



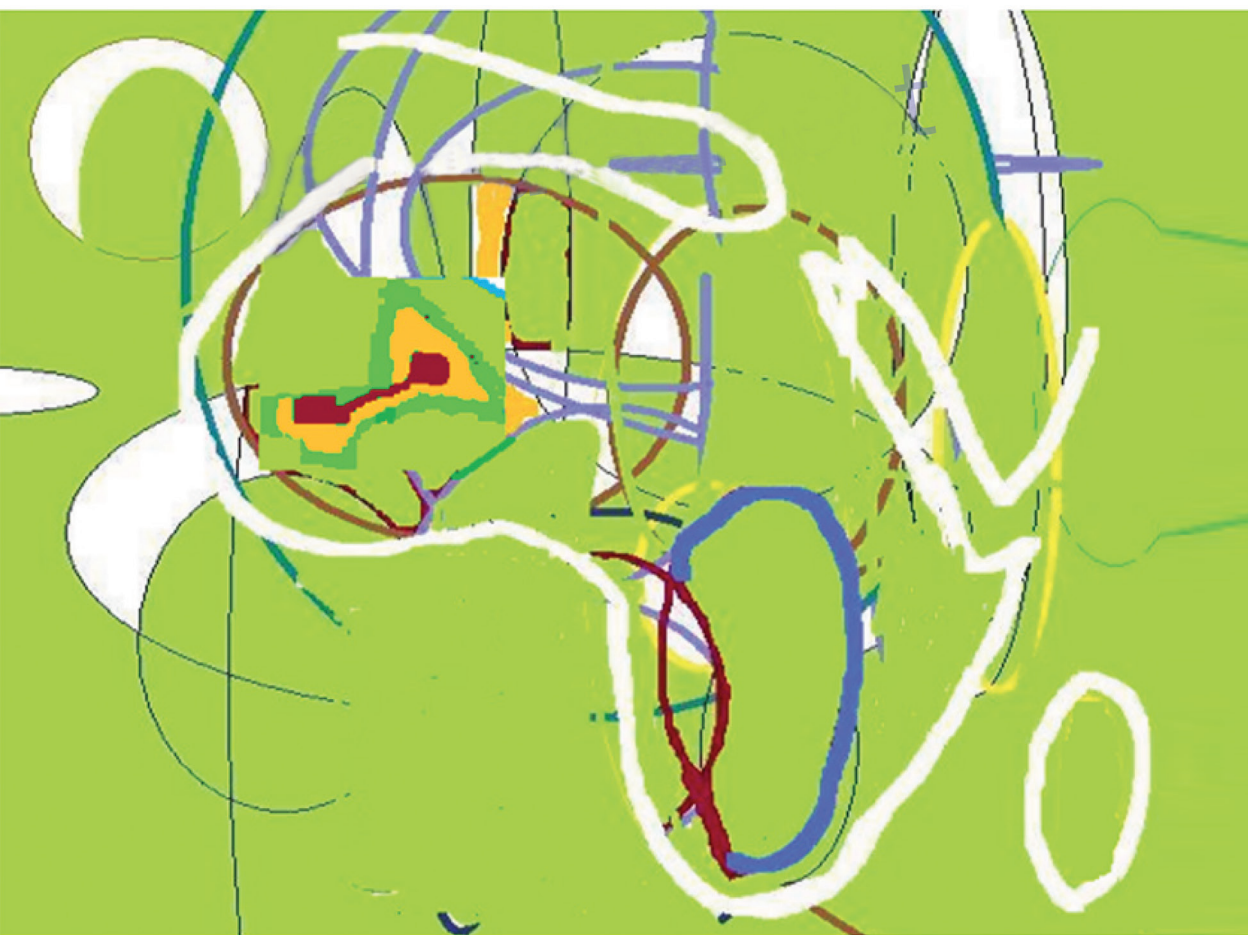
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**TITLE: The challenges related to the implementation of
the Agricultural Orientation Law on Women Agribusiness
Entrepreneurship in Mali.**

**MOVING FROM THE MARGINS OF PATRIARCHY
TO THE CENTER THROUGH ADAH'S STORY IN
EMECHETA'S *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN***

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims at scrutinizing Adah's movement from the margins to the center in Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*. Predestined to eternally live in the margins of society, she succeeds in changing her fate thanks to an early assertiveness. The core of this upward movement can be summed up in three phases: challenging social conventions, the reversal of gender roles, and self-affirmation. Challenging social conventions is readable through western education as an escape and the rejection of the Igbo conception of marriage. The reversal of gender roles consists in taking responsibilities traditionally behooved on men in their marital life. As for self-affirmation, it consists in overcoming stereotypes and racial discrimination and achieving a victory over Trudy.

