

Feminism in Literature: A Study of Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Nwapa's *Efuru*

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ABSTRACT

This Paper is concerned with the motives, concepts and ideas expressed by African female writers in their works. They speak with one voice; they fight for the recognition and emancipation of women in male dominated societies. They use their works to air their views. They aim for the equality of all sexes. This study shows the aims of female writers in literature which seeks to bring an end to the oppression and subordination of women by men. It is worthy to note that these African female writers used in this study do not revolt against men but against certain laws that have denied them their inalienable rights. This study has investigated the aims of female writers in literature using two novels: *Efuru* by Flora Nwapa and *The Joys of motherhood* by Buch Emecheta. These two authors have artistically used their novels to expose the ugly experiences of women in a male dominated society. This work however discovers in dismay that in most cases, women maltreat their fellow women in the name of tradition. The significance of this work derives in the fact that it joins the voices of previous researchers to encourage women, both readers and writers to rise up and be liberated from the long crawls of male chauvinism. The researcher therefore believes that these complementary efforts shall help in proving suitable society where women are to be recognized

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is seen in Africa as an imported ideology alien to the African society and it is seen as the newest form of neo colonialism and because of these, most of our female writers decided to be feminist. However there are many issues militating against feminism in African and in Nigeria. This is because feminism is viewed by men as an unpardonable drive for equality between the sexes in a rather negative out burst. This is seen as an affront to the dominant cultural attitude in Nigeria. It is important to know that the issue of women subjugation is not a new phenomenon; it has its origin in the society from the inception of certain cultures and traditions of various societies. But the pursuit for equal opportunity for women in different societies could rather be said to be a new development when compared with the long established convention of male chauvinism. The problems of women as depicted by the feminist writers are in various forms, ranging from incest, denial of rights of education, rape, unhappy marriage, childlessness, female circumcision, liberalism and total freedom among others. Feminist's perspective as pursued by feminist writers champions the cause of women in modern literature thereby addressing the issue of women marginalization. This is in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the conventions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) in 1979, but which later came into full force in September 1981. The convention called for equal right for women in all aspects of life be it political, economic, cultural, religious and social. This convention or policy leads to the extension of feminist perspective and their writers. But before that convention women had been empowered in pursuing feminist goals.

It is important to know that a newspaper article covering the period of March to November 1996 describes feminists as iconoclasts who want to subvert tradition and religious injection with disdain and pick holes of the sociological make up of the people. It is therefore obvious that such conservation motion persists with regards to feminism in the jet-age of liberation. Mean while, different supportive organization have been raised to assist the female folks. Examples of some of these organizations are National council of women society (NCWAS). However, despite the achievement and the effect made by both organizations, feminism has not dominated the African society as it is in the western countries or internationally. Hence on the literary scene, we have a situation in which women writers and critics are apologetic on behalf of feminism; feminists therefore prefer to be appreciated rather than being criticized by the opposite sex.

There have been protests for women liberation from all forms of subjugation, discrimination, oppression, suppression and maltreatment just like their male counter parts. Women have realized that they play an important role in our male counter parts their contributions to the development of our contemporary society seems not to be recognized. In many societies and cultures, women are dehumanized, oppressed and enslaved. This dehumanization has been traced to have started in the ancient days, when women were not even allowed to go to schools. They were deprived of their

rights of education with the view that the education of a women ended in the kitchen. And therefore, training them in school was as good as wasting of money. Even Aristotle argues that women were: "Not fully human beings and that the nature of women was not efficient rather women were by nature deficient not to be trusted and to be looked down upon" C4).

Because of the biblical belief that the women was made from the rib of a man. Therefore they should be submissive to man, and this inequality has subjected women to many in human treatments in our society. Women are believed to play a second and inferior role in the society, family offices, social gathering, politics and other natural issues feminism does not mean supreme power or authority over men, instead, feminism simply means agitation, protest, plea for women restoration and liberation in the society. It further means plea for fair treatment, hearing and recognition in the society.

The high rate of discrimination in the society makes female writers to depict aspects of female subjugation by male counter parts. They use their works to expose the degree of this subjugation. They serve as the voice of the women in the society. Their works show the of victimization of women. Some of our feminist writers are Buchi Emecheta in her work *Second Class Citizen* and *The Joys of Motherhood*. Ngozi Chuma Udeh in her work *Echoes of a New Dawn*, Flora Nwapa in her *Efuru*. Also this is the theme in Akachi Adimorah's work *Children of the Eagle*. These feminist writers explain that feminism is simply the libration or freedom of women from the shackle of oppression and discrimination and that woman should be allowed to participate in social, political and economic activities in the society. Feminism therefore believes in the social, political and economic participation of all sexes. Buchi Emecheta also laments in *Second Class Citizen* "some are made with everything good already made for them while some are created like mistakes, God's mistakes" (51).

Buch Emecheta here refers to mistakes, God's mistakes. This is built on the fact that a change must made and women should be given the right to express their own views and not being restricted by archaic traditions. This is simply a plea on the part of the African women to regain her dignity. The female voices in African therefore come up as a total and implicit rejection of the derogatory life style created by the norms of the society to restrict and subjugate women both in real life and in fiction. She is made to understand what she must be, what she is created for and what she must continue to do. The oral story telling helps to shape women's behavior and keep them in place in our African society. There are very rigorous gender roles which have prevented women from being elevated. Furthermore, patriarchy as we must know is a system of male authority which considers women as being appendage to the society. Tradition holds that women are intellectually, physically and socially inferior to men. Men's language is said to be the language of law, authority and power while women's language is generally emotional, full of non-rational utterances, grunts, groans and moans. The African women writer came up against this irrational act. For them, women's muffled voices must be set free. Women should find and keep their voices to destroy the frivolousness in silence. They have taken up writing to fight

victimization, subjugation, injustice and to destroy a system that oppresses women. For them, writing is a weapon used to destroy the idea that perpetuate subjugation and inequality.

