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AFRICAN WRITER : CHALLENGES AND
PERSPECTIVES IN *SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN* BY
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Abstract

In some African countries, due to their culture and social norms, women do not have any identity, any dignity and do not have access to education, because they are taken for second-class citizens. The purpose of this study is to show women's marginalization, their struggle for identity and dignity, and the possibility of their liberation from patriarchal norms as depicted by a female African writer. To reach this goal, qualitative research method has been used coupled with feminist criticism and sociological criticism approaches. We have applied sociological criticism which focuses on the norms and values of society and how literary works and works of art reflect a society. The study points out how Adah has to support the pressure from her family and her environment and exposes the hardship she has undergone to reach her goal. The results show that a female African writer, through her pen, points out that women can successfully fight and win identity and dignity in a patriarchal society, contributing then to the development of a nation if they are empowered by education and other trainings and are also afforded that opportunity in the world of work.

Key-words: Social norms, Women, identity, dignity, Second Class Citizen

Introduction

Every woman has the right to stay in dignity and be free of fear, restraint, violence and gender discrimination. They have the right to education, protection, and health in all its dimensions. Yet, these human rights are denied to hundreds of millions of women all over the world. It is particularly important for African societies to secure the right to sexual and reproductive health for women. It is important nowadays that we speak out forcefully of nil tolerance of all forms of violence towards women including girls. And we must well know that this is no longer a woman's issue, but it concerns everybody. Violence towards women is now not a desirable thing. Families and communities need to change some social norms and attitudes. Parliaments must pass strong laws that must be enforced by governments and the latter must be ready to sue to court the perpetrators of violence on women.

In the closing two decades, notions of inalienable human rights have reshaped the political landscapes of the growing world. The human right paradigm has been mobilised to address a range of current inequities, along with the vagaries of neoliberal globalisation, the excesses of authoritarian states, and the effect of new varieties of cultural and religious fundamentalism. Women's rights activists have been at the centre of the revitalisation of human rights, struggling to tackle gender inequity throughout cultures without lapsing into erroneous essentialising. Through participatory and inclusive organising, the international women's movement has advanced a strategy for human rights that cross past "the doomed duality of homogenising universalism and paralysing particularism" (M. Desai, 1996, p. 116).

Man and woman are like two equal wheels of an ideal chariot. If any wheel is quick in radius, then the chariot cannot run properly. Likewise, if anyone of the spouses is quick in position and now not handled equally or lacking in dignity, then the household cannot function smoothly, and cannot utterly contribute to the improvement of the society. Countries that agree to follow the human rights principles contained in Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) comprehend that the "full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world, and the cause of peace require the

maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields” (United Nations, 1981, preamble). As Abdelhamid Maha (2010) has stated in his treatise, Buchi Emecheta has the same point of view and tries to show the exceptional limitation women can face because of their Identity.

The feminist movement is often described as a political wave that advocates radical social changes. Consistent with this description, this issue of agenda is intended to tap into those “hidden sources of power from where true knowledge and therefore, lasting action comes” (A. G. Lorde, 1988, p.37). Wishing to inform the memories of prolific women at some points of Africa, each of those in the limelight and those working diligently in the background find the contribution of women inside collective moves for social justice in their respective spheres. The purpose is to assist women as innovators, pioneers and history-makers with the agency, autonomy and determination.

This research work aims at demonstrating the marginalisation undergone by women and their quest for identity and dignity and at proving that there is a way out to liberate themselves from patriarchal norms. Some previous papers have dealt with the issue of women’s identity and dignity. Among them are two articles by Théophile Houndjo et al. The first one is “African Women as the Alpha and Omega of their Own Promotion as Dealt with in Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*”. The second one is entitled “Women’s Precious Role in the Development of African in Darko’s *Beyond the Horizon*, Ngugi’s *Devil on The Cross* and *A Grain of Wheat*. This research is worth carrying out insofar as there are slight differences and/or specificities in the contents of the corpora. The present study is based on a single literary production by a female African writer who has herself experienced discrimination as a sign of negation of her rights and dignity which is not the case of the authors of the works of the previous papers mentioned above. *Second Class Citizen*, the corpus of this study, depicts the fight against discrimination by an African woman on both African soil and in A Western society, England and London in particular in the twentieth century which is not exactly the same experience in the corpora of the previous papers. *Second Class Citizen* ironizes Europeans and European societies that advocate, at least apparently, equality among all human beings no matter what their skin, origin or religion are, to name just a

few, but that are discriminating some people. The last specificity of this paper worth mentioning is the irony in Francis's attitude of jealousy vis-à-vis his own wife consisting in trying to prevent her making headway in the society.