KEY-WORDS: Capacity building, center, Feminism, gender discrimination, margins, racial segregation.

RESUME

Cette étude vise à analyser le mouvement d'Adah, de la marge au centre de la société dans *Second-Class Citizen* de Buchi Emecheta. Prédestinée à vivre à jamais en marge de la société, elle réussit à changer son destin grâce à une affirmation de soi précoce. L'essentiel de ce mouvement ascendant peut se résumer en trois phases : le défi des conventions sociales, l'intervention des rôles de genre et l'affirmation de soi. Le défi des conventions sociales se lit à travers l'éducation occidentale comme échappatoire et dans le rejet de la conception Igbo du mariage. L'intervention des rôles de genre consiste à assumer des responsabilités traditionnellement dévolues aux hommes dans leur vie

matrimoniale. Quant à l'affirmation de soi, elle consiste à surmonter les stéréotypes et la discrimination raciale et à obtenir une victoire sur Trudy.

MOTS CLES: Centre, Féminisme, discrimination basée sur le genre, marge, renforcement des capacités, ségrégation raciale.

INTRODUCTION

Buchi Emecheta belongs to post-independence writers gifted with an unquestionable literary acumen. Indeed, she is one of the outstanding Nigerian female voices whose works are multigenerational, given the pertinence and acuteness of the issues they raise. In addition to being a best-seller, her novel *Second-Class Citizen* remains a long-seller which is still on shelves more than forty four years after its publication. The issues raised in this multigenerational novel still hit the headlines today because they verge on socioeconomic reality. Such a real life issue is that of immigrants among whom some are sold today as slaves in Libya or are denied decent accommodation when they happen to reach Europe after braving all sorts of dangers in the desert and the wolfing sea. While pondering over the predicament of African immigrants in Europe, Emecheta brings to the fore questions related to the destiny of women in a patriarchal society. In this seam, S. Öztop (2017:151) posits that she “presents African women’s experience of otherness within a broad context of social inequalities resulting from monolithic and unyielding societal construct in the West and in the Third World”. Whether issues raised are mere social ailments or world pandemics, one realizes that a hidden feminist struggle targeting nauseous patriarchal conventions and aiming at the deconstruction of the existing society underlies *Second-Class Citizen*. In this seam, the heroine, Adah who was predestined to be an eternal victim of both patriarchy and racial discrimination, undergoes a capacity building process whereby she writes her own story by breaking off the yoke of patriarchy and racism. In other words, she moves from the margins to the center. This is the way the author tries to rethink institutions in emancipatory ways for girls. This story testifies that “the work of African women writers [...] strives to create a more egalitarian culture and challenges the narrow-minded and patriarchal ethics of their respective societies (S. Zulfiqar 2016: 10).

This study aims at showing how Adah moves from the margins to the center. To this end we will elucidate the following questions: What is the quintessence of Adah’s story? How does she move from the margins of patriarchy to the center?

These questions call a threefold answer: first, challenging social conventions, then the reversal of societal/gender roles and finally self-affirmation which consists in struggling to tackle or curb racial segregation. We will resort to Feminist lenses to scrutiny Adah’s success story.

1. CHALLENGING SOCIAL CONVENTIONS

In the patriarchal society making the backcloth of *Second-Class Citizen*, girls and women are overtly sidelined and silenced as regards social issues and even decisions related to their wellbeing, rights and lives. The community nurtures a strong disdain and discrimination regarding girls who are denied legal existence and western education. Adah challenges and escapes this discrimination by registering at school and later on rejecting the Igbo conception of marriage.

1.1 WESTERN EDUCATION AS AN ESCAPE

Western education in *Second-Class Citizen* is skewed in favor of boys. Besides, to show their disdain or punish children who dare to be born as girls instead of boys, the community deprives them of birth certificate. Adah overcomes this twofold discrimination by attending school by herself, which maps an escape into elitism.

Willingly or unwillingly, Adah is a troublemaker. As a matter of fact, her birth has brought about troubles and despair in the community: she has chosen to be born a girl whereas everybody was expecting and predicting a boy. The community prefers boys because they are would-be godparents and perpetrators of patriarchy. As for girls, they are mere tradable objects whose utility lies in their capacity to satisfy men and to give birth. Harry Olufunwa (2008: 11) underscores the foregoing idea as follows:

Because they are “only girls,” female offspring are apparently indistinguishable from the sexual act: as girls, they can only symbolise the notion of sex as pleasure; male children, on the other hand, are the product of much more purposeful sexual activity: they are emblematic of the social aspirations implicit in marriage and therefore more demonstrative of the cultural imperative to procreate.