Study Problem

Feminist perspective as the researcher widely experienced, shows that women have not been given equal right with men, and this leads to their being subjugated to many inhuman treatments in the society. Women are placed to play an inferior role in the society, family, social gathering, and politics and in national affairs. Although women headed some organizations and governments in the past and still hold some strategic and high positions in this contemporary era, their number in those positions is still very small when compared with that of their male counterparts. Even in academics, women are seen as not being good enough to be trained in school since their place in life is just to sit at home and maintain the family. Therefore, sending them to school should be neglected. It is of course, not doubtful that what women agitate for, is not equality with men but to be seen as human being to be treated as human beings, to be equal opportunities to the right of life. These agitations, cries and complaints, form what is now regarded as feminist perspective which originated largely in Europe but spread all over the world.

Although some countries have given women considerable social recognition, no society has publicly recognized their capabilities as being equal to those of men. In African literature and culture, just as in other literatures, male dominance has been over emphasized. Therefore, the literature is often replete with women characters being represented as mothers and housewives who are totally dependent on the husband. Equality between male and female is strongly opposed by the male. The male behaves in the early affirmation that women must be seen and not heard. So, to portray the happenings in various societies about women, female writers create female characters that are endowed with excellent feminine qualities. They are beautiful, industrious, accomplished and above all have courage. They have been able to get emancipated by throwing off their traditional yokes and breaking their charms thus, standing their ground.

This Paper is based on the study of two novels that have similar objectives; Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* both representing Africa. These two novels are widely acclaimed to portray feminist views. However, no writer to the best of my knowledge has been able to bring out fully the depth of knowledge, techniques and feminist anguish which these two works when combined portray this anomaly.

The Significance of the Study

The significance of the study cannot be over emphasized. It is believed that it will contribute immensely to this field of study as readers, especially students, will better understand what feminism is all about and what the responsibilities of the feminists are. This work can also be beneficial to male counterparts who should through this work be able to appreciate their female

counterparts as playing complementary roles and not to be subjugated maltreated because everybody needs the right to live and be regarded.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the concept of feminism and the various roles women play in the society. By using the selected works of gender writers, we can discover the impact that African writers have made the society concerning women. This research is intended to enable students, scholars and the society at large to understand the responses of the female in the male dominated society and discover feminist perspective in the various works various writers. It will also examine how women too have played great role in the growth of the society and their immediate families. Thus, they deserve to be acknowledged and appreciated by the male. The researcher also intends to find out the circumstances that surround the life of women in the society. These circumstances that affect women in the society include problem in marriage affairs, in having a life partner, problems in academics, economy, politics and religion.

This study builds its wall around a study of two novels in which feminist tendencies abound. The researcher shall therefore focus on the works of Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joy of Motherhood* although references would be made to other related and relevant texts in the course of the exploration. This is to make for a more focused study and avoid being misconceived.

Understanding Terminology

The terms in the topic that need clarification are feminism, contemporary and social feminism: feminism according to Long Man Dictionary is the belief that woman should have the same right and opportunities as men (583). According to the internet free encyclopedia, Wikipedia, feminism is a collection of movement aimed at defining, establishing and women. More so, Toril Moi Opines that:

The word feminist or feminism is a political label indicating support For the aim of the women's movement. If feminism is characterizedBy its political commitment to the struggle against partriarchy and Sexism, it follows that very fact of being female does not guarantee a feminist approach(204).

In addition to the above definition, feminism seeks to establish equal opportunities for women, in education and employment. A feminist is a person whose beliefs and behavior are based on feminism. From the definition we can now deduce that this research aims at knowing more about African women who spearhead women liberation. Though African writers do not carry it to the extreme just like western writers like Jane Austen etc they only plead for their right to education, right to participate in social affairs, right to make their own choice and other national activities instead of just being house wives, traders and mothers. Feminism is defined as the struggle for the liberation of women and a movement geared towards achieving the aim of liberation from victimization and subjugation. A feminist is an individual or person who

espouses feminism. Then the collective mobilization of women against the oppression of women is referred to as "Feminist Movement".

Feminist movement can be seen as a movement which aims at narrowing the gap between men and women in many spheres of life. Feminism did not begin during the 18th century, it gathered momentum in the 19th century arising from the industrial revolution. In the 19th century, British women were legally forbidden to hold public offices, to vote or to own property if married. Until the "married women's property act" was established, women then were regarded as physically, socially and intellectually inferior to men. In 1960 came the next resurgence in feminism known as "women's liberation". This movement sought deeper changes in economic, social and political structure and a need was seen to eliminate sexual preconception of female dependence. In the 1970, various equal pay acts were passed in many countries and legislation was enacted to end discrimination against women in respect of goods, services and employment. The first important feminist document in the English language was "the vindication of the rights of women (1972) by Mary Willstonecraft. The early feminists believed that equality would follow if they obtained the vote for women, an aim which was fulfilled in 1928 in the United Kingdom (UK)

Biography of Flora Nwapa

Flora Nwapa was born on January 13, 1931 in to a popular and wealthy family in Oguta, in the present Imo State of Nigeria. After a brief stint teaching at Priscilla Memorial Grammar School in Oguta, she began her University education at Edingurgh in Scotland. Upon returning to Nigeria. She taught briefly at a female high school in Eastern Nigeria; then, she joined the University of Lagos as Administrative officer and remained there from 1962 until the outbreak of the Nigeria civil war in 1967. At this point, she like many other members to the Igbo elite was forced to return to the Eastern region in 1966, she published *Efuru*, becoming not only Nigerian's first female novelist but black African's as well. Among African writers of the present Century, Flora Nwapa stands apart for two reasons, she is the first African women novelist and she is also the one who has chosen exclusively for domain, the world of women, an awfully integrated smaller world existing within the larger world of men and women in which, we all live. Among her four books are *Efuru* (1960) and *Idu* (1970) which can be marginally regarded as novels. She died of pneumonia on October 16, 1993, In Enugu, Nigeria.

