



**SAFARA**

**Revue internationale de  
langues, littératures et cultures**

UFR de Lettres et Sciences Humaines  
Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis

**ISSN: 0851-4119**

**N°15  
2016**

**SAFARA N° 15/2016**

Revue internationale de Langues, littératures et cultures

UFR Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université Gaston Berger,  
BP 234 Saint Louis, Sénégal  
Tel +221 961 23 56 Fax +221 961 1884  
E-mail : [omar.sougou@ugb.edu.sn](mailto:omar.sougou@ugb.edu.sn) / [mamadou.ba@ugb.edu.sn](mailto:mamadou.ba@ugb.edu.sn)

**Directeur de Publication**

Omar SOUGOU, Université Gaston Berger (UGB)

**COMITE SCIENTIFIQUE**

|            |                  |         |                 |
|------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Augustin   | AINAMON (Bénin)  | Maweja  | MBAYA (Sénégal) |
| Mamadou    | CAMARA (Sénégal) | Babacar | MBAYE (USA)     |
| Simon      | GIKANDI (USA)    | Maki    | SAMAKE (Mali)   |
| Pierre     | GOMEZ (Gambie)   | Ndiawar | SARR (Sénégal)  |
| Mamadou    | KANDJI (Sénégal) | Aliko   | SONGOLO (USA)   |
| Baydallaye | KANE (Sénégal)   | Marième | SY (Sénégal)    |
| Edris      | MAKWARD (USA)    | Lifongo | VETINDE (USA)   |

**COMITE DE RÉDACTION**

|                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Rédacteur en Chef :       | Badara SALL, UGB   |
| Corédacteur en Chef :     | Babacar DIENG, UGB |
| Relations extérieures :   | Moussa SOW, UGB    |
| Secrétaire de rédaction : | Mamadou BA, UGB    |

**MEMBRES**

|             |              |         |             |
|-------------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| Abdoulaye   | BARRY (UGB)  | Maurice | GNING (UGB) |
| Khadidiatou | DIALLO (UGB) | Fallou  | NGOM (USA)  |
| Oumar       | FALL (UGB)   | Ousmane | NGOM (UGB)  |

© SAFARA, Université Gaston Berger de Saint Louis, 2016

**ISSN 0851- 4119**



## SOMMAIRE

An Afrocentric and Feminist Analysis of the Issue of Race and Subalternity in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* ..... 1

### **COULIBALY Aboubacar Sidiki**

Le dispositif scénique ou l'écriture scénographique dans *Les Vainqueurs* d'Olivier PY ..... 17

### **Ignace Bassène**

La mythologie et son expression poétique dans *Les Amours* de Ronsard..... 37

### **Tafsir Mamour BA**

*L'île de Bahila* de Cheik Aliou NDAO ou une pédagogie de la révolution..... 47

### **Ibrahima BA**

Duplicidad de la temporalidad y atemporalidad en la trilogía novelesca de Abel Posse sobre la conquista de América: *Daimón*, *Los perros del paraíso* y *El largo atardecer del caminante* ..... 63

### **Ndiro SOW**

La topografía parisiense en *Susana y los cazadores de moscas* y *Laura o la soledad sin remedio* de Pío Baroja ..... 79

### **Ndèye Khady DIOP**

Bible Translation and Feminism in Burkina Faso: Some Reflections drawn from the Dioula and Mooré Biblical Versions ..... 93

### **F. Emilie G. SANON-OUATTARA / André KABORE**

Etude comparative de l'origine des proverbes wolof et anglais ..... 113

### **Astou Diop**

Micro-violences et incidents à l'école : les violences scolaires comme symptômes de la crise d'un modèle éducatif ..... 137

### **Mamadou Lamine COULIBALY**

Adverbe de négation: place et portée stylistico-sémantique dans la phrase ..... 153

### **YAO Kouadio Jean**

L'apport du français à l'enseignement et l'apprentissage de l'anglais ..... 171

### **Youssoupha COULIBALY / Papa Meïssa COULIBALY**



**An Afrocentric and Feminist Analysis of the Issue of Race and Subalternity in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen***