What Oloufunwa is underlining is that children are given priority according to their sex. Girls are seen as useless beings. As a girl, Emecheta has also suffered from this patriarchal injustice that she subtly cudgels through her heroine. To punish Adah who has somehow ruined their hopes regarding the future of patriarchy, the community, her father in the lead, does not deem it necessary to establish her a birth certificate. Thus, Adah does not officially exist, which is a barefaced violation of her right to existence and that of children basic rights. Owing to the absence of birth certificate, the only event that enables people to trace back her birth is the Second World War which, like Adah's birth, marks great upheavals and desperation. Emecheta mentions this war to show the wideness of the misfortune created by Adah. At Adah's birth, there is a collective rush to send children to school. Parents hustle and bustle to send their offspring to school because they rely on western education as the surest avenue to freedom and prosperity as evidenced bellow:

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 (Emecheta 1974, 3)

The conception of school in Igbo community is biased because it is dictated by gender-based discrimination. As a girl, Adah was predestined to be a victim of inequity: she is denied the right to school whereas her junior brother is attending school. At Adah's expense, parents start to pave a glorious way for Boy, just like Lawyer Nweze. The latter's arrival after graduating in the United Kingdom brings about a collective hysteria within the Igbo community.

On that occasion, the women of Ibuza [...] composed songs, weaving the name of the new lawyer into them. These women were so proud of this new lawyer, because to them it meant the arrival of their very own Messiah. A Messiah specially created for the Ibuza people. A Messiah who would go into politics and fight for the rights of the Ibuza people. A messiah who would see to it that Ibuza would have electricity, that Ibuza would have a tarred road (Emecheta, 1974, 2).

The preparation for the arrival of Lawyer Nweze thoroughly impacts and shapes the mind of Adah who views school as the golden way to prosperity and novelty. Yet, going to school seems a never-to-be fulfilled dream just because she is a girl and western education is a luxury parents cannot grant their female offspring. For Adah, accepting this fate bestowed on her by harmful social conventions equals accepting injustice and forever remaining in the margins of society. Despite her early age, she attacks the foundations of this injustice by deciding to be given the same opportunities as boys. To this end, without prior consent of her parents, she decides to go to school by her own will in order to write her life story.

Adah's going to school is a facet of Emecheta's crusade whereby she wages a war against male favoritism and supremacy with the complicity and protection of patriarchy. She instils into Adah's mind her own determination to attend school. Indeed, according to M. Mazumdar (2014, 132) "from childhood onwards she has been determined to get educated like the men and going to London has been part of her childhood dream". By nurturing her heroine's yearning for western education and sending her to school, the author aims both at empowering her and giving her the same opportunities as boys in future. Commenting on the yearning for equality, M. Charyulu (2016, 298) writes: "This desire to persevere and survive in her society is what leads Adah on her journey through life. It is also the driving force behind her desire to never give up on her dreams". This testifies that the character Adah is an embodiment of Emecheta herself.

Adah's first day at school almost brings about family troubles. Since nobody has seen her going to school, she has been reported lost. Taking advantage of the situation, policemen charge her mother with child negligence and demonstrate their male chauvinism by

inflicting her all sort of ill-treatment before threatening to send her to jail. And yet, these policemen are blind, deaf and dumb to the predicament of girls whose right to existence and education is scoffed. After that incident, everybody agrees on the official sending of Adah to school. This implies the establishment of a birth certificate, which in return confers her an official existence. Despite the purgatorial torture inflicted to her mother, Adah draws happiness from that decision which she considers as her first victory over the community that has explicitly planned to maintain her on the fringe of society. Through the heroine's victory over her community, the readers "discover the stunning ability of the silenced to triumph over adversity" (Vera, 1999, 1). Adah proves to be a real wonder at school as her academic achievement is a symbol that triggers her escape into elitism. Yet, her father's premature death temporarily brings her back to the starting point. Indeed, after her father's death, her mother is inherited by Pa's brother, an autocratic man. As fervent backers of male chauvinism, the new family shoehorns Adah into enslaving tasks. This makes her think that her Pa's death is a blessing to her new family whose head is referred to as her master. As time wears on, advocating money troubles, the family decides to keep Boy at school and stop Adah's schooling. Nonetheless, by a stroke of luck, it is suggested to keep her at school a few years more, not for her own sake, but in order to rise her exchange value when the time of dowry comes.

Adah seizes this unexpected opportunity and works harder and harder to overcome this new adversity. Determined to succeed, she steals two shillings from her cousin and registers for a contest that provides scholarships for the Methodist Girls' School where she graduated five years later.