Biography of Buchi Emecheta

Buchi Emecheta was born on 21st July 1944 in Lagos Igbo parents. Although young, Buchi was a brilliant child. Her brilliance and intelligence won her a scholarship when she was ten years; but after the death of her father, things falling apart for Buchi and her family. She got married at the age of seventeen. Her marriage was not a happy one. There were misunderstanding between Buchi and her husband. She later husband. Buchi in spite of her marital challenges, proved a strong women when she worked hard and earned herself

an honors degree in sociology. In this way, she was able to work as a social worker in London while she single handedly fended for her children.

Buchi saw freedom and self expression in writing. So she began to write to complement her job so as to enable her to adequately support her family, she became a full fledged writer when she published her first novel *In the Ditch* (1972) a detail of her experience as a single mother in London. Then, her second novel titled *Second Class Citizen* (1974) came out. This novel also has London as its setting. After these two novels are *TheBride Price*, *The Slave Girl* and *The joys of Motherhood* seems to be the most popular. Buchi Emecheta also wrote a number of children's stories and an autobiography. Indeed Buchi Emecheta is one of the most remarkable writers Nigeria can boast of. Her contribution to the annals of Nigeria will never be forgotten.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to examine the views of past researchers concerning the topic of this research. This important because it will expose some gaps which this work aims at bridging as well as making meaningful contribution to knowledge. Essentially, some materials reviewed here will enable the researcher ascertain the state of the art as far as feminism is concerned. Also in the Nigerian Contemporary society, feminism manifests as the plea against unnecessary societal injunction on women. It is not a struggle for equality or a fight for supremacy. The feminist viewpoint in the Nigerian context therefore becomes a plea for life, a plea for opportunity and the chance to have a fulfilled life, a yearning for empowerment, education. it is a sincere pleading with the society to recognize the right to life of the girl child; to give her a right to participate and contribute fully in the society of her time and contribution meaning fully toward sustaining the future of present Nigerian girl-Children.

The need for this arises because there is the traditional tendency of the Nigerian society to restrict the woman to her biological roles as a wife and mother. This is carried into all spheres of the societal life. It rears its head in literature where it puts a strong ban on women. However, the aim of this work is to look into feminism using the works of Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa. *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Efuru* respectively. This will be done through the textual analysis of both novels. Discussions of Nwapa's fiction as it relates to feminist politics have produced a number of critical studies. Reviewers note her strong female protagonist and her women centered narratives. Critics often engage in debates concerning the strength of the novelists feminism based on her characters, action and their level of acceptance of rebellion against African patriarchal structures.

Lewis Nkosi, the uncompromising South African writer and critic, assesses *Efuru*, in these words:

Nigeria 's Flora Nawpa attracted a certain amount of attention, but This was mostly because she was Nigeria's first woman novelist. To The debt she obviously owes Chinua Achebe, she has added. Nothing but tedium and a few more details about the social Relations in an Ibo community. Her firs novel is a competent and a Straight forward but excessively dull narrative-the marital troubles Of an Ibo woman (12).

Lewis Nkosi is alone in his view as is revealed by Eustace palmer's exclusion of Flora Nwapa and her novels from his books on twelve "preeminent" novels from Africa. Palmer's only considerations of her are in comparison with Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Specifically he is discussing Achebe's ability to make sociological information come alive as part and parcel of a literary works and he claims quite rightly that Nwapa is not successful in her use of sociological material which most of the time is irrelevant to the incidents of the novel and dose not bear the mark of authenticity. Nwapa's books therefore contain straight-forward narrative of village affairs from the point of view of women. They teem with details of the minutest preoccupations of these people's lives. Events are meticulously observed Nwapa is good at describing people and events and particularly in depicting sympathetically the problems and aspirations of her female characters. These characteristics must be seen as some of the writer's merits as a novelist. She presents vividly to us women noted to their shrewdness and business acumen. The social customs under which they operate are likewise analyzed. In this environment, everyone shares in the joys and sorrows of the other and the education of children is regarded as a communal responsibility. By creating such a rival atmosphere dominated by women, Nwapa betrays her central intentions as the exposition of he social position of women in a typical Nigerian village of small town. Most of her characters lack any type of formal education but they also posses a tenacity and independence of view and action which the author stresses in her novels and which reflect the position of thses women in their society, the writer's approach is therefore dominantly expository. In E.Emenyonu's words:

What Flora Nwapa has done is to introduce the reader to a problematic situation in life, which takes on an aura of tragedy. In the process, she explores in depth the beliefs, aspirations, Failures and successes of the people whose life ways create the particular human condition in then novel (96).

The foregoing quotation comes from one of the most positive articles ever written on Flora Nwapa. Like the novelist herself, Emenyonu's article does not go beyond the expository; statement of themes, and their relevance in the African context where the birth of children continues to be basic reason for marriage. It does not go beyond the statement of possibilities of this topic, because the novel makes it impossible, since its author has not ventured beyond the above stated bounds. Thus in Africa Literature today, S.Aeola James inreviewing Nwapa's works states that:

Unlike other writers, who use the traditional societies of African Background. Flora Nwapa shows no moral involvement in the Reaches behind her tale. Her novel would be more successful, if she Would involve the reader by first involving herself in the deep Moral problems which she mentions, but leaves unquestionably (5).

