways, they are not considered as members of the family who need support and affection, but as strangers since they are inherited. Furthermore, husbands do not treat them well and do not give them a high esteem in the house they go to, they did not show any respect or appreciation for the new wife. Adaku screamed from inside the room: "Help! Help! He is going to kill me – you made man! ".<sup>40</sup> Naife beats her second wife even if she is pregnant. "Leave the poor woman alone. Do you want to kill the new child

that she is expecting? Open the door! ”<sup>41</sup> said Nnu Ego. Adaku was not regarded as a part of the family, and Naif do not recognized her position as a wife, since she did not conceive male child to ensure her status, and do not have a family to look after her as Nnu Ego whose father chief of Ibuza . Consequently, Adaku put herself aside, and do not ask for her right as a senior wife.

Another aspect which Emecheta identifies in the novel is the issue of widowhood, and its effect on family members. The author emphasizes on the dis functioning of economic system due to widowhood practices. In other words, there is an association of poverty and disrupt family function to widowhood. In addition to this, Naife suffered from an unstable financial condition that sometimes he couldn't even feed his family. Adaku, the widow being imposed by traditional beliefs to be part of this family worsen their economic conditions. Nnu Ego complained about this fact and cried: “Oh, Naife how are you going to cope? All these children and all those wives”.<sup>42</sup> Adaku did not enjoy her life with her new family; the bad financial condition pushed her to practice prostitution and save her two daughter's life from patriarchal rules.

Emecheta depicts the ways in which male figures treats their own wives harshly and made them silent, marginalized and subjected to their authority. In fact, Igbo cultural beliefs intensify the marginalization and oppression against female gender. The author outlines the abusive and offensive behavior against women. Keeping in traditionalist Igbo view, men were allowed wife beating. Agbadi said:

Amatukwu, I don't blame you for beating her so badly. We will not quarrel for we are in-laws, but let me take her to my house so that she can rest for a while, and I can look after her. Who knows, maybe after the calming effect of her family she will be cool enough inside to be fertile? At the moment, whatever the juice is by anxiety. Let her stay with me for a while.<sup>43</sup>

Amatukwu beats her wife severally just because she was not able to give him a son to continue his lineage, he reinforced his power on his wife to gain the respect of his people, and prove his manhood, because it was harmful for him to be childless. So, Agbadi was not against beating his daughter since cultural customs permitted to male gender to treat woman badly, in a way to regulate control over them and to regain their authority. And then, since he has paid her pride price, this means that he owns her as an object, and gave him the total right to do whatever he wants, she is treated as a property more than a human being. Consequently, womanhood was devalued and subjected to violence. In addition, Emecheta demonstrates that women's voice is totally suppressed; Nnu Ego faces several obstacles which deprive her emancipation and self-fulfillment. It is the case when Naife went to fight in the war, and Nnu Ego gave birth to twins, she could not give a name to her children before the return of her husband, she was imprisoned and unable to take decisions by her own. She was terrified that it will be viewed as an over authority against her husband, and her social position would be downgraded. The protagonist lives in man's world where she has to prove that she is a good daughter and a good wife to gain respect of others.

In fact, women in the novel are shown to have surrender to the traditional practices and do not question or challenge it. Tradition imposes on women that they should tolerate the situation and do not frustrate or worsen things in the case if their husbands want a new wife. Amatukwu's disrespectful and cruel behavior towards Nnu Ego was very obvious, he continuously ordering her to move up to another hut specialized to older wives, to bring a fruitful one. He said:

I'm a busy man. I have no time to waste my precious male seed on women who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line. If you really want to know, you don't appeal to me anymore. You are dry and jumpy. When a man comes to a

woman he wants to be cooled, not stretched by a nervy female who is all bones.<sup>44</sup>

Nnu Ego is treated with disdain and hostility by her husband because she cannot bear children. She is seen as an animal in Amatumkwu's eyes, without feelings or emotions. The protagonist accepted her position, and decided to take care of her co-wife's son just to save her marriage. She said: " Father, my position as a senior woman of the house has been taken by a younger woman "»<sup>45</sup> She is not given any importance due to her bareness, so the new wife took her position as a senior wife because traditionally womanhood was achieved once a wife give birth to sons. Emecheta criticizes the cultural traditions of the Igbo society in which man conquer more and more woman and subjectifying them.

Emecheta presented another character who personifies inhumanity and coldness towards his wives is Nwokocha Agabdi. In the context of traditions, once a wife lost her youth and suppleness, she can be put aside and replaced by a younger woman. Agbadi was taking wives and mistresses to enslave the man get his sexual pleasure. Emecheta argued:

Like most handsome men who are aware of their charismatic image, he had many women in his time. Whenever they raided a neighboring village, Agbadi was sure to come back with the best-looking women.<sup>46</sup>

Emecheta draws attention to the religious practices that approved the need to look for a fresh woman; such practices negate women's individuality. So they are regarded as interchangeable and unfeeling objects. As if women were destined to suffer to please their husbands, event hey resisted to the authority and patriarchal practices, they are seen inferior, and considered as toys, once fed up with, they would be rejected and replaced by a new one.