The Feminist criticism and sociological criticism approaches have been applied to this work. Feminism is a range of socio-political movements and ideologies with the goal of defining and establishing political, economic, personal, and social equality between both sexes. It fights the fact that women are unfairly treated in societies that value men's viewpoints more than their own. The history of feminist literary criticism is extensive; it starts right from classic works of nineteenth-century female authors such as George Eliot (1819-1880) and Margaret Fuller (1810-1850). The literary criticism that aims to comprehend or place literature in its larger social context is known as sociological criticism. The use of a sociological approach codifies the literary techniques that are utilised to represent social constructs. Sociological criticism looks at how literature fits into society and how the social functions in literature. This form of literary criticism was introduced by Kenneth Burke, a 20th-century literary and critical theorist, with his "Literature as Equipment for Living" (1971). According to Kenneth Burke, works of art, including literature, "are strategic naming of situations" (H. Adams, 1971, p. 942) that allow the reader to better understand, and "gain a sort of control" (H. Adams, 1971, p. 942) over societal happenings through the work of art. In carrying out this research work, we have used a qualitative research method and more importantly library research to gather data so as to deepen the analysis and to sharpen the meaning the results we have achieved. Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* was first published in 1974. The issue used here is the one of 1998. For checking, refer to it.

This research paper revolves around three parts. The first part deals with the background to women's fight for the quest of identity and dignity. The second part is about Factors favouring the quest of identity and dignity. As regard the third chapter, it addresses the different obstacles to the women's quest of their own identity and dignity in *Second-Class Citizen*.

1-Background to the women's fight for the quest of identity and dignity: the prevalent provocative discrimination

Feminists like Simone de Beauvoir demand that women strive for transcendence in their daily activities rather than accepting their status as "the other" sex. She states that "one of the primal and seminal concerns of feminism is to announce that a woman is an individual being. She is neither the — other!; nor an addition to man. She is an autonomous being, capable of finding her own way to salvation". (S. Beauvoir, 2010, p. 48.) *Second Class Citizen* tells the story of a fantastic Igbo girl, called Adah, who has to struggle against many difficulties throughout the novel. When the story takes off, the concept of a second-class citizen applies mainly to women, especially in Nigeria. Adah's coming has not marked her birthday, due to the fact that she arrives when everyone is expecting and predicting a boy. She is, therefore, "a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe..." (Emecheta, 1998, p. 7). In the scheme of things, a boy is considered more important than Adah. Adah's schooling is stalled in order to give a boy a head start in education. The typical family would want their children to go to school: "Boys have been generally given preference" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 9). Actually, in Africa, "The birth of a son gives a woman status and she invests herself in her son's future, creating a deep symbiotic bond." (S. Anandalakshmi, 1991, p. 31). There is evidence in numerous research papers such as (L.C. Chen, E. Huq, and S. D'Souza, 1981; M. Das Gupta, 1987; A.M. Basu, 1989; G. Hazarika, 2000; V. K. Borooah, 2004; I. Kuziemko and S. Jayachandran, 2011), that boys are treated better than girls in households in terms of nutrition, health care, childcare time, and vaccination rates. An instance from the book is that at eight, the argument rages as to whether Adah needs to be allowed to go to school. Ma, Adah's mother, says "a year or two" of schooling "would do, as long as she can write her name and count. Then she will learn to sew". This is the mother's mantra as she "had heard her mother say this many times to her friends" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 9). The remark is that son preferences are frequently suggested as the basis of this unequal treatment, either because parents simply prefer to have a boy or because they allocate resources more selectively as adults in response to the gender gap in expected returns as proved in studies like (M. Rosenzweig and T. Schultz, 1982; N. Qian, 2008). Moreover, some other papers (e.g., J. Holmes, 2003; M. Aslam, 2009) claimed that on top

of being unfairly treated when they are young, women also fall behind in terms of literacy, educational attainment, participation in the labour force, and incomes.

One suspects that Adah's wildness for which she is punished with caning on the facet of Cousin Vincent and the headmaster is her refusal to accept the second-class status. Her family members do not care whether or not she gets further schooling after primary school. The way she affords the secondary school entrance fee no longer bother them because being a second-class citizen, she will not go further ahead in her studies. Concerning the trouble between husband and wife, the second-class sex/citizen is in the background. Francis is not happy with his wife because she fails to cry as he has left the country. For him, as a woman who is supposedly his wife, she ought to cry. In fact, nothing should compel any person to cry when their partner leaves them whether this partner is a husband or not. One can wonder why Francis himself does not cry when he is leaving his wife.

When Adah tells Francis he is lying, his response indicates that Adah is second class: "You've never in your life told me I was lying before" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 40). In England, the concept of a second-class citizen goes beyond sex or gender and incorporates race or where one comes from: "You may be living like an elite but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 43). This is what Francis reminds his wife of. He sees his wife as his mule who works "harder than most girls of her age and because she was orphaned very early in life" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 45). Thus, he prefers to do his reading and leave Adah work to fend for the family. Francis is raced that he accepts his status in life as second-class of their second-class ranking. Adah's house-hunting was made more difficult because she is black. Nothing like this has even existed in Nigeria before she has travelled to England. The story of Mr Noble we have to know in the novel is "when he became a second rate person, when he became second-class" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 89). As it is said, he is a retired civil servant in Nigeria and the only son of a certain chief in Benin City. "He came to England to study Law. But poverty occasioned was something she was supposed to be ashamed of" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 76).