**COULIBALY Aboubacar Sidiki**

Université des Lettres, Langues et Sciences Humaines de Bamako

**Résumé**

Cet article analyse la question raciale et la subalternité dans *Second Class Citizen* de Buchi Emecheta à partir d'une approche afro-féministe. Il démontre la façon dont les constructions sociales et idéologiques de la notion de la race et du genre peuvent engendrer des mécanismes de racisme et de sexisme pour les deux sexes. Ceci est révélé aux travers des personnages féminins et masculins du roman qui est l'objet de notre étude. De cette même manière, le texte se base sur l'hypothèse que certaines pratiques et valeurs patriarcales peuvent constituer la source de la domination et de la subordination de la femme africaine dans une Afrique à plusieurs visages culturels différents. Aussi, il aborde la question raciale qui est devenue un sérieux problème dans la société anglaise postcoloniale où les Noirs se trouvent relégué à la périphérie comme des êtres humains de seconde classe. A travers l'expérience d'Adah dans cette société racialement diverse, le texte décrit la manière dont la femme de couleur peut être opprimée à la fois à cause de son genre et sa race. L'héroïne, grâce à sa détermination et son désir ardent d'être indépendante, a pu s'intégrer dans la société anglaise où elle obtint un travail de première classe de bibliothécaire à Norah Finchley Library. Elle a réussi là où plusieurs Noirs comme son mari ont échoué. Bien que l'article conclut que l'éducation et l'indépendance financière constituent des moyens efficaces pour l'autonomisation de la femme africaine, il révèle aussi l'attitude eurocentriste de la romancière. Ainsi, il a été trouvé qu'Emecheta reproduit certains des stéréotypes eurocentristes sur l'Afrique tout en culpabilisant l'homme africain et sa culture comme la cause de la marginalisation de la femme africaine.

**Mots Clés** : Race, Subalternité, Genre, Culture, Approche Afro-féministe.

**Abstract**

The paper analyzes the issue of race and subalternity in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* from an Afro-feminist perspective. It seeks to show how the social and ideological constructions of race and gender could engender networks of racism and sexism for both sexes: male and female characters as it may be decoded from the literary text being discussed. In like manner, the study is based on the assumption that certain patriarchal practices and values may constitute the source of the domination and subalternization of the African woman in an Africa of diverse cultures. It also tackles the issue of race which happens to be a serious problem in the English post-colonial society where Blacks are relegated to the margins as second class human beings. Through the experience of Adah in this racially diverse society, the paper describes the manner in which the colored woman is double oppressed due to racism and sexism. The heroine, thanks to her determination, and her strong desire to be independent, was able to integrate the English society by obtaining a first class job as librarian at North Finchley Library. She succeeded where many black men failed like her husband. Although the paper concludes that education and financial independence is an efficient means for the subalternized African

woman to put an end to her subalternity and discrimination regardless of the cultural and racial context in which she may find herself, it also reveals the Eurocentric attitude of the novelist. It is therefore found out that Emecheta reproduces some of the same Eurocentrists' stereotypes about Africa by blaming the African and his culture as responsible for the marginalization of the African woman.

**Keywords:** Race, Subalternity, Gender, Culture, Afro-feminist Perspective.

### **Introduction**

Buchi Emecheta is an asserted Nigerian female writer who is highly important in African female literature. She is also a committed writer who has always struggled for the equality of sexes in Africa and in Europe. Her different literary texts better attest such a point of view. From her first novel, *In the Ditch* (1972), to the last one, *The New Tribe* (2000), she has placed an emphasis on issues like gender, racism, sexism, African culture and many other important topics related to the mental, political and cultural freedom of colored people in Africa and outside Africa, especially the black woman. This does not mean that Emecheta is not interested in other issues of great importance for humanity such as peace, development, economy, justice and others.

From the foregoing, it is axiomatic to specify that the paper discusses the particular way the issue of gender in relation to race can cause the double-subjugation and oppression of African women, especially, when they leave their immediate socio-cultural locations for a new racially disparate society (Europe). It does not only explain how this particular work of Emecheta depicts and interrogates the oppression and subalternization of African women within capitalist, male-oriented societies across the two continents: Africa and Europe, but it also shows the way through which the subalternity and oppression of African women could be alleviated or terminated. It signifies that the emphasis of the study is placed on the issue of race and gender in which Emecheta attempts to challenge and question the hegemony of racism and patriarchy in both places (Africa and Europe) against which women of color should struggle as foregrounded in the character of Adah in *Second Class Citizen*. Although this is the main objective of the paper, it also seeks to criticize the Eurocentric attitude of Emecheta in such a literary text from an Afrocentric perspective because of the importance that the author of the paper has also given to the defense of African culture and civilization. He also does this because he believes that no civilization on earth can entirely be regarded as perfect without having within itself some good and bad aspects. In addition, people or writers should not be blind about cultural difference and diversity which is important to avoid the ideologies of essentialism and Eurocentrism. It is actually from such an afro-feminist perspective that the below sections develop the theme of race and subalternity as concretized in *Second Class Citizen*.