### **c. Woman's Oppression:**

Alice Walker's *Meridian* presents the image of motherhood, Kumar says: "She is torn between her own personal desire to become a mother and the fact that motherhood seems to cut her off from the possibilities of life and love".<sup>47</sup>

The *Joys of Motherhood* is set in the pre-colonial and post-colonial period of Nigeria. In fact, Emecheta highlights that most female's figures in the novel are victims of post-colonialism; they are doubly marginalized and oppressed by the new rules of the colonial patriarchal society. Forms of discrimination which existed in Iboza are intensified by new colonial realities in Lagos, it consists new forms of subordination and subjectivity. In addition to this, the narrative clarifies the way in which the new society that emerged as a result of colonial rule is mainly working against women's advantage, and led to the devaluation of female roles and status. Within the novel, Emecheta shaped the image of the protagonist and her imprisonment to traditions, they prevented her from recognizing the changes surrounded her; she tried to stick to her tradition to valorize female's achievements. So, when she suffered from bad economic situation, she tried to manage things by engaging herself in trade to support her husband's low income. She is not only a man's slave, but circled by responsibilities determined to her. She should sacrifice herself because she is a mother; Emecheta said:

It occurred to Nnu Ego that she was a prisoner, imprisoned by her love for her children, imprisoned in her role as the senior wife. She was not even expected to demand more money for her family; that was considered below the standard expected of a woman in her position. It was not fair, she felt, the way men cleverly used women's sense of responsibility to actually enslave her. They knew that a traditional wife like herself would never dream of leaving her children.<sup>48</sup>

This excerpt explains that women must accept their fate without reclaiming, otherwise they will be seen as a bad and disrespectful wife, and even they could bring shame for her family.



Consequently, Nnu Ego is governed by her patriarchal society rules which determine submission. Thus, Emecheta criticizes the way in which man dominated the disempowered female character, and determines male gender as superior and female as "other".

Nnu Ego then sacrificed all her money, time and energy to raise her children and to afford them the necessary to raise them, she said: "On my life, I have to work myself to the bone to look after them; I have to give them my all. And if I'm lucky to die in peace, I even have to give them my soul".<sup>49</sup>The protagonist is responsible to feed her children, no matter the difficult situation and circumstances she would face, she does her best to look after her children, even in the bad situations, she does a petty business, she sells firewood and cigarettes, all to her children. Then, when Nnu Ego begs her husband to give her some money to feed her children, Naife replied:

How can you manage with less, when three whole pounds sent you on strike? You'd better carry on the way you started. It's your responsibility to feed your children as the best you can. Don't worry about me. I shall take care of myself.<sup>50</sup>

This extract reveals the subjectivity and oppression made against women. Naife is regarded as the head of the family, and automatically he is the only one who could take decisions, he is portrayed as a selfish man who spends his money without taking into consideration the needs of the members of his family. As a result, Nnu Ego's responsibility for her family especially to the male members increased, she sacrificed her physical, monetary and emotional investment to her children. she believed in the fact that her happiness and prosperity depends on the success of her children, she fought with all the means so as her boys attempt school and will be members of the New Nigeria, and tried to raise her daughters according to traditional model. Such sacrifice and accomplishment should help her to reach her objectives. However, things

turned against her will, because while her children were growing up, social norms and values of her peoples were changing by the time. Nnu Ego's conservatism restricted her way of thinking, and refused to adapt with new mentalities and beliefs; this caused her failure as mother and her sacrifices were lost in vain.

Emecheta identifies the protagonist as a mother, woman and a wife who resisted to personal and social crises, in the purpose of having many healthy sons who later will take care of her in her old age. Her total devotion to her children and her imprisonment to maternal body was to guarantee her identity, status and her personal well-being. Barbara Christian asserts:

Alice Walker and Emecheta, however, show how the women in their respective societies are valued only in relation to the men in their lives and finally because of the children they bear and how this value demands a giving up of their independence, of their personal life.<sup>51</sup>

However, her children have drawn their own road, too different from the one that their mother chosen to them. They were fed up and decided to break the traditional rules which limited their ambition and to pursue their dreams. To illustrate, the old son won the scholarship to study in the United States, he was determined to go, he said:

I won't copy them, Mother. I will work hard. If I had stayed in Lagos, I don't think our home would have been conducive to my studies. There are so many quarrels over money, and me having to help selling this and that.<sup>52</sup>

Oshia was decided to follow his studies in the United States and seize the opportunity given to him to reach a higher status, and leave the unfairness situation imposed on them, distancing himself from the rites and traditional culture and save his life from the bad condition that were living in. However his father was strictly against the idea, because according to Igbo culture,

when a father grows older, it is to the oldest son to take the responsibility of his family, and become their shoulders on which they can stand on. As a result, Naife blamed Enu Ego for not having well educated them. As any Igbo man, if the children are good, they belong to him, if they are bad they belong to their mother.

In the case of the two daughters, Enu Ego tried to ensure the continuity of the Igbo traditional rites, to prove to her people and her father that she is a good daughter and a wise woman, she raised her daughters by explaining them that they are a complement of men, they must be under his rule and submissive to their request. Consequently, Kehinde didn't share the same view as her mother. The impact of colonization resulted on a radical change, the mode of behavior and thought were altering, Lagos was involved into modernization, this threaten traditional Nigerian culture.