Francis's graduation brings him down to his knees, he is a butt of jokes, which includes some demand that he undresses to show that he has no tail. Each time Mr Noble does this, he corns himself a pin of beer. The money he makes from a railway accident enables him to own a house said to be "too old, um shabby for any white family" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 93). When the white medical doctor fails to come to cure Vicky of his ailment on Christmas, it is comprehensible since every person will like to stay indoors. However, the important problem is that the affected person for which the medical doctor is being invited again and again is "a black child" who "had taken till on Christmas Day" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 149). Even the white man's locum, an Indian, does not come, he who comes is a Chinese, a second-class citizen like herself.

In many parts of Africa, the education of girls is relegated to the background. And this spreads to societal responsibilities which consider that women are to care for the household and do not have anything to do with decision-making positions. But the fight for gender equality reveals the contrary. For those who carry this struggle, women are to be involved in the policies designed for the development of society. During the celebration of International Women's Day 2018, Melinda Gates says in Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's 2018 Annual Letter: "I believe that empowered women change society. The data tells (this to) us."

Thus, even though Adah lacks her mother's support, she is capable of managing her life due to her strong character and power that enable her to fulfil her ambitions. Though not supporting polygamy, Emecheta illustrates the reality that an African woman can exist and succeed even though she lacks the important bond of mother-daughter due to colonial imposition of monogamy by depicting Adah who has one mother with whom she fails to establish that bond and lacks this support but still survives and succeeds. Emecheta's main concern, as she has realized, is promoting the equal opportunity of schooling for girls since she is a staunch believer in the notion that female education is the key to progress in society. Thus, she sincerely advocates in her talk, "Feminism with a small 'f'" that "it is true that if one educates a woman, one educates a community, whereas if one educates a man, one educates a man [only]" ("Feminism with a small 'f'", B. Emecheta, 1998, p. 175). In second, she underlines the significance of female education in Igbo society through the eyes of the protagonist, Adah:

School, the Ibos never played with that! They were realising fast that one's saviour from poverty and disease was education. Every Ibo family saw to it that their children attended school. Boys were usually given preference, though. So even though Adah was about eight, there were still discussions about whether it would be wise to send her to school. Even if she was sent to school, it was very doubtful whether it would be wise to let her stay long. (Emecheta, 1998, p. 8)

Although poverty is a major concern or splitting headache for the majority of families in Nigeria, unluckily training for girls is not seen as main important for those families. Likewise, Adah is not the first choice of her mother and it is decided that her brother goes to this costly school that Adah wants to attend (Emecheta, 1998, pp. 9-10). In fact, being in a dreadful quandary over whom to send to that school, it is unfortunately on Adah's brother that the family has eventually sets their heart, so she suffers from the gender inequalities that Stratton points out in terms of education:

Male bias in education is clearly one such factor. As we have already seen, colonial policy in Africa favoured the education of boys over girls and hence operated to cut women off from the written word. The same male bias is evident in education in 'post-colonial' Nigeria. Speaking in 1984 at the Third Annual Conference of Women in Nigeria, Ayesha Imam referred to the notion of equality of opportunity in education as a 'myth'. 'Not only are there more boys than girls in schools,' she says, 'but also there are more schools (and school places) for boys'. (Emecheta, 1998, p. 80)

Moreover, it is also worth observing that the fact that the more educated a girl is, the more expensive her bride price is which also complicates the bride wealth in Igbo society. Since Adah is determined to continue studying to be a librarian, she has to find a way to. In order to be successful in what she aspires, she manipulates the institution of marriage for her own sake thus going along with the option of getting married with bride. Actually, she has a plan for her future. After her parents' death, Adah has had to live with the relatives of her mother who do not care about her enough and contributes to her education financially and she has had to be creative in terms of making her plans to get

educated (Emecheta, 1998, pp. 19-23). Although she manages to get the scholarship, she needs to enter the Methodist Girls' School which will contribute greatly to her academic background (Emecheta, 1998, p. 23), unfortunately, life means a struggle for Adah and she has to fight for the things she wants to have in her life: education and a career.

2-Reasons for Women's quest for identity and dignity

In *Second-Class Citizen*, among the factors that compel to the quest of identity and dignity by women are discrimination, forced marriage, racism and prejudice, women abuse.

Discrimination is the act of making unjustified distinctions between people based on the groups, classes, or other categories to which they belong or are perceived to belong to. The main thematic trust ine of *Second-Class Citizen* is the prevalence of gender discrimination that is often found in the culture of the writer's people. Adah is also encumbered because of the gender discrimination that is the foundation of her marriage. Her husband, Francis, treats her as his property not as his wife. *Second Class Citizen*, opens up with Adah already being discriminated through this statement: "She was a girl who arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy, so since she was such a disappointment to her tribe" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 24).

