
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Culture and Intra-gender Women Subjugation as Reflected in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*

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| ABSTRACT

Very often men are known to be the subjugators of women in different fields; they are accused of subordinating, manipulating and hampering the visibility of women. This paper however, finds paradoxically that women sometimes are at the root causes of their own problems. It shows that they are those encouraging male domination and this through the way they behave towards their fellow women. In the light of moderate feminist's theory, this paper uses Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* to expose the cultural and the female's intra-gender subjugation.

RÉSUMÉ

Très souvent, les hommes sont considérés comme ceux qui assujettissent les femmes dans différents domaines ; Ils sont pointés du doigt et accusés de subordonner, manipuler et empêcher la visibilité des femmes. Cet article montre paradoxalement que les femmes quelques fois sont à la base de leurs propres problèmes. L'article souligne qu'elles sont celles-là même qui encouragent la domination masculine et ceci par leurs agissements envers leurs consœurs. A la lumière de la théorie de critique littéraire qu'est le féminisme modérée l'article s'est servi des romans *Beyond the Horizon* de Amma Darko et de *Second-Class Citizen* de Buchi Emecheta pour exposer l'assujettissement culturel et intra-genre des femmes.

| KEYWORDS

Women, subjugation, cultural, intra-gender, visibility.

Femmes, assujettissement, culturel, intra-genre, visibilité

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The issue of women's subjugation has been and is still a huge debate across the world. The issue, even nowadays, continues to sink a lot of the anchor of various writers and critics in order to find solutions and eradicate it. Talking about the root of the marginalization and subjugation of women, fingers have always been pointed to men as the main agents of female's sufferance and misery. However, this paper, after a close analysis, finds that men are not the only perpetrators of females' subjugation. It seeks to demonstrate that there is a lack of sisterhood among women, and some women in positions of power become executioners to their fellow women. It highlights that beyond the cultural contribution of women's subordination, women themselves have contributed a lot to their own subjugation. The paper reveals that women's self-underestimation and the female's intra-gender subjugation are some of the aspects which greatly affect women's wellbeing and their freedom before their male counterparts. This is because the female beings' negative attitudes among themselves reinforce male beings' domination. Through the lenses of moderate feminism, this paper scrutinises the literary production of two authors, Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*.

Feminism, as defined in the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, is "the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim" (Oxford, 9th edition). It is a theory that seeks to fight for the rights of women as well as their emancipation. Feminism in this paper, therefore, will help to display the intra-gender and cultural elements that cripple the rights of the female sex in human communities. We choose moderate feminism as our article seeks to advocate collaboration rather than confrontation in the struggle for equal rights for women. In fact, both novels, through their female characters, expose to the readers the impacts of cultural and intra-gender ill treatment of women, as observed in contemporary communities. Nevertheless, the purpose of this paper remains the deconstruction and decolonisation of the mind of women collaborators in female gender oppression because their attitudes continue to maintain their fellow women under subjugation.

2. Socio-cultural Background of Women's Subjugation

Women suffer especially because of oppressive cultural traditions, many of which still persist in modern African societies. Ogunidipe-Leslie identifies traditional structures as mountains on the back of African women (Mazvita, 2011, p. 9).

The above quotation, summarizing the oppressive living conditions of women on the African continent, opens the reader's eyes to how heavily women are loaded and their urgent need to be unloaded. Above all, it shows that these practices are culturally rooted and require courageous moves towards revisitation because although culture is dynamic, deeply rooted ones are very resistant to change. Identifying the traditional dogmas as mountains is a hyperbolic way of telling the world how unbearable the dos and don'ts imposed on women in African societies are. The subjugation and subordination of women in African communities have thus a deep cultural origin. This is due to the Africans' different conceptions of things and realities in association with their straight attachment to the nature in which they live, taking into account their beliefs in link with their mores, habits, and customs that hold them together. Unfortunately, all these give room to gender inequalities in their various facets: socially, economically, as well as politically. Therefore, African cultures, customs, and their traditional practices struggle hard to keep women under men's control. In that perspective, Olusola (2023) posits that:

In Africa, culture has been one of the major factor militating against women's liberation and empowerment. Most cultures in Africa have little regards or placement for women. [...]. Most traditions in West Africa do not give equal liberty to women as men. Due to this factor, most Africans perceive woman as less superior being to men. (p. 81).