### **1. An Overview of the Story of *Second Class Citizen***

Before developing the way in which the issue of gender and race is treated in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, it first of all becomes pertinent to talk about the kind of plot that is used by the novelist to relate the story of Adah as a novel of formation. It may enable the reader to better appreciate the manner in which the issue at stake is described in the paper. To begin with, the novel, *Second Class Citizen*, tells the development of a female character, Adah, from her childhood to her adulthood in two different geographical, cultural and racial locations. The story is that of a Bildungsroman of Adah. At the age of eight, she is a girl of strong determination. It is this strong determination which guides her to achieve self-empowerment and concretizes whatever she thinks is the best for a girl like herself in a society dominated by patriarchal and phallogocentric values and attitudes.

Although, *Second Class Citizen* initially begins in a colonial Igbu, an Igbo village located in the eastern part of Nigeria, it is set in a modernizing and post-colonial Lagos. The main conflict of the story is mainly external. By external conflict, we mean that the heroine, Adah, is confronted with a major external problem which has to do with her society where gender is a serious problem because of its phallogocentric and sexist orientations. For instance, in the exposition of the story, the protagonist is introduced as being born a girl when everybody expects a boy in a society dominated by the idea of the importance of male children. Once the heroine is born, she is rigorously initiated into the male-oriented cultural values of her Igbo society by her own mother. She is thus socialized, like the other Igbo girls, into the blind acceptance of the various patriarchal ideologies, beliefs and attitudes inherent in the customs and traditions of her Igbo society by her own mother, who herself, was educated by her mother to uncritically and passively accept the male dictates of their society. At an early age, the heroine is consequently taught by her mother to be aware of what is meant to be a girl in the Igbo community in which social roles, responsibilities and privileges are determined in terms of male gender. Despite such a state of affairs, Adah, thanks to her personal energy and desire to break the shackles of patriarchy, understands that the fact of being a girl or a woman in such a gendered society entails complete submission and devotion to the male figure like a slave. She is also aware that the role of Igbo women is to stay at home for housework and child rearing. But being fed up with such cultural roles and traditional tasks; Adah decides to be educated without the approval of her parents in spite of knowing that, as a girl, she is not expected to attend school. It is at this particular moment in the story that she begins to confront a strong opposition from her parents because of her desire to be schooled like the other boys of her age.

As the story progresses, the protagonist, a round and dynamic character, is delineated as a strong-willed girl with great wit. Strong determination consequently enables her to get over the various difficulties in addition to her parents' opposition to her education and the fact that her society gives more considerations and privileges to boys and men than girls and women.



It is in that tradition that girls and women are unconsciously interpellated to accept their roles in a society dominated by the power of the father, the husband and that of brothers without any sense of revolt against such patriarchal values. Thanks to her personal efforts, Adah is accepted at the Methodist School. This works because Mr. Cole persuades her parents to let her go to school. As an ambitious, active and resolute girl, Adah takes inspiration from Nweze, the first Igbo lawyer educated in the United Kingdom, whose return home was celebrated by Adah's kinsmen. The great ceremony organized to welcome Nweze motivates the heroine and she decides that she would someday go abroad to pursue her studies like Nweze. From that day on, she realizes the importance of education for women in her Igbo society. This awareness of the heroine about the importance of education in the life of Igbo girls symbolizes the philosophy of African women's guidance by the writer of this novel.

Thus, after achieving a successful secondary education in Nigeria, Adah is compelled to marry with Francis under the pressure of traditions, as well as of her people. But before that, she had rejected many marriage proposals while following her secondary education. In spite of the pressure to marry, Francis happens to be the person Adah loves the most among her many suitors. She accepts Francis as husband not in the name of love only, but also owing to the affinities that the heroine thinks they share. After three quiet years of happy marriage with Francis, Adah's husband travels to England to further his education. After her husband's departure, Adah also leaves for England after deploying different strategies to convince her husband's parents about the necessity for her to join her husband, Francis, in England, a foreign land.

As the story goes on, it is revealed that Francis is not different from the other men, for he also believes in the domination, inferiority and subjugation of women. The story further shows that he is only interested in what he can gain as materialistic profit while being with Adah instead of true love. This is to pinpoint that he does not really love his wife. Francis regards Adah as a financial security and not as a wife to be loved, cherished and respected. As a matter of fact, Adah becomes the bread-winner and the main support of her lazy husband and his family. Their marriage engendered five lovely kids: three while in Nigeria and the two others were born in England. The turning point of the story comes when Adah starts having serious marital problems with her husband because of bad family planning, her husband's brutality and his inability to support the family. As far as Adah is concerned, the ultimate brutality and cruelty find expression in Francis's burning of her first manuscript of her very first novel. The sum total of all these motivate Adah to begin saving money with which she is to live independently of her husband. This works for her, for after saving enough money to fend for herself and her children, she leaves her husband in the end of the story. But, in order to be totally preserved from the intrusions and brutality of Francis, she goes to court where she is officially given the legal custody of her five children with a fixed regular contribution from Francis. This further gives her protection by law from Francis's brutality and violence.