Initially viewed as a failure who has thwarted all the patriarchal prognostics, the heroine ends as a cherished girl who takes up the challenges of the community as a messiah. In the wake of her studies, the icing on the cake comes in the form of a well-paid job that enables her to become the breadwinner of a large family. She takes her economic independence as an opportunity to reject well-off suitors.

1.2 REJECTING THE IGBO CONCEPTION OF MARRIAGE

Emecheta depicts marriage as a social institution which establishes and perpetuates master-slave relations and whereby women are less than human beings. Yet, women who are denied basic economic independence often resort to it as a way out of their poverty-stricken situation. As an untamed rebel, Adah rejects this antiquated view of marriage and rather favors freedom of choice by choosing her husband by her own free will.

Through Adah, Emecheta gives a hard blow to the established system that denies basic rights to girls and women who are bartered through bride price. Paraphrasing Adela

Dumitrescu (2014, 142), one can opine that patriarchy “makes women look to marriage as a means of stability and makes them even more dependent on men”. Dumitrescu’s statement is quite the contrary of what is prescribed by authentic marriage as underscored by H. Olofunwa (2008, 5): “In traditional and contemporary African societies, marriage is often positively portrayed [...] as the zenith of feminine achievement: it is the institution that legitimately enables a woman to carry out the female functions, biological and social, for which she has been groomed since birth”. In *Second-Class Citizen*, marriage triggers anger because patriarchy has turned it into a vicious circle of life tragedy. Emecheta’s disdain regarding this modern enslavement is equally traceable through her brainchild’s conception and rejection of marriage:

She would never, never in her life get married to any man, rich or poor, to whom she would have to serve his food on bended knee: she would not consent to live with a husband whom she would have to treat as a master and refer to as ‘Sir’ even behind his back. She knew that all Igbo women did this, she wasn’t going to (Emecheta, 1974, 14).

The above lines clearly show Adah’s rebellion against marriage as practiced in the Igbo community. Harry Olofunwa (2008, 1) posits that marriage “simultaneously serves to raise the hopes of women and destroy those hopes”. As regards the destruction of female hopes, marriage as an institution establishes a master-slave relation whereby women are preyed. Girls are turned into slaves because they are somehow sold through the institution of dowry. For the sake of dowry, parents willfully stop their daughters’ education. Adah too has to stop her studies halfway and marry because she has no place where she can stay. To show that she is not a mere tradable good that can be swapped for poor-quality stuff and crumbs as prescribed by patriarchy, Adah rejects all the wealthy suitors. She rather prioritizes her intellectual achievement which will ultimately boost socioeconomic and political freedom and independence vis-à-vis men. Against all expectations, she chooses to get married to Francis, a student with a poor background. Furthermore and irrespective of tradition, she refuses any bride price on her marriage with Francis. This refusal is to be construed as another hard blow to patriarchy that she constantly challenges and pummels. Adah’s attitude is a thunderclap that wins her the denial of her parents who refuse to attend the wedding. After coming to blows with her parents, she sets with Francis. She thus enjoys her freedom and avoids being the property of well-off husbands who turn women into slaves and sexual objects through bride price.

From her early infancy to marriage, Adah proves to be an untamable girl who challenges social conventions. By a stroke of luck, she does well at school and later gets a well-paid job which enables her upward movement synonym with an escape into elitism. E. Umana (2011, 1) is right to say that with Adah, Emecheta has “replaced the traditional African women known to be timid, voiceless, helpless and vulnerable with

her modern counterpart that is assertive, ambitious, innovative and resolute”. When she gets married, she is the breadwinner of her family, which moves her from the margins to the center whereas her husband is moved from the center to the margins. In the Igbo context, the very existence of an economically independent woman who caters for her family is synonymous with the reversal of gender roles.

2. THE REVERSAL OF GENDER ROLES

Following her academic achievement, Adah gets a well-paid job at the American Consulate. Thanks to the economic authority vested in her, she achieves elitism, which forces respect and admiration. In her relationships with her husband and in-laws, she becomes a sort of goose that lays the golden eggs and she handles the household expenditure alone. There is thus a total reversal of societal and gender roles whereby Adah somehow becomes the head of the family whereas Francis sinks into failure.

2.1 ADAH, THE FAMILY HEAD AND BREADWINNER

Handling the household expenditure traditionally behooves to men. In a situation of reversed gender roles, it is Adah who assumes this responsibility. Turning the heroine into a family head is an overt way of cudgeling patriarchy.