Through this quotation, it is clear that African cultures are greatly part of the causes of African women's subjugations due to the fact that most of its norms and practices are in favor of male beings, who in turn consider themselves superior and more valuable than female ones. That superiority gives them authority as traditions and customs holders, so they organize society unjustly by keeping the lion's share for themselves and leaving crumbs for women. They make life difficult for their female counterparts through many different practices in the name of culture. Msuya (2020) in that context states that: "Various traditional practices are based upon men's superior position in culture, causing women to suffer much cultural abuse" (p.46). Most of the time, these cultural practices are imposed on women. Among these cultural practices are forced marriages as well as child marriages, polygamy, female genital mutilation, virginity testing, inhuman widow's rituals, and male child preference. This means that most African cultures put down the women's personality, considering them less valuable, just as argues Olusola (2023), who adds that "Many cultures have little or no regard for women and they are regarded as second-class citizens or sex workers" (p.85). All these prove the disrespect that is reserved for women in some African cultures, whereby women are even sometimes taken as sex tools.

It is important to be precise that human beings, in general, are shaped and modeled by the environment in which they are born and grow up. The environment, therefore, has its rules and norms that are, in turn, based on cultures and customs, as mentioned before. Culture in this precise context refers to a panorama of thoughts like behaviors and manners that a human being acquires or learns after birth, with the help of their parents or with the interaction with other surrounding people. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines culture as "the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group: ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society." (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary; 10th Ed). In fact, it is in that light that a popular saying maintains that culture is what remains when one has forgotten everything and what is lacking when one has learnt it all. This reveals how important cultures remain to any people. It is the main element that defines one's origin. Moreover, culture is also an element that defines the lifestyle of humans according to their sex within a community. Msuya (2020) has to say that:

Gender identities and relations are critical cultural aspects that shape daily family lifestyle, workplace behavior, and behavior within the broader community. Gender – unlike race or ethnicity – establishes a principle for society because of cultural connotations given to being male or female (p. 48).

Africa, therefore, can be seen as a particular environment that also encompasses cultures and customs that shape all people living in that environment, then shaping their own way of looking at the world as well as their conception of realities. It is; thus, the case of some Africans' way of conceiving the gender issues in link to what being a male or female means to them according to their different cultures. Hence, all male and female beings growing up in that same African environment are automatically shaped by their cultural bases. According to those African cultures, a woman is characterized by weakness, submission, silence, and servitude, while men are known for bravery, domination, ruling, protection, and bread-winning.

The African conception of what a woman is displays a large difference between men and women and then puts African women into subordinate positions, opening the gates for their men to manipulate and subjugate them by taking women as their property and slaves. All these aspects have been literally reflected through both Amma Darko's and Emecheta's writings with their male characters, namely, Francis in *Second Class Citizen* Akoby and his friend Osey in *Beyond the Horizon*. The forced marriage, one of the oppressive imbedded practices, is what Darko decry through the marriage of Mara in her novel *Beyond the Horizon*. In fact, the condition under which Mara, the protagonist of the novel, is given to marriage is proof that women are subjugated. A kind of marriage arranged only by her father without implicating Mara, the one who is concerned: "Your father has found a husband for you" (Darko, 1995, p. 4). According to Mara's culture, parents are responsible for finding partners for their children. And a well-trained child dares not oppose the choice made by parents. The following quotation illustrates well the forced marriage which still exists in many African families.