Ironically, it is in a 'racist' England that Adah, like all the other colored characters of *Second Class Citizen*, becomes a second class citizen due to the color of her skin. Despite all the problems and suffering that she encounters from Nigeria to England because of the patriarchal values of her Igbo society, the racism of the English people, her oppression and exploitation by her husband, Adah by her courage and determination succeeds in a new socio-cultural context of Europe. She gets a decent first class job in consistence with her high level of education. She successfully obtains her first and second degrees from the Department of Sociology of the University of London. The story ends up with the collapse of her marriage as already mentioned above. She is left to fend for herself and her five children among whom the paternity of the last kid was even denied by Francis, her former husband. In other words, the denouement of the story is happy since it foreshadows Adah's independence, financial autonomy, as well as freedom to pursue her literary career without any hindrance. This is from a feminist standpoint but another reader may find it unhappy because of the disintegration of the heroine's marriage which is praised and sacred in African societies.

## **2. Color and Race Implications in *Second Class Citizen***

The term, color, is generally related to the notion of race which is defined and understood by people according to the complexion of one's skin. The implication is that the meaning of race is namely associated with the ideological conception of blackness and whiteness. This very idea of race<sup>1</sup> has been the subject and object of many debates for many years now culminating in some Western scholars defining and categorizing human beings into different groups on the basis of the color of their skin. In conformity with Caucasian racist ideas, theories have been propounded by some Western thinkers, Gobineau, Darwin, Hegel, Jung and Lucien Levy Bruhl<sup>2</sup>, to show and promote the idea of the superiority of the white race over the black race or other races.

In order to establish and maintain a world of polarities between and among human races and to justify their scramble for the wealth and raw materials of Africa, Europeans saw themselves as being divinely ordained by God to civilize "the heart of darkness" in reference to Africa. So they accordingly promoted what they call "the civilizing mission" so as to hide

---

<sup>1</sup> For more clarification, this postcolonial concept means the different divisions and classifications of human beings on the basis of their physical and biological characteristics. Race indeed started to bear ideological meanings of discrimination in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During those periods, it was generally used as a pretext by colonial European powers to justify the practice of slavery and "the White man's burden" which is the civilizing mission.

<sup>2</sup> He is one of the most important French theorists of race and color. In his book, *How the Natives Think*, Trans. Lilian A. Clare (1926; reprint, Princeton, N.J.; 1985), Levy Bruhl in referring to black people says: "Primitives see with eyes of like ours, but they do not perceive with the same minds." This thought of Levy Bruhl importantly attests the stereotypes and misconceptions generally associated with the black race.

their actual economic and exploitative intentions towards Africa and Africans. The spirit of the civilizing mission is indeed enshrined in the belief that some people or races are naturally “civilized” and “superior” whereas others are believed to be “uncivilized” and “inferior”. Thus, Europe or the West becomes the center and the reference of the world. Any belief or practice which is different from such a cultural locus is denigrated and considered “primitive” or “harmful”. This has been one of the major strategies used by some White Westerners during the slave trade and the colonial period to enslave, colonize, exploit and marginalize people of color on their own soil as well as on the white Man’s land as displaced people. In like manner, neo-colonialism and the present globalizing trend are actually new strategies invented by Westerners to continue to exploit, marginalize and discriminate against black people on the basis of the color of their skin. They are actually coalesced in the promotion and the maintenance of the superiority and hegemony of the white race over the black one economically, politically, culturally and even globally through their economic power.

In view of the foregoing, it is important to note that when a black African woman immigrates to the West, where Eurocentrism is the norm, she would also be the subject of various stereotyping and discriminatory behavior vis-a-vis herself as the other on the basis of her color. The literary text which is the object of our investigation is also written by a person of color who is presently living in England. It is a place where she has immigrated to in search of a better education, and qualification. She also migrates to this new geographical location for her self-fulfilment without fully being aware of the stereotypical problems and racism that she and other black people of England might face as depicted in her biographical book, *Head Above Water* (1989). Like in the experience of this female novelist herself, the protagonist of *Second Class Citizen*, Adah, also experiences the same stereotypical treatment by the English people. Emecheta, in her struggle against any form of discrimination against people of color, especially women of African ancestry, intelligently depicts and shows in this novel that color constitutes a real problem in English society with its corollary of stereotypes and racism. She indirectly does this through the character of Adah in order to sensitize the reader about the misconceptions and false ideologies which are generally engendered by the ideology behind the issue of race in Western society. By this story of Adah and from a biographical approach, the Nigerian novelist may intend to emphasize, through the voice her narrator, the denigrating power of color and race in Western society like England as exemplified by Adah’s experiences as a young and black woman in a particular White society. The excerpt below paints a poignant picture of racism on the part of Whites against Blacks:

On one occasion, he was asked to remove his trousers, his mates wanted to see whether Africans had tails or not because that was the story they were told during the war. Adah remembered her father telling some of his friends something like that, but she had been too young to understand. When she heard of Mr. Noble’s case, she knew that such stories really were told. In any case, Mr. Noble removed his trousers for a pint of beer. It was then that he became so popular, popular and generous enough to be given the name

'Noble'. He was such a noble man that he would do anything for his mates, even taking his trousers off. (Emecheta, 1974, p.84)

The connotative meaning of Mr. Noble in this excerpt implicitly refers to white people's racist concept of "noble savages" while talking about black people in general. This concept is paradoxical and ironical because how can a savage be noble? That is the question to be asked, but in the white man's mind, a noble savage is an "uncivilized" or "backward" black person who begins to adjust his way of life to that of the white man but who has not yet reached the same standard of civilization like the former or who simply knows that he should obey the master like a "loyal dog". In the eyes of the other white characters of the novel, this behavior of Mr. Noble perfectly rhymes with the idea of a "tamed savage" black man who is now being touched by Western civilization because of his obedience. Yet, the fact that these white characters ask Mr. Noble to take off his clothes so that they can see whether Mr. Noble has a tail or not clearly shows the extent to which certain white people have developed false ideas about the black race. Through this incident, the novelist intends to express the degree to which black people, due to the invented meanings given to the color of their skin, are looked down upon through the gaze of the white man as depicted in *Second Class Citizen*. In addition, the fact that the novelist names this character Mr. Noble, it is first meant to reflect the ways through which white people unconsciously or consciously view colored people as animal-like, and second to make an implicit allusion to the Western enterprise of the civilizing mission. In closely analyzing the other side of the coin, people may also see that Mr. Noble indeed symbolizes this type of African who has not been able to understand that he is just like the white man.

Through the character of Adah in *Second Class Citizen*, people may clearly see that, like the novelist herself as already mentioned in the paper, the protagonist also immigrates to London which may signify that there is probably a close relation between the story of Adah and the life of the novelist herself. This may also connote that the experience of Adah is presented in the novel in order to unveil the problems that black men and women may encounter while in a new culturally displaced world like London. In this regard, when Adah reaches England as she has always wished it, she soon gets pregnant and gives birth to her third child, Bubu, a boy. As a mother, a wife and an African Igbo woman in a new "hostile" socio-cultural environment, Adah sees and experiences "the coldness of the English people" because she is first a woman and then an African. This coldness of the English people is well expressed as it follows:

England gave Adah a cold welcome. The welcome was particularly cold because only a few days previously they had been enjoying bright and cheerful welcomes from ports like Takoradi, Freetown and Las Palmas. If Adah had been Jesus, she would have passed England by. Liverpool was grey, smoky, and looked uninhabited by humans. It reminded Adah of the loco-yard where they told her Pa had once worked as a moulder. In fact, the architectural designs were the same. But if, as

people said, there was plenty of money in England, why then did the natives give their visitors this poor, cold welcome? Well, it was too late to moan, it was too late to change her mind (Emecheta, 1974, p.33).

As expressed in the novel, Adah has not totally been accepted by the British people as a full member of their society like the other black people that she finds in London. In reading between the lines, the reader can implicitly understand that the kind of white society depicted in this novel is phallogcentrically capitalist where people are judged and divided into classes according to their gender, race and economic power. It means that some works are only destined to black people or women and certain other lucrative works are reserved for white males only, and despite the kind of education that Adah received in Nigeria before coming to London does not help her when she first puts her feet on the British soil. This state of affairs has greatly impacted negatively on the living conditions and the integration of Adah in such a new socio-cultural environment in the first place. Through the voice of an omniscient narrator, the novelist directly or indirectly tries to reveal how the issue of color and gender can affect the life of any colored woman. This is because Eurocentrism is based on the power of the White male figure at the expense of the other races and sexes.

As the title *Second Class Citizen* indicates, it is in England that the protagonist becomes a second class citizen. This idea of being considered as second class citizens is due to the ideological organization of the English society in which roles are defined according to the status and the color of one's skin. This has a great psychological impact on the protagonist, as well as the many Africans living in a London of discrimination, racism and segregation nearly in all levels of the English society. For instance, in the novel, animals such as dogs are portrayed as having better treatment by English people than colored people, especially Africans or descendants of Africans living in such a culture. Through the particular attention and the great care that English people reserve for dogs in *Second Class Citizen*, the novelist here intends to highlight the extent to which animals are better treated by English people than Blacks who are human beings. In the same vein, it is revealed in the novel that, "They love dogs, the English do. Yes, they love their dogs, Francis continued; so much so that they would rather the dogs butcher a black man, than let the black man kill the dog." (p.134). In addition, the reader may also comprehend that the issue of color is problematized by the novelist in this text in order to project the pernicious implications that are associated with the idea of color and race in the Western context. For instance, in a discussion with her wife in *Second Class Citizen*, Francis explains that:

You must know, my dear young lady, that in Lagos you maybe 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 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, 1974,p.37)

The passage clearly supports the idea of being a second class person despite the level of education of Africans in London because the rule is based on the ideological constructions of skin color. Blacks are looked down upon and this shows that they are considered undesirables. They are accordingly confined to their own space of subalternity which negatively impacts on the psychology of black people like the character Francis and his other countrymen. From analyzing the character of Francis, it can be observed that he is unconsciously programmed by the racist ideology of English society. He, therefore, accepts his subalternity and the secondary role that he has to play in England. In the same way, he wants to force his wife to accept this fact because he is deeply convinced that a Black cannot succeed in such a racially divided English society. Through the narrative voice, the novelist reveals that although God created all human beings equal, some are rated superior to the others just on the basis of their races. This is also exemplified in *Second Class Citizen*, especially, when Adah and her husband start looking for a better accommodation. The different white landlords they visit for accommodation refuse to give them their houses because of their “Blackness” even though they have the money to pay their rent. In some cases, Adah and husbands even propose double the normal price for the rent but they were still refused accommodation. They fail so many times that when they are given an appointment to see a house for rent; Adah has to affect her American accent to give the impression that she and her husband are not Blacks but Americans. In other words, they have to hide their black identity before being accepted into English society. This clearly shows that black people are marginalized and relegated to the periphery of the English society. The following quotation accurately illustrates the racist attitude of some English people when black couples want to live in better conditions and in more appropriate accommodations like the English themselves:

In any case, Francis and Adah had to look for another place to live. If it had been possible for them to find a new place, they would have been moved within weeks of her arrival in London. But it had not been. During the days and weeks that followed, she had asked people at work if they knew of anywhere. She would read and reread all that shop windows had to advertise. Nearly all the notices had ‘sorry, no coloureds’ on them. Her house-hunting was made difficult because she was black...She was beginning to learn that her colour was something she was supposed to be ashamed of. (Emecheta, 1974, pp.70-71)

This issue of race is problematized in Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* in order to conscientize Africans and Whites about the predicament that the ideological ramifications of the concept of race may cause for colored people living in a European society. The author of the foregoing novel is race-conscious and her intention may be to remind the reader that race and racism are unfortunately woven. They are consequently responsible for the social stratification of the English society into two racial classes: white people and black people. This particular division plays a great psychological impact on Francis and his other male

countrymen as portrayed in *Second Class Citizen* because they were called into accepting the inferior position which is given to them.

### 3. Analyzing the Meanings of Gender in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*

Europe has historically been known for its patriarchal culture and its relegation of women to the margins of society where European women were denied some of their basic rights such as the right to vote, education, job etc. This particular fact in the history of Europe has greatly contributed to render the African woman vulnerable as a subhuman being on the margins of Western society. Consequently, the character of Adah in *Second Class Citizen* is badly treated from a multiplicity of centers: within her own community and among other black people, because of certain phallogentric and patriarchal values inherent in many African cultures especially in the Igbo, Yoruba and English societies. Despite the fact that Adah is caught between two gigantic forces of racism and patriarchy, which she experiences daily and encounters among her own people and in the streets of London, she never gives up the fight in rejecting the inferiority of black people, as well as her subalternity among her own people because of her being a woman. Adah is viewed by white Londoners as of an inferior race and she is at the same time oppressed and ill-treated by her husband and her other Igbo and Yoruba countrymen as if they were still in Nigeria. To show the subalternizing attitudes of Adah's husband and her other kinsmen towards the heroine on the basis of her gender, the narrator of *Second Class Citizen* cleverly expresses the worry of the protagonist vis-a-vis the sexist attitudes of her compatriots and the acceptance of Blacks in general to play secondary roles in the kind of English society depicted in the novel:

What worried her most was the description 'second-class'. Francis had become so conditioned by this phrase that he was not only living up to it but enjoying it, too. He 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 Professional Certificate [...] Why should she go and work with her neighbors who were just learning to join their letters together instead of printing them? Some of them could not even speak any English even though it was becoming a colloquial language for most Igbos. To cap it all, these people Yorubas, the type of illiterate Yoruba who would take joy in belittling any Igbo. But Francis mixed with them very well, and they were pushing him to force her to take the type of job considered suitable for housewives, especially black housewives. (Emecheta, 1974, p.38)

The above quotation better illustrates the extent to which African women can be victims of their gender, especially when they are from a culture which socially constructs, encourages and maintains some male phallogentric ideologies and values. Beside this, it can be understood that Emecheta is exposing the complexities of Adah's challenge, as well as those of African women in general. In a reflection on the first year of Adah's arrival:

Thinking about her first year in Britain, Adah could not help wondering whether the real discrimination, if one could call it that, that she experienced was not more the work of her fellow-countrymen than of the Whites. Maybe if the blacks could learn to live harmoniously with one another, maybe if a West Indian landlord could learn not to look down on the African, and the African learn to boast less of his country's natural wealth, there would be fewer inferiority feelings among the blacks. (Emecheta, 1974, p.70)

This indeed reinforces the predicament in which the African woman finds herself. She is trapped by her gender and race and suffers because of the ideology behind these two concepts. Hence, it may be construed from the above excerpt that Emecheta, as an African feminist, is clearly showing, through the character of Adah, how it is not easy to be a woman generally, not to mention the case of a person of color abroad, because some African customs and traditions also neglect, marginalize and deprive African women of their ``humanness``, as well as of most of their basic rights. The experience of Adah is intelligently constructed by Emecheta to criticize and reveal the hostilities and discrimination of Whites vis-a-vis other races, especially the black one. The latter can also downplay the psychological confidence of the African woman or man in herself or himself. Thus, in *Second Class Citizen*, the novelist is at the same time raising the awareness of the reader about the various stereotypical assumptions associated with the issue of race and subalternity, and implicitly explaining the existence of a world of diversity and difference. The novelist via the voice of the narrator throws up the issue of cultural difference as an established barrier between cultures and races and implicitly pushes for the harmonization of cultures where some cultures and races will not be considered superior in comparison with the others like the West and the Orient or the North and the South, or men and women or White and black in an ideological binary opposition.

Now, the importance of cultural and racial difference lies in the possibility of going beyond these polarities and oppositions between cultures, races and sexes in order to give way to a third space where the other may emerge. It is actually within this kind of third space that Adah succeeds to obtain a first class job of her rank as a librarian and it is also thanks to this third space of enunciation that she has been able to integrate into the English society where color or race seriously matters.

From the analysis of *Second Class Citizen*, it is understood that the emergence of a third space deconstructs all the binary oppositions between races and sexes because there is no pure culture or race, or true nature (males' attributes more positive than female ones) and everything is related through hybridity<sup>3</sup> and complementarity. In the direction of showing the necessity for the complementarity between black people of different sexes in a totally "hostile" and racist environment, as well as the importance that an African woman has or can

---

<sup>3</sup> Hybridity here means that all cultures and people are interrelated through origins and ancestry. That is, there are no pure and superior cultures than others in the world because all cultures have the same socio-historical origins. And all human beings created by God have the same original ancestry.



have in displaced families, the narrator of Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, in talking about Adah, reveals that:

She had not been able to buy any clothes since she arrived in England as all the money she had brought with her went on food. Francis would not work as he was studying and he said this would interfere with his progress. (Emecheta, 1974, p.39)

From these lines, people can grasp that the role played by Adah in her family is deliberately stated by the novelist to demonstrate that women are useful in society and complementary with men. They can always help in the family like in the case of Adah in *Second Class Citizen*. In other words, women should not be regarded as inferior and useless in patriarchal African societies or seen as mere means of solving one's financial difficulties. In addition to all that, the friendly relationships that Adah develops with the other white characters in the novel, especially with the girls of the library and Janet, is just to attest to this sense of complementarity between white and black races. From her particular relation with Trudy in comparison with her other White friends, Adah also comes to comprehend that White people are just like Blacks and the preconceived idea that she has had about the superiority of the white race over the black one is unfounded. This is attested by the following socio-historical reflection:

She babbled all the way home, telling Adah her whole life history and the history of her parents and grandparents. But Adah could not stop thinking about her discovery that the Whites were just as fallible as everyone else. There were bad Whites and good Whites just as there were bad blacks and good blacks! Why then did they claim to be superior? (Emecheta, 1974, p.52)

From an Afrocentric perspective the above implies that Africans and Blacks in general should not underestimate themselves, for a Black is not that different from a White in terms of human terms (intelligence, feelings, creativity and civilization). Apart from the color difference, whatever the White can do or does, the Black can also do it. He may even do it better than the white man and vice versa. This is a reminder for those postcolonial Africans or Blacks who have unfortunately accepted their subalternity before the white Man like Mr. Noble in this narrative of Buchi Emecheta. This realization of Adah in *Second class Citizen* is actually salient because it more reassures the heroine about the problems that a black woman may face in a culturally displaced location. It also eases her integration into the English society. This realization has also helped her to get rid of the complex of inferiority that she has always had about the meanings of gender, race and subalternity and the happy ending of the story confirms this.