The Igbo society depicted in *Second-Class Citizen* is structured in such a way that all power is concentrated in the hands of men. Besides, tasks and social responsibilities are defined according to one’s sex. It is commonplace to notice that men are wealthier than women, which results in the establishment of a master-slave relation with men and the feminization of poverty, which absolutely worsens women’s predicament. According to J. Ziegler (1998:194) “in the third world, the woman is the proletarian of the proletarian, the oppressed of the oppressed, and the slave of the slave”. As a consequence, women are sidelined as second-zone citizens with very restricted rights. There even comes times when they are found on the list of men’s material possessions because they are somehow bought through the dowry institution. Consequently men behave and subjugate women according to their whims.

To subvert the order of this society, which has too long victimized girls and women, Emecheta empowers her heroine in such a way that she is well-off. Being wealthy guarantees her a social status that helps her cater for a plethora of people among whom her husband and in-laws. In addition to her own children, she pays the school fees of her sisters-in-law: “she was to feed herself and the children whilst they were still in Lagos and pay the rent and help in paying the school fees of some of Francis’s seven sisters” (Emecheta 1974, 21). Moreover, she employs many servants, which is a luxury that only wealthy men can afford. By empowering Adah so that she can become the

head of her family, Emecheta raises her to the level of powerful men, a social class reserved to men. By the same token, she definitely solves the problem of the alleged inferiority of women and tries to deconstruct patriarchy, a noxious system that touts the superiority of men over women. Such practices have also long existed in the western world before being eradicated. Indeed, as A. Dumitrescu (2014, 143) states, “Women used to occupy an inferior position and enjoyed limited freedom in the patriarchal society though a reappraisal of the status of women was attempted initially in Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”. Emecheta’s struggle is therefore that of all the women fettered in the chains of patriarchy.

When Francis and Adah get married in Nigeria, she is economically more powerful than him and as such, she pays his school fees. By accepting to be schooled by his wife, Francis has swapped and bartered the social position bestowed on him by patriarchy. Differently put, Francis has implicitly transferred all the power and privileges granted him by his masculinity to Adah. He thus symbolically castrates himself, and by the same token betrays patriarchy and all other social conventions for the sake of marriage. As a result he loses his position as head of his nuclear family to the benefit of his spouse.

In England, Adah resumes her tasks as head of their family. As a true tyrant Francis handles the family earnings despite his economic powerlessness that prevents him from contributing to the budget. Besides, he starts and keeps beating her only a few days after she has delivered a baby. Fed-up with Francis’s patriarchal and despotic behavior, Adah rebels against him and decides to no longer feed him if he does not get a job. That is how he applies for and gets a job. However, Francis is so lazy that he spends his time complaining that the job is too difficult and tiresome. Advocating racism, he cultivates a painful fear each time he has to go to job. And yet, a girl joyfully does the same job without the slightest complaint. Emecheta thus covers Francis (and patriarchy) with ridicule and proceeds to a masculinization of laziness and fear. Likewise, she feminizes courage. Actually, Francis has been forced to look for a job because Adah has decided that it was about time she stops to nourish and rely on a man who spends his time watching TV from six o’clock to closedown and thinking himself as a master whose slave, namely Adah must work to feed.

As can be seen, Adah is the decision-maker in the couple. As for Francis, he is an extremely slothful and shortsighted man regarding the future. His laziness always leads him to failure.

2.2. FRANCIS, A SYMBOL OF FAILURE

Francis typifies failure at many levels. To underscore this failure Emecheta makes him

fail to school examinations before transferring him the alleged female weaknesses.

As underscored earlier, Francis betrays patriarchy by bartering all the privileges granted to him by his masculinity. Through education, he could have been given the opportunity to catch up with this betrayal and take back this power and social position. Notwithstanding, in her strong desire to behead patriarchy, Emecheta cripples Francis intellectually and economically. His intellectual dwarfism is first traceable through a series of failures. After many waves of failures to his exams in Nigeria, he precedes Adah in Europe in order to multiply his chances to achieve elite education. Yet, as it proves later, Francis goes to Europe before Adah to impede her from fulfilling her dream. In Europe, he proves to be a numskull who is always visited by failure: his arrival in England has not helped him sharpen his dozing intelligence and he keeps failing. Adah's arrival in London does not bring any change and Francis keeps failing and failing. Actually, he hardly accepts Adah's arrival in England. He has such an attitude because he is convinced that "It is allowed for African males to come and get civilized in England. But that privilege has not been extended to females yet" (Emecheta, 1974: 34). As a result of his being in England, Francis is supposed to get immersed in civilization. Despite this supposed immersion he does not accept female intelligence and the fact that he is less intelligent than his spouse. Nurtured in patriarchal principles and male chauvinism, he refuses to accept his male intellectual dwarfism and rather scapegoats Adah as being responsible for his failures as exemplified below:

A few weeks later, Francis had his examination result, and it was another failure. Of course the fault was Adah's, especially as she managed to scrape through a part of her library examination (Emecheta 1974: 156).