Being influenced with this change, Kehinde decided to break the chains and rejects the cultural traditions that restrict their liberties; she declares her happiness and her right to choose her soul-mate. This shed a conflict between the daughter and her parents. As a result Nnu Ego plugged in a dilemma, she worked hard and sacrificed her health and youth to feed her children, and provide them better conditions, and finally she was left alone. Emecheta points out that the effort of Nnu Ego did not be enough to please both her children and her people. Unfortunately, she died all alone, without any body at her sides, no children to take care of her, and no friends to stay with; Emecheta said: "She died quietly there, with no child to hold her hand and no friend to talk to her. She had never really made many friends, so busy had she been building up her joys as a mother"<sup>53</sup>.

Emecheta proved that motherhood is not only a source of happiness for Nnu Ego, but also a great defeat for her, Motherhood marked her joy and then her sorrow, she invested so much of her life on her children, but they didn't show any concern for her well-being. As well as, instead of cherishing and honoring her, they rejected her and pursue their own interests; Nnu Ego gave her soul for her family while she received only a little or anything in turn. As a result, the title of the novel became ironical; the protagonist became a subjugated African woman. Emecheta's main goal is to attack the idea of idealization of motherhood; Nnu Ego attachment to motherhood causes her despair and sadness throughout her life. As well as, the author highlights women's weaknesses and experiences to create consciousness among females to make them stronger, and fight against patriarchy.

### **Endnotes:**

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<sup>19</sup>Radha Chakarvaty, *Feminism And contemporary Women Writers Rethinking Subjectivity: Buchi Emecheta: Hazardous Border Crossing* (London, New York, New Delhi: Routledge Press, 2008), 123.

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<sup>21</sup>Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender: Their New Sister Buchi Emecheta and the contemporary African Literary Tradition* (London: Routledge (Press, 1994), 110.

<sup>22</sup>Su-li Yu, Wrting Motherhood: The Case of Alice Walker (Associate Professor of department of Foreign Languages and Literature: National Cheng Kung University).

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<sup>24</sup>Buchi Emecheta, *the Joys of Motherhood: The Mother's Mother* (London: Heinmann, 1979), 30

<sup>25</sup> Ibid33

<sup>26</sup> Ibid30

<sup>27</sup> Titus and Nnabugwu, Childless Marriage in Africa and Indissolubility (A canonical Appraisal, March 19, 2014)

<sup>28</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys Of Motherhood: Sharing a Husband* (London: Heinemann 1979), 143.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid 142

<sup>30</sup> Aleksandra Izarjans, Alice Walker's womanism: Perspectives Past and Present(University of Novisad) 313.

<sup>31</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (London: Heinmann, 1979), 218.

<sup>32</sup> Melda Yanti Danjaitan, Celie's Struggle against Gender Inequality in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (Faculty of Languages and Arts State University of Surabaya)

<sup>33</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *the Joys of Motherhood* (London: Heinmann, 1979), 230.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid 243

<sup>35</sup> Ibid 29

<sup>36</sup> Ibid 20

<sup>37</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>38</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *the Joys of Motherhood: A man Needs Many Wives* (London: Heinemann, 1979), 130.

<sup>39</sup> Samuel Oktonkwo, De-institutionalizing the Plights of Women and Communicating Development through Theatre, *American Journal of Social science Research*, vol1, no.2(2015),

<sup>40</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys Of Motherhoo: Sharing a Husband*(London: Heinemann, 1979), 150

<sup>41</sup> Ibid 151

<sup>42</sup> Ibid 128

<sup>43</sup> Ibid 34

<sup>44</sup> Ibid 31

<sup>45</sup> Ibid 31

<sup>46</sup> Ibid5

<sup>47</sup> E. Kumar, Ph. Mumachi, Oppression and Exploitation, Feminization in Alice Walker's Work (vol 14. Sept 2014), 165.

<sup>48</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*(London, Heinmann, 1979), 153.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid 210

<sup>50</sup> Ibid 152

<sup>51</sup> Barbara Christian, *Black Feminist Criticism: An Angle of Seeing: Motherhood in Buchi Emecheta's the Joys of Motherhood and Alice Walker's Meridian* (1984) (New York: Colombia University Press, 1997), 232

<sup>52</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *the Joys of Motherhood: A Daughter's Honour* (London: Heinemann, 1979), 231

<sup>53</sup> Ibid 253

## **Chapter Two: Polygamy**

The second influential theme of our dissertation is concerned polygamy. In the novel, Buchi Emecheta shows how this system of oppression discriminates and dominates women.

Our task in this section is to analyze the novel and point out how women are silenced and oppressed by native patriarchy; this oppression is not mediated by race but also by Gender. “The struggle for equal rights between the sexes is going to prove even more difficult than that of the de-colonization because in essence it is a struggle between husband and wife”.<sup>54</sup>

To better illustrate this, we are going to show how this system of oppression is dominated by male authority and how women suffers because of this system of multiple marriages.

### **a. What is Polygamy?**

Polygamy is the practice of having more than one wife or husband. Whereas polygyny is the practice of having several wives, polyandry is the practice of having more than one husband at one time. Polygamy takes many forms across the globe. In some cultures one wife is shared by many brothers, in others father and son have a common wife; in others a man has many wives.