#### **4. The Eurocentrist Discourse of Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen***

Although *Second Class Citizen* is a good African text which criticizes certain negative cultural practices and values of Igbo culture, it unfortunately disseminates some Western

stereotypical images of Africa. The stereotypical images of Africa conveyed in this novel are believed to be rooted in the unconscious effects of colonialism and neocolonialism upon the author of such an interesting literary text. For instance, she has used the term tribe many times in *Second Class Citizen* to refer to her Igbo community or the Yoruba nation:

From that day on, no boy ever volunteered to back Adah up any more, but that incident gave her a nickname which she never lived down : the tigress .Some of her Yoruba classmates used to ask her what human flesh tasted like, because ‘you Igbos used to eat people, didn’t you?’ Well, Adah didn’t know about the cannibalistic tendencies of her tribe;... (Emecheta, 1974, pp.15-16).

The term tribe from the viewpoints of scholars like Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Kwakuvi Azasu , the author of this paper and other panafricanists, it is connotatively negative and ideologically charged. What the author is trying to point at is that it generally implies: conflict, disunity between native communities and on the top of all that this term tribe in English and French is used by Eurocentrists to show the “uncivilized level” of a racially different people from the white caucasian color. As for the above excerpt , it implicitly confirms the kinds of Eurocentrists’ views about the African. This sort of misrepresentation of Africans is further amplified in Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen*, especially, when she writes: “Francis was an African through and through. A much more civilized man would probably have found a better way of saying this to his wife (p.24)”. There are many other examples in this text which reproduce the same unfounded descriptions of African culture as if African culture or her Igbo culture is totally “primitive” in comparison with Western civilization. For the author, there is no culture which is entirely perfect without any flaws. There are good aspects of African culture as well as there are bad aspects of European culture. This blindness of Emecheta constitutes the major failure of her *Second Class Citizen* to authentically depict the socio-cultural realities of Igbo people and Africans at a larger scale. This does not mean that she does not promote African cultural values such as wifehood, motherhood, sisterhood and family.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude , it can be uttered that despite all the problems that Adah faces while in a displaced place like London because of her status as a woman in her family and because of her skin’s color in different English social spheres, she never abandons the struggle for her social ascension in such a foreign place. This is due to the fact that she is strongly convinced that she can overcome the horrors of the patriarchal attitudes of her husband towards her. Things that the heroine succeeds in achieving in the course of the development of the story are due to the novelist’s particular method of characterizing Adah in the novel. Emecheta indeed characterizes Adah not just as a dynamic and round character but also as a strong

and self-conscious character that believes in herself and her capability to succeed where her husband and her other countrymen fail, especially in a different socio-cultural environment like London. Thus, it can be understood that Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* functions as a didactic novel because it teaches people that the issue of color and gender is purely ideological and gives birth to mechanisms of oppression such as racism and sexism. But despite all these, like Adah does in the novel, Black people who migrate to Western countries should never give up the fight if they want to be recognized as full human beings with all their rights. Besides, people should not always see African culture as entirely "primitive" because it has also many good aspects like Western culture and the empowerment of the colored woman lies in her education and economic autonomy.

### **Bibliography**

- Beauvoir, S. D. (1972). *The Second Sex*. Great Britain: Penguin Books.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Blaut, J. (1992). *The Debates on Colonialism, Eurocentrism and History*. New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc.
- Chodorow, N. (1978). *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Christian, B. (1985). *Black Feminist Criticism*. New York: Pergamon.
- Coulibaly, A.S.(2014). "Theorizing African Feminism within the Context of the African Female Novel", in *Recherches Africaines*. N° 13.
- Emecheta, B. (1972). *In the Ditch*. Barrie & Jenkins.
- Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. London: Heinemann.
- Emecheta, B. (1976). *The Bride Price*. London: (African Writers Series)Heinemann.
- Emecheta, B. (1979). *The Joys of Motherhood*. London: (African Writers Series) Heinemann.
- Emecheta, B. (1986). *A Kind of Marriage*. London: Macmillan.
- Emecheta, B. (1986). *Head Above Water*. Fontana.

- Emecheta, B. (1988). In H. Kirsten, *Criticism and Ideology* (p. 175). Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.
- Emecheta, B. (2000). *The New Tribe*. London: (African Writers Series) Heinemann.
- Gaulmier, J.(1965).Spectre de Gobineau , Paris :Pauvert.
- Hooks, B. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margins to Centre*. Boston: South End.
- Hooks, B. (1992). *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press.
- Hooks, B. (2004). *The Will to Change : Men,Masculinity,and Love*. New York: Atria Books.
- Mukherjee, M. (1996). Interrogating Post-Colonialism. In H. T. Murkherjee (Ed.), *Theory,Text and Context* (p. 265). Shimla: IIAS.
- Ogede, O. (2011). *Intertextuality in Contemporary African Literature : Looking Inward*. Uk: Lexington Books.