Through the character of Adah in the novel, Buchi Emecheta explores how women, whether married or not are dominated by other family members, sometimes in the name of culture, value, preference and authority. Adah's world is entirely controlled, and she is dominated by men in her life. She is not empowered to make decisions for herself, but her other family members make decisions for her. A little girl in Nigeria initially displays the gender problems in this African society. Adah is the eldest child, but she is an unwanted and underprivileged child in her family because of her gender which is less important in her culture. The quotation below is an indication: "She was a girl who arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, and to her tribe; nobody thought of recording her birth. She was so insignificant." (Emecheta, 1998, p. 7) People overpass the limit of the believable. Hating

a female child is one thing but going far by not recording her birth is almost inconceivable but unfortunately true, at least in a novel.

Adah's brother is preferred for education, she is never appreciated nor encouraged for her studies or any decision she takes in her life. Little Adah is not permissible to join school as a part of this male-controlled order in the community, still she finds her own way to challenge the persisting norms of her prevailing culture and society at a very small age. Adah expects that her teacher at high school will appreciate her willingness to be educated. "She [Adah] felt Mr Cole should have asked her why she came, but being reassured by his smile, she said in her little loud voice. I came to school – my parents would not send me! [...] Adah scribbled away, enjoying the smell of craw-craw and dried sweat. She never forgot this smell of school" (B. Emecheta, 1998, p. 29).

Through *Second Class Citizen*, Emecheta wants to highlight the problem of equality among genders. In the traditional Igbo society that the narrator portrays in *Second Class Citizen*, some are involved in unhealthy attitudes towards marriage and the roles of the two genders are involved. Paramount among these is the idea that men are superior and women must accept and play their role as inferior partners. Men own and used their women as property. In the novel, Buchi Emecheta makes imparts imparts to the readers that the husband must be worshipped by his wife. A wife must work to cater for the whole family. Love is not an important consideration in some marriages. The children who result from any marital union are the woman's sole responsibility especially when they have a problem. For many women, Adah included, marriage is never a bed of roses. It is painful, energy draining and can even kill one's dream for personal development.

Second Class Citizen also describes various kinds of racism, and prejudice experienced by blacks living in the 1960s in the United Kingdom. They have resigned themselves to considering and accepting themselves as second-class citizens to traditional racism, in which black people have no right to accommodation owing to their skin colour. As an illustration, Francis cannot get better accommodation for his family who is coming from Lagos. It is just a room, a very small room with a single bed without toilet facilities. He knows that his wife is coming with two children. There

is no space between the bed and the settee in the room. Francis reminds her that in comparison to their social status in Lagos, they are “second-class citizens” in London (Emecheta, 1998, p. 31). He says to Adah: “You see, accommodation is very short in London, especially for black people with children. Everybody is coming to London. The West Indians, the Pakistanis and even the Indians... We are all blacks, all coloured, and the only houses we can get are horrors like these” (Emecheta, 1998, p. 29).

Obviously, living conditions are hard enough for black immigrants in Britain. Francis is just a ‘second-class citizen’ in London, however, Adah has already been a second-class citizen as a woman in her hometown, and now she is doubly disadvantageous because of her colour as well as her gender. Adah is not happy with such an accommodation. Francis is living among Nigerians who are working in factories, who believe that they are second-class citizens and have settled with such a stigma. Adah cannot accept such a low status. She has worked among Americans in Nigeria and has come to the United Kingdom to give her family a better status so that her children are trained in Western education. How can she get lower than where she was in Lagos? Francis says:

You must know, my dear young lady, that in Lagos you may be a million publicity officers for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants: you may be living like an elite, but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen. So you can’t discriminate against your own people, because we are all second-class. (Emecheta, 1998, p. 39)

The fact that Francis has accepted living like a second-class citizen due to laziness makes him think that Adah can be persuaded to think of herself as such. As Adah looks for a job, Francis persuades her to get a job in a shirt factory or a menial job like cleaning a shop to remain and maintain the level of a second class. Adah refuses to yield to his persuasion, saying:

“After all, she had several ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels and she had part of the British Library Association Professional Certificate, to say nothing of experiences. Why should she go and work with her neighbours who were just learning to join their letters together?” (Emecheta, 1998, p. 38).

Here, Adah is fighting in two fields. She has, first of all, fought to study and on this ground she has been successful. She has succeeded in getting “several ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels and she had part of the British Library Association Professional Certificate”. This is just a success but a great one for an African. Some European or British citizens do not even get these papers after education. We have already mentioned the usefulness of education in general and for women in particular especially in their fight for equality with men. The second fight by Adah here is her numerous endeavours not only to get a job but one which matches or more or less matches with her level of education. In this light, she fears nothing. She is determined to go to the end contrary to what her lazy husband Francis advice to accept any job that can enable her or them to make both ends meet. The results will prove her right. Adah has fought for education, equal job opportunities and equal treatment in society and has won the battle.