Femiojo-Ade in "Female Writer Male Critics", view the importance of women in the society. He is of the view that women like their male counterparts should be given opportunities in the society. And he has this to say, "The era when the woman is seen as a flower not a producer is over. She is no longer conserved to be a guided cage" (3). He goes further to say that:

The personality and inner reality of African women have been hidden under such a heap of myths, so called ethnological theories, Rapid generalization of patient untruths that it might be interesting To study what they have to say for themselves when they decided to Speak (5).

The Joys of Motherhood is novel written by Buchi Emecheta. It was first published by Allison and Busby in 1979 and was printed in Heinemann's African writers' series in 2008. The basis of the novel is the "Necessity for a woman to be fertile and above all to give birth to sons" (5). It tells the tragic story of Nnuego, daughter of Nwokocha Agbadi and Ona, who had a bad fate with child bearing. In the words of the critic, Maria Umeh:

Emecheta breaks the prevalent portraiture in African writing.... It Must have been difficult to draw provocative image of African Motherhood against the already existing literary models, especially On such a sensitive subject (2).

A.N Wilson in the observer says:

"Buchi Emecheta has a growing reputation of her treatment of African Women and their problems. This reputation will surely be enhanced by The Joy of Motherhood" (4).

The works of Nigerian Female writers are in the main, far-reaching in feminist orientations and their feminist views project a literary parlance capable of sustaining the future generation to meet their own need. Buchi Emecheta, talking on issue bothering female writing in Nigeria opines that people should view concepts from their milieu of origin. Thus, her assets in her paper "feminism with a small "f".

I chronicle the title happenings in the lives of the African women I Know. I did not know that by doing so, I was going to be called a feminist, but if I am a feminist then I am a feminist with a small "f". In my books, I write about women who try very hard to hold their family together until it becomes absolutely impossible. I have no sympathy for a woman who desert her children or child; neither do I have sympathy for a woman who insists on staying in a marriage with a brute of a man simply to be respectable... edited by (Tejumola Omalora 553).

Buchi Emecheta did not know the fact that she is a feminist but she rather accepted that even though she is a feminist with a small letter "f", only depicting the lives of women in our African society both in their families and in our present society. She did not write for her to be called a feminist but those works she wrote made her to be recognized as a feminist.

In the absence of secondary materials, historical information and anthropological works on the African woman's experience, the works of Buchi Emecheta have been read and reread by foreign critics of African women writing and the experience expressed by that author in her numerous works have been understood as representing the one true African women's experience.

In an earlier article in perspectives on Nigeria literature edited by Yemi Ogunbiyi we are told that:

I have illustrated this extensively Redaders of Emecheta's works Easily that her portraiture of the African Gender Relationship is Largely titled and marred by

"her portrayal of her male characters in Exaggerated states of idiocy, irresponsibility and insensitivity". The over riding amount of pessimism and bitterness which filter through her narration often makes the author incapable of treating Other thematic issue that would have given the Desired finish to Her vision and these in turn affect the reader response to her works (55).

Marriage still remains the most subs mating feature in African womanhood. It is not founded on partnership, and further, the woman is tested on fertility as well as having children with the right gender aggregate when she all these as Nuego does, *The Joys of Motherhood* provided ironical and elusive as Buchi Emecheta observes in the novel. The point therefore is that these features listed above are part of African reality. They are not imported from the west and so reactions cannot be western oriented. That African writers portray the now and not earlier only confirms the level of their awareness and progress. Bell hook, a black American feminist writer, confirms this individual experience that gives rise to reaction from within. She writes:

My awareness of feminist struggle was stimulated by social Circumstances. Growing up in a southern black father dominated, Working class household, I experience varying degree of Patriarchal tyranny and it made me angry; it made us all angry. Anger led me to question the politics of male dominance and Enabled me to resist socialization (10).

The experience through found in different localities and races is basically similar. What differs subtly is the reaction to these experiences sexist preference in African is culture-based so that female reaction it is decried as accultural. This led to Afam Ebeogu's holler that "Buchi Emecheta is an iconoclast who breaks down Igbo traditional system (7).

What Ebeogu fails to realize is the dynamics of change, which cannot be stampped. But perhaps the truth of the matter is that there is need for such a change of discarding retrogressive and oppressive norms and practices against women. There is the need for the women to take their rightful places in society besides and alongside their men not behind them, groaning in silence. It behaves Ebeogu to cast off the tax master and be part of this refreshing and amply rewarding experience for all. There is a striking diversity of critical views on what feminist is all about. Even the views of women writers and critics on the issue often differ. As Ezenwa Ohaeto notes in "replacing myth. The feminist streak in Buchi Emecheta's double yoke".

The nature of feminism itself compounds the problem of a Female writer creating with female consciousness. The brand Of feminism which Emecheta dwells upon is not the Feminism of the self-seeking radical proposed by Aidoo And it is not the tempareture feminism or womanism of Flora Nwapa.... (216).

A writers view of feminism and what critics, even female critics, make of them depend on the practitioners personal on the female issues. However, in an interviewed by Maria Umeh in 1993 says that flora Nwapa refused to be called a feminist she said "I don't even accept that I' a feminist. I accept that I'm an ordinary woman who is writing about knows. I try to project the image of woman positively" (27). By looking at her novels which Efuru, Idu others one can see that Nwapa is a writer who dedicated her efforts to discuss women's

issues of struggle, quest for independence and success in their native patriarch Igbo culture.