For instance, African women in deeply patriarchal societies such as Senegalese Islamic society are not given the opportunity to choose the men they would want to make their life partners. The choices that are made for such women are usually in the interests of men, meaning that the male authority figures in their lives choose the man they deem fit to suit their needs, which are often influenced by material concerns and issues such as status. (Mazvita, 2011, p.21)

Mara, in Darko's novel, is an example of a woman who is trapped in the patriarchal system. To corroborate that Mara's lack of freedom to choose her life partner is a widespread practice, the South African writer Ngcobo, as cited by Mazvita M. (2011), states that "an African girl child is born to fulfil a specific role, for she is trained to be a suitable wife from a very early age" (p.38). Mazvita shares that view when he comments that "this was done in order to make sure that the girl child would become a valuable commodity, the bride's family would be able to gain materially from marriage to a prosperous man." (Ibid, p.38). This confirms that it is in the financial interest of her parents that Mara is given to marriage to a man she has never met. Like a commodity, she is sold, and nobody cares about how she will be treated by the unknown man. Having grown up in an environment in which silence is required for women, Mara could not talk her mind and express her disagreement. She could not challenge her parents' choice and decision. She grew up with that education, and she witnessed the same scenario with her senior sister and her mother. Mara reveals: "I only know that a girl grows up, is given to a man by her parents and she has to please the man, serve him and obey him and bear him plenty children" (Darko, 1995, p.86). Mara's words in the above passage from the novel transpire how, through education, she is conditioned to accept her enslavement.

Mara is given no power of expression. She just has to accept to be given away like a mere property, to be sold like a camel or a cow to a master whom she will serve for the rest of her life. Mara's father, for example, only chooses wealthy men who can afford to buy his daughters. Mara says, "But father, it appeared, had a different formula for choosing or accepting husbands for his daughters, which took more into consideration the number of cows coming as the bride price than the behavior of the man" (Darko, 1995, p.4). Although the status of a groom is important for the bride and her parents, even in these modern days, parents who care for their daughters will prefer a man of virtue and good manners for the emotional and psychological health of their child. And even if wealth is involved, that wealth will first of all benefit their child before themselves. But in the case of Mara in the novel, the benefits go directly to her father, the authority face of her family. For that greedy father, wealth is more important than anything else, and for that, he chooses to sell his daughter like a commodity.

Likewise, Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* shows that according to some African cultures, a woman is reduced to nothing, and all decisions have to be taken on her behalf while she remains voiceless. The narrator in *Second Class Citizen* reveals that: "as most African wives know, most of the decisions about their own lives had to be referred first to big Pa, Francis' father, then discussed amongst the brothers of the family before Adah was referred to" (Emecheta, 1974, p.23). The above excerpt reveals that though the matter concerns Adah's life, she is the last to be consulted, and this surely is not for her to give her opinion but to subtly impose their will on her. This stands as proof of the non-consideration of women in decision making, instances even if those decisions are about very important aspects of their own lives, like marriage in this case. As we can remark in both Mara and Adah's cases, in respectively *Beyond the Horizon* and *Second Class Citizen*, no woman is consulted in the making of the decision for their future lives.

Like goods for sale, their sellers (Adah's and Mara's fathers) bargain with the customers, and the commodity has no mouth to give her consent or disagreement. This will continue in marital life, where women will have no say in their lives as couples. This indicates that in their fathers' houses and their matrimonial houses, women are just like objects of decoration. This remains something too unfair and shameful. It is shameful because humans are treated just like animals. Humans endowed with the capacity of reasoning are silenced and given away, just like one will decide to sell his cow or dog without caring about the opinion or the feeling it. And this is just because those decision makers think that a woman is a nonentity. This is so that even if she proves to society that she can provide for the family like Adah does in the novel *Second Class Citizen*, decisions will still be made behind her and imposed on her. "She (Adah) found all this ridiculous, the more so if the discussion involved finance. After all, she would have to pay for the plan in most cases, but the decision would have been made behind her back" (Emecheta, 1974, p.23). The most painful in this aspect is the fact that women undergo the most negative outcomes of such decisions, which are made about their own lives by male faces around them.