### **b. Polygamy in Islam**

Polygamy is practiced all over African communities. Marriage in African culture is sacred, it is very important in the life of the Muslims in order to build up an ideal Islamic society. The Prophet Mohammed argues that when a man marries he has fulfilled half of his religion. In Islam it is a sign of God’s power and glory the Quran say: “From his signs is that he has created

for you eposes from yourselves so that you May get peace (and tranquility) through them; and is placed between you, Love and mercy”<sup>55</sup>. In Islam, a man can marry as many as four women. Prophet Mohamed had eleven wives at ones. In this context the Quran Says: “Marry of the women, who seem good for you, two or three or four, and you fear that you Cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only)”<sup>56</sup>. This verse plainly allows a man to have up to four wives. From this we understand that the Quran allows the practice of polygamy.

### **b. The Negative Implications of Polygamy**

Polygamy is a term refers to multiple marriages practiced generally by men. It encourages the traditional patriarchy; men can take decisions at any time to marry another woman, it is widespread especially in African communities:

Polygamous marriages are the most popular in the rural regions and are taking place in the low educated peoples. Polygamy has reflected various different on the couples where couples relationships will be more traditional than in monogamous marriages. Men are the masters in a family in particular in the developing nations and rural regions. Men can take the decision at any time to marry one, two, three, or four wives. Marriage is more locus of reproduction in African countries.<sup>57</sup>

Women are under polygamous marriage, they feel injustice, pain, humiliations, jalousie, neglection, because their husbands get married a new wives. They are seen as slaves. “Polygamy was deemed uncivilized, immortal and harmful to women”.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, polygamy has negative aspects on physical and mental health especially the Women who get married at the young age. Rose McDermott, a professor of political science at Brown University during her research on polygamy claims:



According to the information I have Helped to collect in the women stats database, women in polygamous communities get married younger, have more children, have higher rates of HIV infection that men sustain more domestic violence, succumb to more female genital mutilation and sex. Trafficking and more likely to die in childbirth, their life expectedly is also shorter than that of their monogamous sisters. In addition, their children, both boys and girls are less likely to receive both primaries and secondary education.<sup>59</sup>

The quotation above explains that polygamy has many sides' effects on women. It promotes the spread of HIV and AIDS epidemics that can sexually be transmitted because of multiple sexual relationships.

Polygamy may also affect children educationally, socially and morally. Some families may not give their children the educational materials they need as a matter of fact they kept them receiving any kind of educational especially girls. McDermott added: "Polygamy is neither new nor rare. It is practiced in many cultures around the world"<sup>60</sup>, she argues that polygamy undermines any society that practiced it especially woman and her children.

### **c. The Issue of Polygamy in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood***

*The Joys of Motherhood* portrays the African women issues and their situation within a patriarchal and male- dominated society. It depicts the life of Nigerian women who scarified all her life for her children. She thinks that bearing children is the highest achievement in life. Buchi Emecheta seeks to expose gender inequality and the polygamous system of oppression that regulate women to childbearing and Motherhood. In the novel, Polygamy and gender inequality are traditional factors that men use to oppress and dominate women. The novel is a powerful example on polygamy and all kind of oppressions. Most of female character in the novel tries to follow the traditional beliefs but most of them failed. However, it ends to give them more liberation. In the novel Nnu Ego has the least amount of liberation because she followed the Igbo

traditional values to be a good woman despite of her suffering. The author gives us an example of liberate women, Ona, Nnu ego's mother; she is a dependent woman who refused to marry Agbadi.

Emecheta argues that Polygamy is not a pressured right especially when the husband is unable to support other additional wives. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, the protagonist, Nnu Ego is the representative of all the subjected African women. Polygamy is better illustrated with Nnu Ego who had married twice to polygamous men. In her first marriage, her husband took a second wife because she could not produce children. And as she fails to prove Amatokwu's manhood, his family starts to look a new wife for him, he says:

I have no time to waste my precious male seed on women who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line. If you really want to know, you do not appeal to me anymore. 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.<sup>61</sup>

Ego finds herself in a miserable situation when he gets married a new wife; her pride is destroyed. He asks her with savagery to move to nearby hut with the other wives because his people find him a new wife. As a matter of fact, she feels humiliation; she is not her fault if her Chi (personal God) refused to give her children she claims "What happened to us Amatokwu? Is it my fault that I did not have a child for you? Do you think that I do not suffer too?"<sup>62</sup> The pain is killing her. In addition, Amatokwu beats Nnu Ego after he discovers that she is feeding his second wife's son with her proper breast.

When Nnu gets married her second husband Naife, she does not like him. But she learns to accept her situation just to prove herself that she is a good woman "she would rather die in this country could Lagos than go back home and say father, I just do not like the man you have

chosen to me”<sup>63</sup>. Her relationship with her husband becomes worse especially with her pregnancies. She disliked Naife because he spends all his money drinking while his family is starving. Even Naife beats her “he could even now afford to beat her up if she went beyond the limits he could stand.”<sup>64</sup>

Nnu Ego feels pain when he gets married a second wife “Nnu Ego fought back tears as she prepared her own bed for Naife and Adaku. It was a good thing she was determined to play the role of the mature senior wife.”<sup>65</sup> Nnu Ego suffers from all kind of neglecting, humiliation, jealousy and abandonment.