In conclusion from the above findings, one could deduce that the struggle for political and economic recognition by women is a Universal campaign which would continue because what men are willing to compromise is not enough to rate women as equal to men. Many critics have written on the subjugation of women and how men and the society should appreciate women and encourage their effort to contribute to societal growth. But none to the best of my knowledge has brought out fully the anguish of women in the society.

Feminist Perspective in Flora Nwapa's Efurú

Flora's novel Efurú was the first book written by a Nigerian woman to be published. Among African writers of the present century, Flora Nwapa stands apart for two reasons. She is the first African woman novelist and she is also the one who has chosen exclusively for her writing, the world of women, in African environment. Her novel Efurú portrays the-world of women as a fully integrated smaller world existing within the larger world of men and women in which we all live. She portrays her work using themes that are centered on the existence of women in the contemporary society.

Efurú is a novel that portrays the themes of motherhood, Wifehood, importance of fertility, Neglect, Absence of love, and independence of woman. Flora Nwapa wrote to show the troubles, struggles and maltreatment women undergo because of their sex. She wrote to address some ills in the society. Efurú is a story that is set in a rural community; its protagonist Efurú is a strong and beautiful woman. Efurú met Adizua at a festival in which, young men and young women were looking for wives and husbands, and he asked her to marry him, which she agreed but Adizua did not have money to pay her dowry so, she ran away to become his wife without her dowry being paid. This made her father upset but she managed to keep the bond she has with her father as well as create a special relationship with her in-laws. After a few years, Efurú had a child but at about the same time, her husband began disappearing for days. The child takes ill and dies and Adizua can not be found for the funeral and is said to have married another woman. Efurú, rather than face what she sees as shame, leaves Adieu's home and return to her father. Not long after she has returned to her father, a suitor, Eneberi, appears. They marry and have a blissfull marriage. The first year of Efurú's second marriage was a happy one;

Gilbert loved and respected her and Efurú did not slack for a moment because she knew her duties as a wife. She did not only take care of her husband but was also sweet to her mother-in-law; She would washer clothes and cook for her and this made Gilbert's mother consider herself lucky to have Efurú as a daughter-in-law.

One day Omirimma, went to met Gilbert's mother about Efurú's childlessness. The thought of Efurú's childless state disturbed Gilbert's mother and she colud not sleep that night thinking of what she would do if Efurú was truly barren. She concluded that the only alternative was for Gilbert to marry another girl, but she found it hard to discuss the matter with Efurú who has

been very good to her. Two years passed and Efuru was still not pregnant. Her mother-in-law could not bear it any longer. So she called Efuru to know the reason why she has not gotten pregnant and they agreed to meet a native doctor. Efuru's father called a native doctor and the native doctor told them that Efuru belonged to the woman of the lake Uhamiri. She was told that Uhamiri has chosen her to be one of her worshippers. She was told that Uhamiri was going to protect and shower her with riches but she was not told that she would be given children. Later Efuru asked husband to get married to second wife, which Gilbert did. He married Nkoyeni who gave birth to son for him. Later Gilbert went to Onitsha and did not return for a long while. He even missed Efuru's father burial and when he came back, Nkoyeni gave him trouble and due to this, he started looking for a new wife and then decided to marry Ogea and this made Ogea happy. They began the arrangement for Ogea and Gilbert's marriage. Before the finally arrangement, Efuru suddenly took ill and many native doctor were called but they said different things. Sacrifices were performed by Efuru, still her condition got worse. One day, Omirimma came to see Ameba and told her that Efuru was going to die because she guilty of adultery and that she should be asked to confess so that the sickness would leave her. Gilbert seeing that the sickness was getting worse asked his wife to confess or she would die. Efuru asked Ogea to call Ajanupu who came and Gilbert repeated himself and Ajanupu cursed Gilbert. This made him to slap her and she broke his head with a pestle. When Efuru got better, she turned her back on her husband and her marriage and went to her father's house. That night, she dreamt of the woman of the lake, her beauty, her long hair and her riches.

In Efuru the writer write to give Hope to African women who are childless and who have been looked upon as outcasts by the society. Efuru in Efuru goes through pains because she is unable to bear children. Nwapa presents a society that places child bearing above companionship and happiness. Efuru after one year of marriage, she and her husband Eneberi have no child. So one day, Omirimma came to their house and advised Eneberi's mother:

It is a year since your son married; one year is enough for any Woman who would have a baby to begin making one. find out Quickly if she's barren; start early to look for a black goat because At night, a black goat will be difficult to find...(139).

Efuru herself has demonstrated her independent by marrying Adizua against her father's wish and has withstood all her marital problems with Adizua and Gilbert. She is strong enough to leave Gilbert instead of living out her life with his mutual mistrust. This is women's empowerment because she knows that she still has the right to choose if to go or to stay for she at the end is childless, fatherless and husbandless. Yet cheerfully she accepted her lost as a matter of course and goes about her business. Efuru explains to a friend: there I swore by the name of Utuosu she should kill me if since I married Eneberi, any man in our town, inonicha, Ndoni or anywhere I have been, had seen my thigh (220). The effect of the village gossip is to reveal both Efuru's character and the value of the society she inhabits. Efuru stands out from her

community for her beauty, her skill as a business woman, and her inability to bear children Nwapa subverts the notion that child bearing is the only characteristic valued in African women by making Efuru live her life as fully as possible and by showing the reverence and esteem granted to her other women. When Efuru did not get pregnant early enough after her marriage with Adizua, Ossai her mother-in-law became very anxious and tried to make her happy in every way that she could because she knew how Efuru was feeling and any where she was spoken ill of, Ossai was there to defend her. When Efuru got pregnant, her mother-in-law was so happy that she declared: "God thank you, thank you God, my daughter will have a baby at last, my daughter is not barren after all my enemies will no longer rejoice. God thank you....." (27/28).