Adah applies for a job at the the North Finchley library and is accepted as a senior library assistant. As soon as Adah gets a job which her neighbours term as “a first-class citizen’s job”, she is discriminated against by her neighbours who taught her in various ways. They first speak through Francis who suddenly informs Adah that he will not be looking after the children when she goes to work. He complains that they will not learn good English and so will have to be fostered away. The landlord starts his self-intimidation, insisting that they should get a foster mother. He even puts up an advertisement without Adah’s consent. Unfortunately, no one offers to mind the two children aged 2 years and 9 months. The landlord and his wife are married without children. They complain that the children are disturbing them with their noise. The main problem is that Adah has refused to live like a second-class citizen. So many factors are working against Adah. First, she has a white man’s job, despite the warning from her neighbours. Second, she does not want to send her children out to be fostered like others, so their children are living with them as if they are first-class citizens. Third, they are Igbos with their own ideology. Their children are given a study space at the nursery school. Their Nigerian landlord and landlady complain that Adah is showing off her children when she comes down to fetch water. They decide to give Francis and Adah notice to quit the premises within

a month. The neighbours begin to taunt Adah with songs as soon as they see her around. "Most of the songs were about the fact that she and her husband would soon have to make their home in the street. What use would her education be then? The songs would ask. To whom would she show her children off then? It was all so Nigerian" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 72). With this attitude, one can conclude that Adah is discriminated against by her own people who cannot understand why she has to live as if she is a first-class citizen when they have accepted to live like second-class citizens. Since she does not want to fashion herself as they dictate, she has to leave their vicinity. This determination too is another tough fight by Adah, and she will win it.

In *Second-Class Citizen* by Emecheta, abuse is pervasive with women. The abuse takes on forms in the novel: moral abuse and physical abuse. As a womanist or "feminist" writer, Emecheta wears the dress of African women who are abused.

Traditional African customs require that once a man gets married to a woman, his parents and relatives are generally those who decide on her behalf whether those decisions are beneficial for her or not. For instance, in *Second-Class Citizen*, most decisions about Adah's life are gradually made by her husband's father, his mother and his brothers before Adah herself is referred to. The following quotation substantiates the fact:

She did not know her husband very well because, as most young African wives know, most of the decisions about her own lives had to be referred first to Big Pa, Francis's father, then to his mother, then discussed among the brothers of the family before Adah was referred to. She found all this ridiculous, the more so if the discussion involves finance. After all, she would have to pay for the plan in most cases but the decision would have been made behind her back. Of course, Francis was simply a puppet in such cases, and so was she. They could not refuse. They had to bow down to their elders. (Emecheta, 1998, p. 23).

The writer harshly criticizes the fact that most decisions about Adah are made by her husband's family without her consent. She denounces the burden of African customs and traditions that require Adah to submit not only to her husband but also to her family-in-law, and to bear whatever abuse she undergoes silently. She is scandalised when Francis tells her that his father has given him permission to go to England first without

her consent although she is the one who is going to provide him with necessary funds. The narrator tells us about it in these terms: "Father does not approve of women going to the UK. [...] you will pay for me [...] and within three years, I'll back. Father said you're earning more than most people who have been to England. Why lose your good job just to go and see London? They say it just like Lagos". (Emecheta, 1998, p. 24). This is not less than violence and torment exerted on women and also exploitation. Nobody, in a good partnership, should decide on behalf of the other without their consent whether within a married couple or not. The worst here is that it is the women who will pay for the husband and this has been decided behind her. It is simply unacceptable.

Throughout the novel under study, Emecheta also lays bare physical abuse. Emecheta denounces the fact that apart from being abused psychologically, African women are generally abused physically. She uses Adah as the prototype of such women. For instance, after she has read the birth-control literature that a nurse has given her, she has opted to use the cap, and Francis has eventually discovered her trick after much suspicion. According to him, "a cap [...] had been invented for harlots and single women". (Emecheta, 1998, p. 154). Instead of understanding her, the only way out that he finds is to beat her until "She was dizzy with pain and her head throbbed. Her mouth was bleeding. And once or twice during the proceedings as felt tempted to run out and call the police." (Emecheta, 1998, p. 154). To humiliate her further, "Francis called all the other tenants to come and see and hear about this great issue, how the innocent Adah who came to London only a year previously had become clever". (Emecheta, 1998, p. 154). The novelist intends to show how Francis uses physical violence against his own wife in a society where people are strictly required to respect and protect their wives. In this sense, M. Sidi Chabi and Y.C. Aguessy (2018, pp. 81-83) infer that Francis is inhumane because the writer is denouncing Francis's attitude and equates him with an animal. On no account, should a husband exert physical violence on his wife whether they are Africans or not, whether they are in Africa or anywhere else. Neither should a woman exert violence on her husband. All human beings should raise like only one person to fight against violence of all sorts in households, in families instead of fighting separately against violence on women, men, children

and female children just to quote these examples. All these forms of violence prevail all over the world including the pompously so-called old democracies or developed societies or countries, even though they are not appraised or judged in the same way everywhere.

3-Obstacles to women's quest of r identity and dignity

The impediments Adah must overcome in her quest of personal development include gender discrimination, poverty and her father's untimely death, irresponsible husbandhood in an abusive marriage, economic obstacles, and social norm obstacles.

Once again, it is worth recalling that gender discrimination is a hurdle that Emecheta has decided to combat. She denounces the fact that the first impediment to Adah's education is mainly related to the fact that her own parents discriminate her in *Second-Class Citizen*. She portrays the protagonist of her novel as a girl who was born when everyone is waiting and predicting the birth of a boy. The extract as illustration of this has already been quoted more than once in this very paper.