In the Igbo society, women must prove they are good enough to gain respect. For example, Nnu Ego wants to prove to Agbadi and to her society that she is a complete woman, she accepts everything even her ugly husband. She learns to accept her situation because she is attached to her dream of becoming a mother. Her life is all about producing children especially boys; she must accept all insults and humiliation without complaining. Nnu Ego faced all kind of domination from her selfish husbands.

The oppressive nature of this polygamous system is also shown through Nnu Ego’s father, Nwokocha Agbadi, his behavior with women showed how women were subjected to men “He had many women in his time”<sup>66</sup> he is described to be an arrogant man who had got three wives and two mistresses, among them, his beautiful and beloved mistress Ona. Agbadi’s treatment to women renders them powerless, his view about women is all about beauty and possession, and he changes women every time he felt that she could not satisfy him enough:

He marries a few women in the traditional sense, but when he watched each of them sink into domesticity and motherhood he was soon bored and would go further afield for some other exciting, tall and proud female. This predilection of his extended to his mistresses as well.<sup>67</sup>

Emecheta had illustrated even women sexual oppression through Agbadi, the latter oppresses his beloved Ona sexually just to satisfy his needs “He felt like jumping on her, clawing at her, hurting her”<sup>68</sup>. Ona was suffering and he wanted her completely humiliated in her burning desire, he had even beaten her while screaming just like an excited animal that looks after his desire.

Emecheta uses Agbadi to illustrate the polygamous man of native patriarchy of the Igbo society and his cruelty towards women. Agbadi also gives her daughter a priceless name, after his daughter birth he claims “This child is priceless, more than twenty bags of cowries. I think that should really be her name, because she is beauty and she is mine. Yes, Nnu Ego: twenty bags of cowries”<sup>69</sup>. For him women are subjects of sexuality and domestic shores. Through him, Emecheta entails the victimization of female subjects within traditional polygamous men.

#### **d. Polygamy and Alice Walker’s theory of “Womanism”**

The theory of Womanism is a revolutionary movement for the marginalized people in terms of race and gender. Although Emecheta’s novel draws us into familiar territory with feminism. Both theories seek against condemnation, injustice unfair treatment of women. The difference between them is that Feminism includes gender issues and the other includes both gender and race issues. Indeed, in the novel Nnu Ego unconditionally accepts the inferiority in colonial Lagos, she finds herself subordinate not only to her husband but also to their white employers.

As black they themselves suffered as victims of a white patriarchal culture, as women they also face racial, sexual, harassment and class discrimination by white men within the frame work, most of

the black female writers deal mainly with the black woman as a victim of black patriarchy.<sup>70</sup>

Polygamy is a social challenge to Black women practiced mostly in African continents where most traditional beliefs marginalizes and oppresses women. The movement is created by Black female writer to struggles against all systems of oppressions including Polygamy. In *The Joys of Motherhood* Buchi Emecheta struggles for women' liberation, she criticizes native men who have all types of ill- treatment and subjugation of women just like the polygamous Nwokocha Agbadi who is different from many men, Emecheta says:

He himself might take wives and then neglect them for years, apart from seeing that they could each received their one yam a day, he could bring his mistress to sleep with him right in his courtyard while his wives pined and bit their nails for a word from him.<sup>71</sup>

Buchi Emecheta has received many critical views concerning her writings. She has always been described as a feminist writer and told be involved the trace of western feminism. However, she refuses to be called a feminist especially a western one, she herself states that she works toward the liberation of women. In all her novels, she deals with the many problems and prejudices which exist for women today; she speaks for the marginalization of women. She rather preferred to be called a feminist with a small 'f'. In an interview with Marie Umeh in 1980 she says that she is feminist with a small 'f'. She loves men and good men are the salt of earth. But to tell her that they should abolish marriage like the capital 'F' (Feminism) women who say women should live together and all that. She says no. She would like to see the ideal, happy marriage<sup>72</sup>. In contrast, she refuses patriarchy that oppresses women, she believes on polygamy and motherhood as it includes what it takes to be a wife, a mother, and breadwinner. In addition, Ama Ata Aidoo's opinion is put forward more strongly; she is against Feminism she claims in

her own: “Feminism. You know how we feel about that embarrassing western philosophy? The destroyer of homes.”<sup>73</sup> Most African female writers refuse Feminism; they all sing a similar song.

Buchi Emecheta adopts Alice Walker’s theory of Womanism, a revolutionary that seeks to resist patriarchal domination of black women; it is all about black feminist identity. *The Joys of Motherhood* is Womanist text of women paradigm; it tends to give a sense of full individuality to black women. She states that her type of Feminism is an African Feminism called Womanism. Like Buchi Emecheta, Alice Walker takes into consideration the survival of black women; her movement is not only about gender inequality but race- based oppression. She created this movement in response to the women who felt racially oppressed “Womanism seemingly supplies a way for black women to add gender- oppression without attacking black men”<sup>74</sup>. The quotation explains Alice Walker definition of Womanism and her search for justice and racial oppression. She then noted:

I do not choose Womanism because it is better than Feminism, I choose it because I prefer the sound, the feel, the fit of; because I cherish the spirit of the women, the word comes to mind, and because I share the African-American habit of offering society a new word when the old word it is using fails to describe behavior and change that only a new word can help it more fully see.<sup>75</sup>