Because Ossai knows that a woman without a child in our society is regarded as an outcast that is why she is happy for Efuru. Efuru after one Year of marriage with Adizua said this: "I am still young, surely God cannot deny me the joy of motherhood"(24). After Efuru gave birth she was not trading with her husband any more because she had to stay with the baby until she was due to come out. Adizua her husband was not good at trading because Efuru was the Brain behind the business. So one night he spoke to Efuru thus: "Efuru I think it is time you should face trade. Your baby is old enough to be left with a nurse" (36). With the author's rise to present women noted for their shrewdness and business acumen. In Efuru, Nwosu gave out his daughter Ogea in order to collect ten pounds from Efuru and Adizua, he says: "my daughter, Efuru, if you do this thing for us, if you take my daughter Ogea and give us ten pounds, I shall for ever be grateful to you..."(40).

Nwosu, Ogea's father, used Ogea to collect money from Efuru. Notwithstanding that he has other children, he chooses to use the girl and leave the boys. Women in African society should be given their rights to freedom, the right to be heard and not only seen. Flora Nwapa uses her work to show how women oppress their fellow all in the name of childlessness and to show that women can still make it either childless, fatherless or husbandless by using Efuru who turned her back on her marriage and still goes about her business, worshipping the goddess and helping people.

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on secondary sources of data and information, books, literatures that influenced the study.

Feminist Perspective in Buchi Enecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*

The Joys of Motherhood is a novel written by Buchi Enecheta. It was first published by Allison and Busby in 1979 and was printed in Heinemann's African writer's series in 2008. The basis of the novel is the necessity for a woman to be fertile and above all to give birth to sons. The novel gives the impression that might appeal to western feminists. With motherhood as its theme, and the irony of its title, it appears to be part of the significant body of feminist literature concerned with women's experience of motherhood in patriarchy cultures, women are victims of subordination within their society

because the opposite gender overpower and retrains them in their development by dictating their thoughts, behavior and decisions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nnuego the protagonist stumbles across her compound almost delusional with grief. She makes her way to the water front, heading to cater bridge, intending to throw herself off. The action shifts to twenty five years previous to this moment, in the village of Ogboli in the Ibuza homeland. Agbadi, the esteemed local chief, is enamored by the one woman he cannot possess, the beautiful and strong willed Ona. During, a hunting trip, Agbadi is gored by an injured elephant and not back to health. As he heals, he humiliates her in the compound by loudly forcing his sexual attentions on her. She becomes pregnant as the result of the union, and her father Obi Umunna says if she gives birth to a boy the baby will belong to him but if it is a girl, the baby will go to Agbadi whom will accept responsibility. When Nnuego is born, a medicine man concludes that her guardian spirit is the slave girl who was forcefully killed and buried with one of Agbadi's wife within the year; Ona dies during her second child birth.

Sixteen years later, Nnuego is of marrying age. She is first betrothed to Amatokwu; when she does become pregnant relations come between her husband and she is soon forced to move into another room for a new wife. Nnuego is relegated to working in the fields and taking care of her co-wife's infant son. Amatokwu catches Nnuego breast-feeding the hungry child and beats her. Nnuego returns to her father to rest and recover and the marriage ties are severed. Dedicated to finding his daughter a better match, Agbadi arranges marriage between Nnuego and Nnadife, who lives in Lagos. Nnaife's older brother escorts Nnuego to the city and she begins anew life with Nnaife. Nnuego and Nnaife live in the Yaba compound where Nnaife does Laundry for the meers, a British couple. Nnuego becomes happy in her marriage when she takes in and give birth to a son, Ngozi. She also starts her own business selling cigarettes and matches beside the road. One morning, she discovers Ngozi in their one room apartment. Distraught and devoid of hope, she rushes to the water front to throw herself off carterbridge. Nwakusor, an ibo man coming off his shift at work prevents her with the help of the crowd that has gathered. Nnuego's recovery from Ngozi's death is a slow painful process. Eventually, she becomes pregnant again and gives birth to Oshia and so she decides to focus solely on raising the child instead of making extra income at her market stall. But economic pressure sets in the when the meers return to England and Nnaife is suddenly out of job. Nnuego resumes her local trade in cigarettes. Nnaife eventually secures a position that takes him far from home, working for a group of English men. While he is away, British soldiers enter the abandoned compound and tell Nnuego to vacate the premises. Nnuego takes a rented room in another part of the town, where she gives birth to another son Adim. Left on their own, the famil succums to malnutrition. One day Nneugo returned to search for more contraband cigarettes to find that her husband has returned, flash with money. Nnuego secures a permanent stall in the market place and

pressure nnaife to find his next job. One evening, Nnaife's friend arrived with the news that his brother has died in Ibuza and tells Nnaife that he has inherited all his brother's wives, but only one that will come to live with them in Lagos. Adaku arrives with her daughter, setting off tensions and rivalry between two women. As Nnuego tries to sleep nearby, Nnaife invokes his right as a husband and has sexual relationship with Adaku.