As can be seen, Francis perceives Adah as the responsible for his failure. His series of failures betray the patriarchal belief that men are more intelligent than women. Comparison with Adah proves that she is more intelligent (than her husband), which deconstructs gender stereotypes and revalorizes women.

With Francis, Adah's belief that men are stronger and more enterprising than women proves false. And this utterly debunks the myth about the stronger and the weaker sex. The alleged weaker sex becomes the stronger one and vice-versa. Francis is a tapeworm, a useless man who wants to reproduce patriarchy even in England. He is convinced that white men demean women as patriarchy does in Africa. And he loses no occasion to debase his wife as exemplified when she shows him her manuscript. His reaction regarding the manuscript betrays his male chauvinism. To Francis who cultivates an inferiority complex regarding his intelligent and assertive spouse, white men have no business with a brainless woman like Adah: 'The white man can barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breast-feed her baby' (Emecheta, 1974, 178). The rationale behind such an attitude

is to discourage Adah whose sparkling intelligence and assertiveness turn him into a mere shadow. Worse, as a typical failure and social waste, his covert aim is to see to it that Adah fails too and forever remains a second-class citizen under his control as exemplified below:

He had told himself subconsciously that he would never pass his examinations. He has, as it were, told himself that his ever becoming a Coast and Works accountant in this world was a dream. She did not know that for this reason he would do everything to make Adah a failure like himself (Emecheta 1974, 167).

As evidenced above, Francis is convinced that he will never succeed. In addition to being a lazy man and a social failure, he proves to be a notorious womanizer who tries to chat up all the women of their residence. To smother this blunder worthy of patriarchal and deviationist behavior, “all the women in the house wrote Adah an open petition begging her to control her husband, because he was chasing them all” (Emecheta, 1974, 163).

The last event Emecheta chooses to exemplify Francis’s weakness is the sickness of his son Vicky. Whereas Adah is relaxed in the face of the serious infection, Francis spends his time crying like a woman, because he does not know how to be a man. Emecheta thus proceeds to a feminization of men, which is a subtle way of deconstructing the patriarchal society. In the same seam, “Francis acquires the corporeal prolificacy that is often associated with women: the former has a (H. Olufunwa 2014, 15) “belly bulging like that of his pregnant wife” (Emecheta, 1974, 81)). Emecheta even assimilates Francis to an animal when she writes that he is “a jelly of a man” with “a belly like a pregnant cow” (Emecheta, 1974, 42) whereas Adah is portrayed as a determined woman as posited by **Öztop Haner** (2017: 151) who writes: “the figure of determined mother comes to the fore as a strategy of resistance to cultural expectations imposed on women or established customs as being stultifying to women, preventing self-development throughout the novel”. As mentioned earlier, Adah’s strong belief that men are stronger and more enterprising than women proves fake with Francis. To cap it all, he turns out to be a raw man found of rows. His favorite sport consists in daily bullying Adah because of her stern refusal to be a second-class citizen.

The unmatched laziness displayed by Francis, coupled with his repeated violent assaults on Adah, is the straw that breaks the camel’s back and pushes her to divorce from him. Through the institution of dowry, the woman becomes the private property of the man. As such, she cannot leave her husband. This is well exemplified in *Beyond the Horizon* (1991) by Amma Darko. When the heroine leaves her husband in the wake of numberless battering, she is obliged to tell lies to avoid being repudiated by her father and being sent back to her earthly hell. Accepting her is tantamount to paying back the dowry, which he cannot

afford. But within the same community the husband can repudiate his wife. In her desire to proceed to a reversal of roles, Emecheta makes Adah leave her husband, which is a bitter pill Francis cannot swallow.

Francis loses the privileges bestowed on him by patriarchy. His cynical desire to impede Adah's goodwill to achieve a high-class life results in failure. This failure symbolizes that of patriarchy that fails to inhibit female self-affirmation.

3. ADAH AND SELF-AFFIRMATION

When Adah migrates to Europe, she discovers that the saying that all men are born equal is a mere sentence. There is a long and well-rooted tradition of racial discrimination that sidelines black people as second-class citizen, whatever their origin. As an untamed rebel, Adah rejects preconceived ideas based on race and endeavors to raise to the level of first-class citizens. To this aim, she challenges white supremacy before winning a victory over Trudy.

3.1 CHALLENGING WHITE SUPREMACY

Adah is highly subversive to white supremacy that she endlessly defies. This challenge is perceptible when travelling to the United Kingdom and later on when looking for a job.