The position of men and women in society is part of Africa's unchallengeable culture. African societies are well structured in such a way that they have male beings at the top, followed by women, and after children. But sometimes, it is realized that women are mixed with children because they are all ruled by men and that their mentality is compared to that of children who are not able to think further. In certain circumstances, male children, however small they may be in their ages, seem to be more precious and valuable than a woman, whether old or not. This explains the fact that in some African communities, mothers and elder sisters bow and serve food and water to their sons or junior brothers. In Africa, men have thus set norms and strategies that protect their hegemony and keep female beings in subordination. Even in these modern African societies, where some cultural norms are challenged by the principles of global development, some communities are still making things difficult for whoever is willing to fight or dethrone the male-centered cultural system. Corroborating that view, Olusola (2023) argues:

Female oppression is deeply ingrained in the culture of the society, which ensures the continuation of patriarchal control. This situation makes it impossible for women to seek ways of liberating themselves because doing so will be tantamount to challenging the age long tradition and customs of the people (p.83).

The passage sheds light on the fact that male hegemony is strongly embedded in African cultures, and strategies are developed to stand against the liberation of women. That practice of patriarchy is so rooted that some women internalize it and see it as something that is normal. They patronize and see it that such female enslavement practices are accepted and transmitted from one generation to the other. Those women, knowingly or unknowingly, greatly contribute to their own undermining and that of their fellow women.

3. Females' Intra-gender Subjugation

In the society in ..., there are women who are indoctrinated to the extent that they actively practice, maintain, and perpetuate oppressive traditions. Such women see other women as born to serve men, without choices and destined to live their lives in exactly the way in which they have led their own under patriarchal oppression. Moreover, such women emphasize that traditional beliefs should be preserved and that a woman should know her place in this society, thus further perpetuating the oppression of women. Lindorfer concurs with this, providing evidence that this is a widespread tendency in Africa in which women actively practice and maintain oppressive customs and that women themselves are behind some of these dehumanizing practices. Mercy Amba Nwachuku expands on this, observing that the oppression of women in Africa is further worsened by female collaboration with male oppressors (Mazvita, 2011, p.42).

The above passage, which tells a lot about how education conditions women to normalize their enslavement, opens the second part of this paper, which is about the collaboration of women with men to subjugate their fellow women. It reveals that one thing that keeps female oppression going is the indoctrination, the female brain-washing system that is embedded in African culture. Women are educated to see their oppression by their men as something normal and natural, which they (Women) should patronize and make sure it is perpetrated from one generation to the other. This is the case of Mara's Mother in *Beyond the Horizon* as she cooperates with her husband and gives her daughters in marriage to men that she herself doesn't know. The worst is that the marriage plans are not known and consented to by their daughters. Without minding the feelings of their daughters and the behavior of the men (whether they will be caring husbands to their daughters or not), they just choose men who are financially well settled. Mara's senior sister went through the same scenario, and now it is Mara herself's turn.

I remember the day clearly. I returned from the well with my bucket of water of the day when mother excitedly beckoned to me in all my wetness and muddiness, dragged into her hut, and breathlessly told me the 'good news.' 'Your father has found a husband for you, she gasped, a good man.

All I did was grin helplessly because I clearly remembered the good news as this that mother had given my sister two years before. Found, too, by father. And my sister was now wreck (Darko, 1995, pp.3-4).

This excerpt displays Mara's mother's complicity with her authoritarian husband. She is the one who prepares the mentality of her daughters so they do not oppose the choices their father makes for them. The role played by that older woman in the objectification of her daughters is what holds our attention. Her eagerness to break the news to her daughters and her subtle way of compelling them to accept without a word of disagreement shows how she secretly works for the perpetration of the patriarchal culture. Before her daughters could speak their minds, she called the information "good news" and the unknown man "good man". This is somehow her strategy of preventing her daughter from giving their objection. Her collaboration with the authoritarian father to force their daughter into marriage in which they lead a wretched life makes her an oppressor instead of a protector of her female children. She should normally seek the opinion of her daughters before showing any appreciation for the information and for the man. She is, in this case, the right person to defend her daughters and precisely base herself on the negative outcomes of Mara's senior sister's marriage, which is not enviable.