Nnaife starts a new job cutting grass for the rail road with less space and more mouth to feed. Nnuego and Adaku becomes pregnant around the same time. Nnuego gives birth to twin girls, while Adaku's son dies shortly after he is born. Angry that they are not given enough money to support the house hold, the women go on strike. Nnuego's firm resolve eventually wavers and she cooks a large conciliating meal, but Nnaife dose not come to home to enjoy it. He has been forced to join the army and is shipped off to India and then Burma to fight in world War 11. With Nnaife away and his pay partially secured in a saving account, Nnuego again pregnant takes her family to Ibuza and to the death bed her father. After his two funerals Nnuego is unwilling to return to Lagos. However, Adankwo the eldest wife of Nnaife's older brother, urges her to return to the city to keep an eye on Adaku, nnuego returns to find out that Nnaife has been home for a brief visit and left some money for her that she failed to receive. Relationship between Nnuego and Adaku grows increasingly strained; culminating in Nnuego's rude and brusque treatment of one of Adaku's visiting cousins. When Nnaife's friend stepped into resolve the conflict, Adaku decides that she and her daughter will move out on their own. impoverished once again, Nnuego spends the last of her saving before learning that she has not been receiving her husband's yearly stipends due to an institutional error. Nnaife returns and spends most of this windfall. Though Nnuego is pregnant again Nnaife decides to return to Ibuza where he impregnates Adankwo and returns with a teenage bride Okpo. Nnuego gives birth to twin baby girls and the family moves to a mud house in another part of the town. First, Oshia and then Adim announce their intentions furthering their education. when Oshia tells Nnaife he has won a scholarship to study in the United States, Nnaife demounces his duty as a father to pay for his son. Later, Nnaife attempts to kill kehinde's father-in-law with his cutlass because kehinderuns away to marry a Yoruba man. Taiwo is arranged to marry an Ibo clerk. Due to that attempt to kill, Nnaife is put in jail, tried and sentenced to five years. He later released with the condition that he should return to Ibuza after his release. Nnuego has also returned to her home land, where she dies severalyears later, alone roadside. Oshia to honor Nnuego with a costly funeral, befitting her sacrifices as a mother.

In Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, the writer presents a society that places child-bearing above happiness and companionship. Nnuego in Emecheta's work is unable to bear children for her husband Amatokwu and because of this, he insists that she makes way for a new wife and he condemns her to working in the field in a manner of a slave. "If you can't produce sons, at least you can help harvest yams" (33). Denying her the basic conjugal rights, he insists that "I am a busy man; I have no time to waste my precious male seed

ona woman who is infertile. I have to raise children...If you really want to know you don't appeal to me anymore...(32). Nnuego cries out in agony "oh my Chi, why do you have to bring me so low? Why must I be so punished" (32).

Nnuego as a product of her time and the society which conditions her is thus responding to the common belief that a woman without a child is a failure. Since she has fail in her basic function as a wife, she is forced to return, hump;pated to her parental home. Amatokwu's treatment of Nnuego especially his brutality toward her and his denial of her marital rights is a symbol of the callous indifference of the traditional African male. Her yearning for motherhood is finally fulfilled when she bears Ngozi, her first child and son. Tragedy however strikes as Ngozi dies in his sleep at the age of four weeks. So strongly aware is Nnuego of the corollary between motherhood and womanhood, Nnuego exclaims poignantly: "But I am not a woman anymore, I am not a mother anymore. The child is there dead on mat. My Chi has taken him away from me. I only want to go in there and meet him..."(62). She tries to kill herself but Nwkusor intervened and saves her life.

The preoccupation of American societies with children, especially male issues enable the novelist to make important contributions about the position of women. Through the experience of Adaku and Nnuego, she calls upon the society to review it's notion regarding the importance of children in the lives of women. Sons are what consolidate a woman's marriage and endear her to her husband and family. Adaku's inability to bear sons ultimately condemns her although Nnuego bluntly Igbonoba's wife, who is Adaku's cousin, adaku gets no sympathy from Nnaife's relatives Nwakusor and Ubani posit that:

The only woman who is immortalizing your husband you make Unhappy... if were in your shoes, I should go home and consult My Chi to find out why male off springs have been denied me, but Instead you are here quarreling about your visitor (166).

The unfairness of the attack on Adaku and the injustice of the situation whereby the women bears blame for being unable to produce male offspring over whelm Adaku. She goes out to consult her Chi but away from Nnaife's house. She in her action, revolts against notions of female subjugation. In the Igbo society, a woman that has only daughters is also seen as a childless woman. Girls are never regarded in the society. Nwakusor makes it clear to Adaku in Emecheta's novel that she has no right in the family since she has only daughters. He puts it that:

Our life starts from immortality and end in immortality. If Nnaife Has been married to only you, you would have ended his life on This round of his visiting earth. I know you have children but they Are girls, who in few years time will go and help build another Man's immortality...(166).

This mean that woman are of no value, that they only end up helping another man to build his immortality instead of theirs. When Nnuego comes to Lagos she does not like Nnaife because he is ugly and has a pot belly. Because of this, Nnaife tells Ubani his friend about what he notices. He says "she thinks I'm ugly, she hates me, she always hated me" (71). And Ubani, Nnuego's

family friend, makes an important statement on the position of the woman vis-a-vis the status of her male counterpart. Ubani says that:

How can a woman hate a husband chosen her by her people? You are to give her children and food, she is to cook and bear the children and look after you and them so what is there to hate? Women may be ugly and grow old, but a man is never ugly and never old matures with age and is dignified (71).

Thus traditionally, the woman is conceived of a vehicle through which a man satisfied his needs and fulfills his ambition. A truly virtuous woman should neither question nor rebel against these conventions. In the novel *The Joys of Motherhood* when Nnaife goes on the trip to Fernando, both women take care of the family and when Nnaife sends money, Adaku invests her own wisely and makes a lot of profit. She decides to give her children good education though they are girls. She believes they could do well in life. She makes sure she does not treat them as objects or give them the impression that they are inferior. She says: "I will spend the money. I have given the girls a good start in life; they shall stop going to the market with me. I shall see that they get enrolled in a good school" (212).