The quotation above explains that she refuses Feminism and she chooses a word that represents her race, it represents black African women, her strength and to get rid of the stereotypes especially from the westerns feminists. Therefore, Emecheta’s narrative strategy of resistance is said to be Womanist, she herself declared:

I will not be called a feminist here, because it is European, it is as simple as that. Otherwise, if you look at everything I do, it is what feminists do, too, but it is just that it comes from Europe or European women and I do not like being defined by them. But in almost everything, except perhaps the problem of family, my book

has the same idea as they do. It is just that it comes from the outside, and I do not like people dictating to me. I do believe in the African kind of Feminism, they call it Womanism.<sup>76</sup>

Buchi Emecheta in her discourse entails the elements of Womanism. In her novel *The Joys of Motherhood* she better illustrates Patriarchy through her female character for example when Nnu Ego brother –in - law died; Nnaife inherited all his four wives. Emecheta also gives as an example of sexual discrimination, she says:

Grunting like an excited animal with a helpless prey, he left her abruptly, still unsatiated, and rolled painfully to the other side of the goatskin. Having hurt her on purpose for the benefit of his people sleeping in the courtyard, he had had his satisfaction.<sup>77</sup>

The author shows also the ignorance of mothers as subjects, his husband does not take care of them, he preferred spend his money on drinking. Nnu Ego declares: “Yes, I have many children, but what did I have to feed them on? On my life, I have to work myself to the bone to look after them.”<sup>78</sup>

Alice Walker celebrates black color and culture; she struggles to give Black movement a name of its own. She has always defended Black African writers like Buchi Emecheta, they have almost the same ideas, to celebrate African women and give her an important place. They both struggle for black people, particular women and their lives in racist, sexist and violent society. For example, Alice Walker’s novel, *The Color Purple* (1982) is all about her fighting about racism and patriarchal Black culture. Emecheta in her fights for women’s position. In her novels, she problematizes issues of identity and gender oppression like patriarchy and polygamy.

Her discourse of Womanism is against polygamous oppression, in *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta shows how Nnu Ego is victimized because of gender oppression.

Throughout the novel, Emecheta proves how this oppression is mediated by the natives. In addition, she highlights how gender determines who is the “superior” and who is considered the “other”. In *Ibuza*, women are subordinated to men, it is said that Ona is sentenced to death as she disobeys patriarchy and as she refused to marry Agbadi. A man can marry the number of women he wants. As a matter of fact, women are sexually neglected because of polygamy. We have seen in the novel how Agbadi neglected and disregards his wives for years because he is always with his mistress, Ona.

Alice Walker theoretical writing on Womanism draws the issue of gender oppression. The *Joys of Motherhood* epitomize most the characteristics of women underlying Alice Walker definition of Womanism. The title of the novel is ironic, despite her dream to become a mother. She never experiences the “Joys” that she was expected once she got children. Nnu Ego invested all her life for her children; she struggled to raise her growing family through feeding and clothing them at a time of starvation while her selfish husband spent all his money for drinking. Nnu Ego unfortunately became a sacrificial lamb, all her sacrifices has gone without receiving nothing in return. Unfortunately, she dies a lonely death in her return to *Ibiza*

Nnu Ego lay down by the roadside, thinking that she had arrived home. She died quickly there, with no child to hold her hand and no friend to talk to her. She had never really made many friends, so busy had she been building up her joys as a mother.<sup>79</sup>

Poor Nnu Ego, she had no peace in her death even her husband was not with her. Naife was occupied with his young wife Okpo, He left Nnu Ego gone with a great despair because she was psychically poor to satisfy him.

Finally, the paper includes that Buchi Emecheta’s novel *The Joys of Motherhood* reveals Alice Walker’s Womanism and her understanding of gender oppression and Polygamy.



Emecheta's position is to give voice to the women who suffered from patriarchal hierarchy caused by polygamy. At least, Womanism accounts for the ways in which Black women suffered and still suffer from the patriarchy and the institution of polygamy.

## Endnotes

<sup>54</sup>Pushpa Naidu Parekh, Siga Fatima Jagne, *Postcolonial African Writers: A Bio Bibliographical critical sources* (UK: London, USA: New York, 1998), 153.

<sup>55</sup>The Quran, Surah-el Room (Iselam International Publication limited, 2004), 30:24.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid, 4:3.

<sup>57</sup>Zaineb Al Hammadi, Dodoo, F. Ni, *Marriages Type and Reproductive Decisions: A Comparative Study in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Journal of marriages and the family, 1998), 232:240.

<sup>58</sup>Shayna M.Sigman, *Everything Law Years about Polygamy Is Wrong* (Cornell Journal of law and public policy, 2006), 3.

<sup>59</sup>Rose Mc Dermott, *Polygamy More Common than You Think* (Wall Street Journal, 2001).

<sup>60</sup>Rose Mc Dermott, *Don't Legalize Polygamy* (The province Journal, 2015).

<sup>61</sup>Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood: The Mother's Mother*(Heinmaan Oxford: London, 1979), 32.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, 31.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, 45.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 130.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, 138.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid, 16.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, 23.

<sup>70</sup>Syed Hajia Begum, *Agaist All Odds: African Womanhood in Postcolonial African Women Writing* (Marany, 2006), 112.