Adah starts to challenge white supremacy even before migrating to Europe. Even if it is not willfully, she has raised to the level of whites by the very fact of working and spending full days with them at the American Consulate. As a pure product of the white milieu, she deems it normal to have the same privileges as them when shipping to the United Kingdom, whatever the price. Indeed, on the boat, all the black travelers choose second-class trip except her and her children who buy first-class tickets. This is an overt challenge to white supremacy. First-class tickets make her share the same privileges as white travelers and foretells her struggle to raise to the level of whites and also be a first-class citizen once in England. In England, the author uses her to deconstruct the British supremacy just as she does with domestic norms in Nigeria. In the mind of immigrants, "in Lagos, you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants: you may be living like an élite, but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen" (Emecheta 2004, 37). Relying on her intellectual achievements Adah refuses subaltern jobs that can never give her the opportunity to be an executive. Such jobs will but confirm the inferiority bestowed on black people, which she can by no means accept.

Adah comes to the conclusion that being second-class citizen is psychological. She is chocked to see that just like her useless husband, her fellow Nigerians are but wimps

who internalize the idea that they are effectively inferior to their ancient white masters. Worse, they barter their masculine pride granted them by patriarchy for servant positions as if they were still under the yoke of colonization: “Men here are too busy being white men’s servants to be men” (Emecheta 2004, 51). In addition to symbolically castrating themselves, they interiorize the preconceived idea of white men who consider themselves as the superior class. “Not only does that class confine the actions of the subordinated, but it also dictates their language, preferences, thoughts, dreams, and indeed most deeply held moral and political intuitions (L. White, 1992: 1503). As a consequence immigrants content themselves with petty or menial jobs that can never help them raise to the position of executives. They are so convinced of their inferiority that they do not dare to make efforts to prove the contrary, which infuriates Adah who utterly wants to destroy the myth of the white supremacy. No wonder when Francis urges her to consider herself as a second-class citizen, she refuses and rather looks for a job whereby she can draw satisfaction. Accepting a low-paid and subaltern job would be to demean herself to the level of illiterate and perpetuate the master-slave relation established in the colonial era. Looking for elite or middle-class jobs is a way of breaking the alleged first-class myth and by the same token the yoke of Francis who has a colonial mentality. Adah’s interests and those of Francis come to blows because contrary to Nigerian immigrants who are highly feeble-minded and yes-men, she has so decolonized her mind that she regards herself as the equal of any white. She consequently applies for the jobs till now reserved for white people. Emecheta sheds light on Adah’s stern refusal to devalue herself and abide by second-class citizenship in the following:

Francis kept pressing Adah to get a job in a shirt factory. Adah refused. Working in a factory was the last thing she would do. After all, she had several ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels and she had part of the British Library Association Professional Certificate, to say nothing of the experience (Emecheta, 1974, 38).

Adah’s struggle to get a first-class job goes in pair with her strong desire to be the equal of any white men. Her efforts are rewarded in the form of a senior library assistant at North Finchley Library. As a consequence, she enjoys the privileges of a first-class citizen and this de-facto turns Francis into a temporary babysitter, a task behooved to women:

All in all, Adah was happy she’d got a first-class job [...]. It was all right for her, being a first-class citizen for the part of the day when she worked in a clean, centrally heated library...while it was still news that she had got herself employed in a library, doing a first-class citizen’s job, Francis was prepared to look after their children, but soon her job was no longer news (Emecheta, 1974; 43).

The very fact of getting a well-paid job proves that it is up to everybody to remove barriers that impede one’s happiness. For R. Webster (2001, 62) “Class barriers or wealth

do not appear as insuperable obstacles to individuals from impoverished classes, and thus allow us to equalize in the imagination what is unequal in social practice". Adah succeeds in turning imagination into reality and living consequently. Through her job, she escapes the dirty environment which typifies second class citizens and evolves in a highly clean one symbolic of first-class. Adah's struggle to achieve first-class citizenship aims at showing that she was born to live in elitism, regardless of patriarchal bans to impede women's success. Her struggle goes beyond her personality and becomes that of all the women trapped and silenced by patriarchy. This idea is stressed by ÖĞÜNÇ Ömer (2015: 39) as follows:

In her struggles against the social order, Adah turns into a symbol of this anti-male domination crusade. She does not simply accept the role in the background, assigned by the patriarchal Nigerian society under the influence of British colonial rule, and becomes a challenging character".