In Mara's words, her "sister was now a wreck," which means that her sister is going through hardships in the marriage she has been forced into. She is not happy at all in that forced wedlock. Unfortunately, their mother still fills happy to continue pushing her daughters to accept to be sold like cows. She subtly acts on the psychology of the girls with her joyful mood as she gives them the information. Her excitement in telling Mara the 'good news' reveals her support for such a situation. She finds it to be good news, while Mara does not share the same opinion. However, as a good girl trained to be submissive to the authority faces in her life, she is unable to openly talk her mind. The words of Mara in the following passage show that she is aware that the choice which is made for her has nothing to do with her welfare in that marriage. It has to do with the interest of her father.

I don't know why, of all the eligible women in the village, his father chose me. I only know that the choice for my father could not have come at a better time. A man he owed money to had come and forcefully claimed his debt in the form of eight of father's eleven goats. So, my dowry came in handy. And then, too, he was flattered that the first Naka son with a school corticated should choose his daughter for a wife... But like I said, Akobi's father bought me off handsomely. " (Darko, 1995, p.7).

Father is thus commodifying his daughter. And a mother who has already seen the sufferings of her first daughter out of the same choices, calling it "good news" instead of helping her daughter to stand against that practice, is to be condemned and classified among those women who support the subjugation of their fellow women. That way of encouraging one's daughter into forcible wedlock resembles the women trafficking by other women of power and authority, about which Okpala and Ezeajugh (2019) comment as follows:

Ezeigbo's *trafficked* is a true representation of modern-day form of slavery whereby women are used as commodities in the sex trade. It is a terrible type of business that traumatizes the victims so much that rehabilitation of their psyche becomes a pre-requisite. It may be necessary to note that women are collaborators in this game. (p.156).

The above passage shows clearly how female commodification affects women's lives and how women themselves are being implicated in the subjugation of their fellow women. The following complaints of characters in a novel, as quoted by Okpala and Ezeajugh (2019), substantiates the collaboration of women in the subjugation of their fellow women: "Madam Gold sold me to a pimp a white man-after four years slaving for her" (ibid, p.155). The affirmation that she is sold to a man by her fellow woman is very shocking and opens her eyes to the participation of women in positions of power in the enslavement of the poor and powerless. This participation of women helps men to easily expand their patriarchal system and its exploitation.

When women among themselves refuse to come together against their ill-treatment, when some of them choose to help in the denigration of other women, it will still prove difficult to successfully fight the generational woes. As would say Okpala and Ezeajugh (2019), "a woman who mocks a barren woman has given voice to the male's maltreatment" (ibid, p.95). This means that it will be difficult for men to love, respect, and keep barren women under their huts when they witness women themselves growing much hatred toward their fellow women who are barren. When women themselves do not feel the pain of their fellow women, when those women who are in a position to defend the weaker ones turn out to exploit, marginalize, and down throw the latter, men will do nothing more than follow their steps in the subjugation of the female sex.

As maintains a common saying, "If you do not say I am, nobody will say you are." If women themselves do not give value to their fellow women, men will just continue viewing them as their slaves. It is because many women take their oppression for granted

and see to it that it is considered the same by the younger generation that the practice will be difficult to erase among humans. The passive acceptance of female subjugation and its transfer from mother to daughter is what compelled Mara in the Novel *Beyond the Horizon* to take the oppressive behaviour of her husband as normal because she has all her life witnessed the same with her father and mother and her mother has advised her to be submissive to her husband in any case.

... it was natural, too, that when he demanded it, I slept on the concert floor on just my thin mat while he slept all alone on the large grass mattress since, after all, mother had taught me that a wife was there for a man for one thing, and that was to ensure his well-being, which included his pleasure. And if demands like that were what would give him pleasure, even if just momentarily, then it was my duty as his wife to fulfil them.... I still regarded my suffering as part of being a wife and endured it just like I would menstrual pain.... I saw also as falling under 'obey and worship your husband', as my parents and family elders stringently repeated to me at the end of the marriage rites. In other words, that, too, was for me normal (Darko, 1991, pp.12-13).