<sup>71</sup>Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood: The Mother's Early Life* (Heinmaan: Oxford, 1979), 36.

<sup>72</sup>Taju Olawall Ajayi, Buchi Emecheta: Beyond the Task and the Mask (department of English, Faculty of arts: Ogun state, Nigeria), 370.

<sup>73</sup>Marry E Modupe Kolawole, *Womanism and African Consciousness: The Context of African Women's Struggle* (Africa World Press Inc, 1997), 11

<sup>74</sup>Patricia Hill, What is a Name? *Womanism Black Feminism and beyond*, vol 26, iss 1, 1996.

<sup>75</sup> Reny S. Thomas, Sisterhood in Alice Malsenior Walker's *The Color Purple*. Index, Peer Reviewed and Refreed Journal, vol 6, iss,(2016),246.

<sup>76</sup>Omar sougon, writing *Across Cultures: Gender Politics and Differences in the Fiction Of Buchi Emecheta*( New York: Edition Rodopi, 2002 ), 217.

<sup>77</sup>Buchi Emecheta, *the Joys of Motherhood: The Mother's Mother* (Heinemann, Oxford, 1979), 17

<sup>78</sup>Ibid, 186

<sup>79</sup>Ibid, 253.

## Chapter Three: Education

Despite post-independence, girls still suffer from gender inequality; this gender gap has become wider. Daughters were not able to reach a high level in education or to achieve personal development objectives. In fact, Access to female's education was limited due to the cultural traditions and other factors which disallow girls from going to school. So, Since Black feminism stresses on the marginalization of women and the struggle for their rights, Emecheta, as a feminist writer, stands her voice to liberate women from hierarchical traditions. She says:

I do believe in African feminism. They called it *Womanism*, because you see, you Europeans don't worry about water, you don't worry about schooling, you are so well off. Now, I buy land, and I say Okay, I can't build on it; I have no money, so I give it to some women to start planting. This is my brand of feminism.<sup>80</sup>

In her novel *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta aims to present two opposite pair of women to highlight the effect of maintaining the oppressed traditions, and the rebelling to release from patriarchal society. She focuses mainly on education to use it as a weapon to bring back women's rights and achieve self-definition, despite their great sufferance. As Umeh points: "Education...is the crucial liberating force in the lives of Emecheta's heroine, and in fact their degree of servitude is inversely proportional to the amount of education they receive."<sup>81</sup> So, this part exposes the issue of inequality between female and male's education, and the break of cultural rights to reach women's goal.

### **a. Inequality between Boys and Girls in *The Joys of Motherhood*:**

The author tends to focus on the injustice that exists between the two sexes concerning the educational system. Within the novel, Nnu Ego and her husband did everything to build for their

two sons Oshia and Adim a better future and get a good job that the whole family would benefit from it; she sacrificed the girl's education to ensure the one of her sons. She said:

As long as God is with us, I shall help you whenever I can. Your brother is the direct heir, the first son of your father; he needs to be specially treated. If you can wait, when he finishes his education, then we will all be better off. Oshia will pay for you too.<sup>82</sup>

The protagonist admitted that once growing old, her sons would hold and take care of her, Emecheta pointed:

Her joy was to know that she had brought up her children when they had started out with nothing, and that those same children might rub shoulders one day with the great men of Nigeria. That was the reward she expected.<sup>83</sup>

However, no attention given to daughters, they are considered as investment. As a matter of fact, African patriarchal rules imprisoned females children rights, pursuing a higher education for African girls was not merely encouraged, they attended school for several years to fascinate and bring a good bride price once they reach the age of marriage.

The author highlights the male-centered world, sons were recommended to be sent to a pricey white school whereas girls were sent to private schools and were better investigated to domestic sphere, Nnu Ego claimed:

The twins will have to leave and help me in running the house and in my trade. If they are lucky, they too will go to school when your father returns. They don't need to stay long in school only a year or two.<sup>84</sup>

This exert mentions that girls are keeping enslaved, they are prevented from attending school, the role of a child girl was determined on cooking, cleaning, splitting the firewood... they are denied

access to education, suppressed their voice, and confronted to cultural rules, this reduces their opportunity from going further and decreased their chances in life. So, educating the sons will help them to live a secured life, whereas girls are devaluated and considered as objects. Additionally, Buchi Emecheta punishes her protagonist for her conservatism; she dropped into difficulties, famine, and remained inferior. Oshia's high degree in education made him a selfish man who did nothing to help his family financial problems; the two daughters married and left their home. Nnu Ego fall into despair and she even died a lonely death with a harsh misery and loneliness.

### **b. The Break of Traditions in the Joys of Motherhood**

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* exposes women's fight against sexual abuse, gender inequality, male subordination and patriarchy to bring back their status and start a new life. Within the novel, the protagonist struggles against inequality in education to achieve personal fulfillment. This shaped the notion of womanist liberation from gender oppression.