Emecheta who is no one else, but Adah transmuted into fiction, to a large extent, deplors the truth that a child is considered as a disappointment not only to her parents but also to her whole community. In the Igbo society which Adah or as a substitute Emecheta belongs to, the birth of girls is considered as something awkward, as a kind of failure and even an omen. Bringing up a girl is regarded to be as pointless as watering a neighbour's plant certainly because she is predicated to get married one day and make contribution to the increase of her husband's family at the expense of her own family as proved in research papers like (M. Rosenzweig and T. Schultz, 1982; N. Qian, 2008).

For that reason, most people prefer boys to girls. This is, of course, a kind of discrimination towards children's rights which stipulate that children should not be discriminated against whatever their sex. It is not understandable that in the depicted society, people usually opt for boys' birth and education. Although they realise that training is very important, they fail to acknowledge girls' importance in the community as doable marketers who can save them from poverty and diseases, in a

world, underdeveloped through education. Emecheta refers to training in Igbo land in these terms:

School — the Igbos never played with that! They were realizing fast that one's savior from poverty and disease was education. Every Igbo family saw to it that their children attended school. Boys were usually given preference, though. So even though Adah was about eight, there were still discussions about whether it would be wise to send her to school. (Emecheta, 1998, p. 3)

Emecheta portrays Adah as a very formidable girl. However, she has to face other obstacles to her training simply after her father's death which have to do mainly with poverty or to the lack of financial potential owing to the fact that her mother continues discriminating against her. The author makes use of poverty as an impediment to Adah's schooling to show that money is important in any human undertakings including the whole process of sending children to school. In Adah's case, her mother is keen on preventing her from going to school; solely the future of her son, boy, is her concern. She decides that the money that their father has left to them as an inheritance ought to be spent on the boy's training to the detriment of Adah's.

Irresponsible husbandhood in an abusive marriage is another obstacle to women's full bloom. Francis marries early in his life. It is not clear if the way he behaves as a husband is because he takes on such a responsibility so early in life. Adah considers herself fortunate marrying Francis who is neither an old baldy nor a 'made man' then..." Emecheta, 1998, p. 25. As the days progress, the way he says or does things shows that he is not ready, neither for fatherhood nor for husbandhood. He sets to go to England for further studies besides being bothered how his spouse will fare at home. Instead he is extra fascinated in noting whether or not Adah cries on the eve of his departure from Nigeria. Anything between him and Adah will "be referred first to big Pa, Francis's father, then to his mother, then discussed among the brothers of the family..." (Emecheta, 1998, pp. 28-29). Adah hides the fifth pregnancy from her husband because she is aware of the fact he will "repeat it to the Nobles, to his parents and to everybody" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 164). We are informed that at the top of their disagreement over the 'cap' issue, "Francis made it clear he was

writing to his mother and father. Adah used to be not amazed at this" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 161). Tichenor (2005, p. 193) points out that, "within marriage, men's power over women has been linked to and legitimated by their role as breadwinners..." and many other norms or aspects that go with the sociological perceptions of masculinity.

Their marriage "was completed as soon as Francis called in the Nobles and the other tenants... (Emecheta, 1998, p. 161) and let them know what should have been a family secret. Yet these are the same people or neighbours, the women in particular, who have written Adah an open petition warning her to control her husband, because he was chasing them all" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 168).

At the least provocation, Francis beats his wife. Once, he has beaten her till their landlord, Mr Noble has come to stop him doing so. Since Adah "was dizzy with ache and her head throbbed. Her mouth was bleeding" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 160). After she has packed out of their Nobles room apartment, Francis visits her with a knife and beats her even as he is aware of the fact that she is five months pregnant. But for their Irish co-tenant, Mr Devlin, perhaps Adah would have misplaced her life. Part of why he will be considered as an irresponsible fellow is what he does with his wife's manuscript. He is conservative to the factor where he does no longer agree that a woman has to be a writer. He wonders in a strange way: "A woman writer in his own house, in a white man's country!" Reminded that "Flora Nwapa is black and she writes", he retorts: "Flora Nwapa writes her stuff in Nigeria" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 184).

When Adah is about to start work with the American Consulate, Francis shudders to assume that his spouse will earn greater than himself. He complains to his father: "Her pay will be three times my own. My colleagues at work will laugh at me." He asks his father what he should do. His father is angry with him and calls him a fool of a man." (Emecheta, 1998, p. 26.) The father-in-law goes on to remind him that Adah's money is his, especially as she virtually has no direct relations interested in her or in what she is doing: "The money is for you, can't you see?" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 26).

As a more or less an irresponsible husband, he loathes work. He is contented with being fed by his wife, Francis is not bothered that his wife whom he leaves behind in Nigeria is taking care of herself and their two

children, is financing his schooling in England, offers his parents costly gifts and caters for the charges of his younger sisters. Although he does not work, he grumbles when he is requested to look after Titi and Vicky while Adah goes to work. He does not regard his looking after his own children as part of his responsibility. Interestingly, Adah has played and is playing well and successfully her part in the household and even beyond.