This emphasizes Emecheta's belief in education as a weapon against subordination. Adaku begins to see herself as only a ledger in Nnaife's house because she does not have the much-desired male children. She leaves her husband's house and even Nnuego goes to beg her to return but she refuses. It is at this point that Nnuego begins to question her whole life spent in the service of a man who does not appreciate her efforts. She begins to reassess the role that society had bestowed on her: that of a daughter to her father, a wife to her husband and a mother to her children she says:

The men make it look as if we must aspire for children or die. That's why when I lost my first son, I wanted to die, because I failed to live up to the standard expected of me by the males in my life. My father and my husband and I now I have not hope on our daughters? We women subscribe to the law more than anyone until we change all this. It is still a man's world, which women will always help to build (187).

In the above statement, Nnuego questions the traditional belief of that children make the woman. She also questions the preference for male children, she now confirms the fact that women are their own worst enemies because they subscribe to all these laws. Women are therefore agents of patriarchy. Nnuego immediately resolves to do some things with the remaining of her life she regrets having made friends with other women and having so many children. She had nine children in all. How was she supposed to know that by the time her children grew up, her tribe would have changed having so many children would face a lonely old age and maybe a miserable death all alone, just like a barren woman. In the novel, Nnuego is the opposite of her mother Ona who has a more vulnerable personality underneath her steely mask and because of this, she is condemned by the other more docile women of the village for being "A woman who has troublesome and impetuous, who had the audacity to fight with her man before letting him have her: a bad woman" (14). It is her very independence, ironically which makes Ona so desirable and so

compassionable a mistress Agbadi is a victim of his own double standard as the entire society. When one of his wives whom he neglected in order to stay with the willful and challenging Ona sickens, eulogizes her sons in one of the most piously hypocritical speeches that any Emecheta's character has yet uttered: "your mother is a good woman. So unobtrusive, so quiet. I don't know who else will help me keep an eye on those young wives of mine, and see to the smooth running of my household" (15).

Perhaps it is a realistic acceptance on Emecheta's part that motivates her writing such women as Ona out of real life? They either live in a legendary past or a romantic present and they always die before their immediate social environment adapts to their challenging unconventional lives and demands, to be judged on their merits as human beings rather than female chattel. Perhaps, it is also in part an admission of how far Nigerian womanhood has yet to journey towards freedom. The Joys of Motherhood refutes these ideas. Nnuego slaves tirelessly for her seven living children. She gives them everything in all her life, hoping that they will be her insurance against old age securities. Emecheta posits that "she was sure now as she bathes her baby son and cooked for her husband that her old age would be happy, that when she dies there would be somebody left behind to refer to as mother (54). Some of the most touching scenes of the novel brings to life the excruciating poverty of Nnuego as she struggles single handedly to sustain her children. To be able to look after them Nnuego refuses to handle an extensive business, often displaying a meager stall in front of her house. As children mature and grow away from her, she finally realizes that the joy of motherhood is not only that of giving everything to one's children but at the end reaping no rewards. Her sons Oshia and Adim, who have developed beyond the communality of Igbo traditional life, fail to remember their mother rather they struggle to advance only themselves. Consequently, Nnuego is left stranded, Emecheta posits:

Nnuego in old age was going down very fast. What actually broke Her was month after month, expecting to hear from her sons in America and Adim too who later went to Canada and failing to do So it was from rumors that she heard Oshia had married (224).

She finally cracks up, dies by the road side with no child to hold her hand and no friend to talk to her but she receives in death the attentions which her son denies her in life. Buchi Emecheta argues, through the heroine, that women in Nigeria need not achieve status through motherhood. This is because motherhood does not always guarantee social and financial security.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The topic, definition and aims of feminism in literature as treated in this study goes beyond the frontiers of the plea or crave equality between men and women in the society, but gives a detailed exploration of the issues that border on the culture and tradition of African and the Western Societies where women also belong. The feminist perspective looks towards social reconstruction in the African and Western environments women crave for a change which would be beneficial to all and sundry in these societies. They show solidarity and ideological movement of women through a literary perspective, craving for

their fundamental human rights and equal treatment with the men in the society, having discovered that men can also be a victim of circumstances in all ramifications. This is because, over the years women are very vulnerable to social ills, social injustice, man's inhumanity to man, suppression and marginalization of various types. In view of this, Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta in their novel titled *Efuru* and *The Joys of Motherhood* respectively show the ugly experience of women in the Nigerian society, which include childlessness, denial of education, problem of giving birth to only female children and non-recognition of women in the society. With reference to the two novels their protagonists, Nnuego and Efuru share the same sad experience, the pain the heart break and the misfortunes. They are both industrious women willing to love their husbands; but Nnuego allows herself to wallow in self-pity, Efuru becomes a mother through helping the world around her in spite of her failed marriages and childlessness. Other feminist writers that used their works as a weapon to fight against women subjugation and liberation are Mariama Ba in her work *So long a Letter* in which Ramantoulaye was the protagonist. Others are Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough* and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. These are some of the women that contributed in the fight for the liberation of other women.

Finally, the finding of the study is that these writers have achieved a lot in improving the status of women in the society. This, they have done through their works in which every woman who reads them is inspired to fight for independence through education and hard work. Today, owing to the awareness created by feminist writers of the world, women are being given opportunities to head companies and various government parastatals and also being gender sensitive. Therefore, feminist writers in their ideology and perspective have improved the status of women in African and Western societies immensely at various levels.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so further research on the topic still needs to be done "Feminism in Literature: A Study of Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Nwapa's *Efuru*."

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