The notion of womanism is depicted also in the course of *the Joys of Motherhood*. Buchi Emecheta places great importance on education, she consider it as a salvation, and women's weapon to struggle against sexual harassment, race, poverty, and patriarchal rules to reach self-definition. Thus, Emecheta believes in modernity, this allows a shift from traditional values to a new world, a world in which exist equality and fairness. Emecheta points:

(...) I believe that if you create a heroine, whether African or European, with education- not necessarily money, but education- she gains that confidence of being able to cope with the modern world.<sup>85</sup>

She added: "(...) I always believe that given the Big E- Education- the position of women can be very positive".<sup>86</sup> Emecheta shows her notion of modernity in her character Adaku, Her experience

is depicted as modern African women who fights against patriarchy, male domination and culture values. She presents the Womanist, she realizes that she is not inferior to men and can take decisions by her own. She has shown the advancement and revolutionary stand against the stereotypical social culture, and succeeded without the help of men, she says: "I am not prepared to stay here and be turned into a mad woman, just because I have no son"<sup>87</sup>. The tendency of education expanded when she liberate her two daughters from the stereotypical rules and male authority. Adaku believed on the fact that with knowledge, her two daughters can free themselves from male domination and patriarchal traditions; they can stand by their own and reach the pick. She claims: "I want to be a dignified single woman. I shall work to educate my daughters; though I shall not do so without male companionship"<sup>88</sup>. She devoted herself to sexual trade, and rejects the traditional values which limited her freedom to provide her two daughters a better life; she liberates herself from gender inequality, male subordination. The two daughters are both sent to fancy schools just like the rich Yoruba. Reaching a high degree in education would help them to get a job, and do not be dependent on men, this liberate them from gender, race oppression and establish their own identity. Education would allow them to open a new room for their own, far from male subordination, and be used as means to raise women's voice and prove that they are capable.

Emecheta rewards Adaku by giving her a successful life, she represents the new African women; who denounces poverty and other aspects that restrict her advancement. She protests against the patriarchal society and give a new life for her two daughters to prove their identity and self- definition. Ngcobo states: " Emecheta receives praise for giving voice to the hidden feelings of women and she voices them as perhaps no one has done before...insisting that females complacency and the inequationing acceptance of male domination do not constitute the

quintessence of femininity"<sup>89</sup>. The author tends to give women other reasons to free themselves from patriarchal norms, and break the bondage of dependency, she asserts: "Women are capable of living for so many other reasons than men."<sup>90</sup>

## **Endnotes:**

<sup>80</sup>Bedana, Sangeeta Laishram: Search for Identity and Home in Buchi Emecheta's novel second-class citizen, IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, vol 19, iss 5, (2011), 34.

<sup>81</sup>Florence Stratton, Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender:" Their New Sister" Buchi Emecheta and the Contemporary African Literature (London: Routledge Press, 1994), 110.

<sup>82</sup>Buchi Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood: Mother of clever Children (Oxford: Heinmann, 1979), 214.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid 127

<sup>84</sup> Ibid 194

<sup>85</sup>Bedana, Sangeeta Laishram: Search For Identity AND Home in Buchi Emecheta's novel second-class citizen, IOSR journal of Humanities and Social Science, vol 19, iss 5, 2011), 34

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup>Buchi Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood: Woman alone (Oxford: Heinmann 1979), 189.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid 191

<sup>89</sup> Vicki.k, Janik and D. Jaik, Modern British Women Writers( London: Greenwood press,2002),116.

<sup>90</sup> Philip Megwali, Just Igbo Women (The Voice, 1996).

## **V. Conclusion:**

Emecheta is a Nigerian writer; whose works tend to present mainly the difficulties and unequal role of women within African societies. She devoted herself to literary writings to express her ideas and thought to protest against male's dominance, seeks for fair treatment to women, and bring back their dignity and independence, because African women were excluded, marginalized in all spheres and rejected by their community.

Our aim in this dissertation is to demonstrate Emecheta's main goal for writing her novel, she uses her autobiographical voice to discern the African stereotypical traditions that oppress African women, and encourages women's liberation through feminist discourse. Moreover, she seeks to bring back their identity since they are voiceless victims, and protest against all the negative images which are associated to women, propagate social justice among African society, achieve social changes by providing equal position and equal rights with men, and then put an end to marginalization and all aspects that contribute to the diminish of women's status.

In the first chapter, we have dealt with the African traditions and African realities, especially in Nigeria, providing the unfairness and the injustice rules which inhibit women's rights. We have also presented the negativeness of colonial ideologies which contributed the rise of sexism and gender inequality. So, through her writing of the novel, Emecheta speaks about the abusive traditional structure and problems that black women face every day, and outlines women, wives and mothers as passive and victims of society.



In the second chapter, we have identified the issue of polygamy, Emecheta chastises the institution of marriage, and the practice of polygamy empowers male dominance and leave women silent and voiceless. Emecheta's female characters were controlled by their men and kept enslaved; this made them the only victim of male exploitation, and suffered from oppression, segregation, and other stereotypical treatment. So, Women are depicted as other and inferior in patriarchal society.

In the third chapter, we have focused on Emecheta's emphasis on the importance of education to reject the traditional customs that restricts the improvement of women status. She honors black women by associating them as courageous and capable to manage things by their own. In addition, she encourages women's education to detach themselves from the boundaries and the obstacles that limited their liberties, and break the traditional chains to liberate themselves from male rule.

Finally, Emecheta provided all the aspects of Alice Walker's definition to the concept of Womanism, it is a symbol of liberation, and optimism for a better future. Giving the inspiration to go beyond the boundaries and fulfill their ambitions and dreams.

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