Another obstacle is of an economic order. Economic barriers appear when a woman is compelled to work when she is incapacitated or underage to make a contribution to the economic needs of the family. Other forms of financial boundaries consist of lack of employment, unequal pay for the identical job between a man and a woman, being subjected to low and menial jobs which make the woman a stabilised being. In the novel *Second Class Citizen*, Adah's work as a librarian at the American consulate does not go down well with Francis who believes that his buddies will make fun of him because Adah earns greater than him. His father tries to draw his attention on the advantages he can enjoy from his wife's income and how stupid he proves to be.

You are a fool of a man, you are. Where will she take the money to? Her people, who did not even come to congratulate her on the arrival of baby Titi? Her relatives, who did not care whether she lived or died? The money is for you, can't you see? Let her go and work for a million Americans and bring the 201 money here, into this house. It is your luck. You made a good choice in marriage, son. (Emecheta, 1998, p. 24)

This quotation illustrates more than one thing. The first of these things is that Adah, as a woman is a great fighter, a positive fighter meaning a fighter for common cause. She is a fighter with a clear objective and as such she knows how to go about it. She is a winner too. After proving her success in her studies, after getting her first job, she nevertheless continues looking for a better one. Not too many women do that or can do that. Some men even do not go further ahead. She must be praised and encouraged for that. Nothing stands on her way in the quest of a better situation. She proves to be a hard worker and other women should follow in her foot step. Her husband will acknowledge that.

Another important thing pointed out by this quotation is the open-mindedness of Adah's father-in-law, Francis's father. Contrary to the trend in their society, the one described in the novel, he withdraws his support from the filthy and backward principle of patriarchy which stipulates and advocates that women should not be either at the level of their husband nor overpass them in some fields such as property and owing. This does not mean that the old man is irreproachable or totally faultless. Francis behaves towards his wife almost the same way colonisers used to do towards the colonised peoples. This is an illustration of post-colonialism. Fortunately, the old man, Francis's father, is there to put things in their right places. This is not surprising insofar as Francis proves to be both a jealous person and a lazy one.

Francis acknowledges that he is lazy and so needs somebody who will work and offer him money while he whiles away his time and controls both the person and the money. Adah's economic fee is exploited. When Adah is applying for jobs, Francis asks her to get a job in a shirt factory, like other Africans to make certain that Adah sees herself as a second-class citizen. Adah does not belong to this category of people. So, she refuses, replying: that after all, she "had several "O" and "A" levels and she had part of British Library Association Professional Certificate, to say nothing of the experience. Why should she go and work with her neighbours who were just learning to join their letters together instead of printing them. (Emecheta, 1998, p. 40)

Adah's wealth worth is based on the money she brings into the family. She is being exploited. Though she makes the money, it is Francis and his father who dictate how it is and must be used. When Adah finally arrives in London, Francis makes it clear to her that he has married her because she is hard-working. She can work and get money. The marriage is not based on love but based on what Francis can get from his wife. The narrator reveals that: "He had told her that he married her in the first place because she could work harder than most girls of her age and because she was orphaned very early in life, but since she had arrived in England, she had grown too proud to work" (Emecheta, 1998, p. 41). So, the marriage is based on self-interest, rather than being based on the love which is capital in any marriage. (M. Sidi Chabi and Y.C. Aguessy (2018, pp. 79–80.) More concretely, Adah fights for women's identity, dignity and promotion. She is a good example. This shows that Francis does not

want Adah to have an identity better than his and other Africans'. That is why all are against Adah when she finally got a job at Finchley Library which Francis and his group regard as a first-class job. Instead of rejoicing with her, it increases their hatred and they want Adah out of the neighbourhood. Adah realises that her husband is tied to her because of her money. Many men like Francis feel threatened when their wives earn more than them because they feel they can no longer put the woman under their control. This is an illustration of the patriarchal behaviour. Economic independence plays an essential role in the freedom of women.

Social norms hindering progress and evolution are exposed through *Second Class Citizen*. The narrator inspires the reader to chase their dreams no matter the race, gender, or status. The story follows the evolution of Adah, Nigerian women around the time of World War II. Adah never let her dreams die out. She has kept to be able to get out of Nigeria despite her prerequisite and go to England to fulfil the lifestyle she desires to live. Furthermore, in both Nigeria and England, Adah fights against social norms that have delayed her evolution and as a result, she manages to attain her independence.