What ÖĞÜNÇ Ömer is underscoring is that Adah rejects backbencher roles for frontbencher ones. Taking advantage of her position as a library manager, she reads a lot to be cultivated and discusses any intellectual issue with whites. In addition to intellectual capacity building, her reading of Baldwin comforts her that black is beautiful and therefore she must not be ashamed of her skin color. In the same seam, she banishes notion such as inferiority complex from her basic vocabulary. In her relationships with white men she comes to the conclusion that they are all equal. She also discovers that despite their tendency to claim racial supremacy they are as fallible as black people. Such a fallibility is observed in her self-control following Vicky's sickness. Indeed, while whites are panic-stricken by a mere fever, she shows no sign of fallibility. The conclusion one can draw is that Adah is stronger than whites. It is rather her who should claim superiority. Her stress-free attitude destroys the myth of white supremacy.

Adah succeeds in destroying racial barriers. Her triumph over white supremacy myth is symbolized by the victory that she wins over Trudy.

3.2 VICTORY OVER TRUDY

From her native Nigeria to England, Adah successfully overcomes obstacles that hinder her freedom, which is a symbolic victory over society. This triumph is perceptible through the victory over Trudy.

Trudy is an untrustworthy British female citizen who registers as a child-minder. Yet, when she is entrusted with Adah's children, she cashes their money without taking care of them. She rather confines them in the dirtiest part of her house where they play with soiled toys. This results in the sickness of Vicky. As a 'rotten liar' (Emecheta 1974, 67) Trudy denies any responsibility in the child's sickness. This denial triggers Adah's anger and as she puts it, she would have beaten her if they had been in Nigeria. She does not

give the slightest

punch to Trudy. Yet, driven by a search for justice and a revengeful impetus, she leaves no stone unturned to get her removed from the list of child-minders. As surprising as it may seem, Trudy even leaves the quarter to relocate in a remote place where Adah cannot meet her. Trudy moves from the quarter because she is scared to death at the idea that meeting Adah will bring about more problems. Trudy's removal and relocation following the complaint of a nigger is a great victory that somehow reinforces her first-class citizenship already lived at Vicky's birth:

She had had Vicky in the best hospital in Nigeria in the best ward under the most efficient Swiss gynaecologist that the Americans could get for her as a member of the staff which was one of the innumerable fringe benefits attached to work for the Americans (Emecheta 1974:65).

As can be seen, Adah and her child are citizens who remove racial barriers by enjoying the same privileges as white men. Her victory in the deconstruction of the myth of the white supremacy is brought to the fore when she succeeds in making Trudy banished from the list of people with a license to take care of children.

Adah seems to typify Emecheta's female characters who "struggle against gender biases, racism, inter-ethnic conflicts and certain negative impacts from the institutions of marriage, motherhood and family and try to re-establish themselves" (M. Mazumdar, 2014, 130). Through Adah, "Emecheta advocates a change of attitude towards female and believes that this change should be initiated by women themselves. She believes that a woman can contribute meaningfully to the growth of the society just as men can do" (M. Charyulu, 2016, 300). Her victory over Trudy is a symbolic one over racism.

CONCLUSION

Adah's movement from the margins to the center of society is a covert way for Emecheta to ponder over and combat patriarchy and racial segregation. Through her upward movement, the heroine rails against and defeats fate. Prior to the reversal of gender roles and the stern refusal of second-class citizenship, Adah pummels well-established traditions and paves her way into elitism. Strengthened by vested rights resulting from her intellectual and social achievements, Adah shows a strong and doze-free goodwill to write her story and her part of human History by her own free will instead of allowing others tailor her a gloomy future. In many regards, Adah's story is that of the author herself. As a matter of fact, L. Bedana1 and Laishram (2014, 33) opine that "*Second-Class Citizen* is a record of her experiences and struggles of life through the fictional character of Adah Obi which is the alter ego of Emecheta herself in the 1960s at the

backdrop of racism in the United Kingdom”. Adah’s achievement in her struggle partly stems from the fact that she is enthrallingly assertive and always tries to conquer what she is deprived of.

Borrowing from Y. Vera (1999, 2) one can state that Adah’s story testifies that “women from Africa have not been swallowed by history, that they too know how to swallow history” by turning its pendulum to their advantage in order to create a more equalitarian society. By breaking patriarchal conventions and racial segregation, Adah becomes the very epitome of untamable people who never balk before difficulties. As such, her story can serve as a springboard to all the African women enmeshed in patriarchal trap and evil. In the same seam, *Second-Class Citizen* can serve as an avenue to world-wide movements of mind decolonization which will ultimately sparkle the struggle to cudgel racism for the advent of a humanitarian world freed from gender and racial prejudices. And this can happen only if people demonstrate as recent movements such as “MEE TOO” and “BALANCE TON PORC” that fuelled Feminism did, contrary to Emecheta’s quiescent or sloppy Feminism.

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