Among her obstacles is her husband and his conception of life. Adah has to fight against her husband, Francis's idea of what a Nigerian wife must be like. When Adah writes her first book, she doesn't come home to a supportive husband but a husband who burned her manuscript. Emecheta's narrator states: "You keep forgetting that you are a woman and that you are black. The white man can barely tolerate us, men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breastfeed her baby." (Emecheta, 1998, p. 167). Adah is in constant turmoil with her husband despite her being the breadwinner of the family. Francis is making an attempt to manage Adah and have her continue to stay under his shadow. This society believes that the role of a woman is sure to care for children and household chores. Adah challenges this belief that women are only good for bearing children and taking care of their husbands by not only taking care of the household but holding down the family financially. In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah proves many people are wrong of the social norms they grow up with such as men being superior, raising children how society feels is necessary, and Nigerian

women can't have a good education and get high paying jobs. Francis is a byproduct of how Nigerian women are viewed hence, why he treats Adah the way that he does. Adah, on the other hand, doesn't allow herself to be the byproduct of the social norms in both Nigeria and England of how a woman of colour must live. Adah doesn't let her husband define her, she raises her children on her own without foster care, and she obtains a high paying job due to her well-educated background which a Nigerian woman is denied to get. Adah can be considered as an inspiration to women in today's society.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined and interpreted the challenges that women face while fighting for identity and dignity. The study has exposed the abuses of women in African culture as featured by Buchi Emecheta in *Second-Class Citizen* through a fictional world. The paper reveals that women are verbally abused, physically beaten, psychologically abused and maltreated. They are denied education. Very often, these women are traumatised, stigmatised and rejected by their respective society. The paper argues that it is unjust, unethical and immoral to reduce women to household chores doers and children producers by depriving them of the right and chance to be educated and get worthy and high-paying jobs.

In *Second Class Citizen*, Buchi Emecheta, as in her other notable works, harshly criticizes some of the African beliefs and practices that promote social and gender inequality, thereby revealing the need for social change. It includes the belief that it is only a male child that is expected to have a formal and sound education which is contrary to the contemporary belief and practice of equal opportunity and right to education by both genders. A woman without a male child is despised by the society because girls are regarded as inferior to boys but Adah is a girl and is determined to be someone in life, therefore she confronts the beliefs by struggling by all means to see her goal of being educated achieved. She attends the best school of her interest that is the Methodist Girls' School because she realizes the importance of education and its role as a tool for self-emancipation and self-actualisation. To succeed in this research work, a methodology well-structured has been used. This study is conducted through three main points.

In the first point, the background for women's fight for social identity and dignity is depicted because of the social injustice that women are undergoing daily in African societies. It is then possible to state that in *Second-Class Citizen*, Buchi Emecheta reveals factors favouring women's quest of identity and dignity and the obstacles encountered in this struggle which most black people face in society.

The second point shows how, in England, Adah is forced to carry the burden of being a woman and being a black together with the other problems common to all immigrants. In both Nigeria and England, she struggles against the challenges of discrimination and prejudices, poverty, the irresponsibility of her husband, economic and social obstacles, hindering her personal development and adjustment. However, the problems she faces have gradually transformed her because of the cultural and social differences between Nigeria and Britain. She does not resist such differences as she seems willing to cultural integration in England. She believes that if she depends on the rules and norms set by the Igbo society, she is bound to fail. So, in the process of transformation and cultural integration, she has to fulfil the requirements of the host country. She then appears at the end, to have achieved her dream as she has established, and gain her identity and dignity.

In the final point, the obstacles to which the materialisation of equality of gender and women's quest of dignity are confronted with are exposed. Those hurdles are gender discrimination, poverty and untimely demise of the biological parents, irresponsible husbandhood in an abusive marriage, economic obstacles and social norm obstacles. Adah's father has died when she is still a small girl. This has had an impact on her schooling. Since she is a girl, her education is said to be unimportant. Her brother's education is a priority. Her husband is another obstacle that tries to block her ambition. But as a determined woman she overcomes all obstacles to succeed. She is an example to be followed by women within the society. Women must realize that opportunities will not land in their laps. They have to create them and if need be, fight for them. The women are to fight back to restore their dignified position in the society.

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NOTE A L'INTENTION DES CONTRIBUTEURS

DEZAN est la revue scientifique du Département de Sociologie-Anthropologie de la Faculté des Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines de l'Université d'Abomey-Calavi au Bénin. De sa dénomination «dézan» signifiant «rameau» en langue béninoise «fɔngbé», elle est représentative de la symbolique du changement social en culture africaine. De ce fait, la **Revue DEZAN** se donne pour vocation première de contribuer à une configuration décloisonnée des sciences de l'homme et de la société, pour une synergie transversale et holistique génératrice d'une interdisciplinarité plus fertile à un développement convergent où l'endogène et l'exogène sont en parfaite cohésion. Elle paraît au rythme de deux numéros par an. Les articles y sont rédigés en français, anglais, allemand, ou en langues nationales africaines.

Le comité de lecture est habilité à accepter pour publication ou non les articles soumis. Chaque article est résumé en une page au plus assorti de cinq mots clés du travail. Le manuscrit de 20 pages au plus est soumis en exemplaire original, recto seulement, saisi à l'intérieur d'un cadre de frappe 21 x 29,7; police Times New Roman, point 12, interligne 1,5. Il est accompagné d'un CD-RW ou d'une clé USB comprenant les données. Chaque auteur est appelé à donner son adresse électronique et son institution d'attache. Les cartes et les croquis sont scannés et notés de façon consécutive.

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