This extract makes plain that in Africa, female children are not educated to know their self-worth and capacities but rather educated to erase themselves, nullify themselves, and make way for men to shine. Mara's mother, having internalized that education which tells her that her well-being should be sacrificed for that of her husband, transfers the same education to her daughter, compelling her thus to make herself the slave of Akobi, her oppressive, devoid of feeling and narcissistic husband. Mara's mother is thus convinced that women are born to serve men and her daughters should not oppose their father's choices because they are destined to obey any man. Mara's mother becomes, thus unknowingly, a collaborator in the oppression of Mara and her sister. She is the one encouraging Mara to take oppression for granted instead of supporting her in her questioning and eventual rebellion.

Women preventing other women from struggling against male oppression is not good for the whole fight. They need to join hands because it is through unity that their victory will come. Regarding the importance of unity in women's fights, Mazvita (2011) has this to say: "When women decide to unite and resist these practices, they will be in a better position to achieve self-actualization" (p.43). Women should unite against their objectification. Older women who have become shadows of themselves because of the ill-treatment they have faced in their marital home should be a support and not in opposition to the new generation of women. Insisting on the fact that a woman single handedly cannot fight that embedded tradition but only together can they stand it, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, a Nigerian critic, as quoted by Mazvita (2011), affirms that "if such oppressive aspects are not resisted by many women, they will remain impediments in women's struggle for empowerment" (p.43). Normally, as Mara's mother has suffered martyrdom at the hands of her husband, she should teach her daughter to stand against marital oppression, but unfortunately, she is the one who encourages her daughter to enslave herself for the well-being of her abusive husband. Mara's mother becomes thus one of those women used by men to perennially subjugate other women. She is a passive woman who thinks that male oppression of women is normal, and that her daughter should accept it. The insistence on the words "normal" and "natural" in Mara's story on pages 12 and 13 of the novel is an ironical way of talking about the abnormality in the relationship between Mara and her husband. It lays emphasis on the naivety of Mara as she passively accepts physical and emotional violence in the name of Marriage, as her mother taught her. Female subjugation is thus sustained by those women who are enabled to stand the oppressions. They passively accept and educate the younger generation to follow in their footsteps for the welfare of their marriages and not for their own welfare. The welfare of a marriage should normally pass by the welfare of every individual in that marriage. But mostly in Africa, the welfare and the security of man alone is what people seek in a marital home, and that alone is sufficient to qualify the marriage as a good one. Women and their wellbeing are ignored.

Moreover, Women's subordination is also sustained by the females' intra-gender subjugations. This is then referred to as the same sex exploitation, such as some women who inter human trafficking businesses by using their fellow women as commodities and subjecting them to prostitution, where they allow some men to use and play with their bodies for only a little money. This is more apparent in *Beyond the Horizon*, where many women are managers of the prostitution centers, such as that of 'Peepy' Kaye, the female character is one of the managers of the center. The narrator explains: "Kaye was an African woman, too, a stunning beauty and the wife of the good looking man who was the owner of peepy. Kaye was herself still partly in the trade... She assisted her husband in managing peepy" (Darko, 1995, p.116). The passage clearly reveals how Kaye, though a woman, joins hands with her husband and other men to subjugate and manipulate her fellow women under prostitution in the center. The passage later makes it clear that Kaye is also the one who polished Mara to adapt her to the mood of peepy, their center of prostitution. So Kaye, as a woman, joins hands with her husband and their male customers to objectify and commodity her fellow women and make money on their backs by turning decent, innocent women into sex slaves. She is thus a female oppressor.

The females' intra-gender subjugation is successfully reflected in both *Beyond the Horizon* and *Second-Class Citizen*. In Emecheta's book, this is first visible through the character named Ma, the biological mother of Adah, the protagonist. As a woman, she opposes her daughter's intellectual progress, and such an attitude is simply proof of same sex subordination. In fact, Adah reveals this when

she says: "If not for Ma Pa would have seen to it that I started school with Boy" (Emecheta, 1974, p.4). The passage shows clearly that Ma Adah's mother is the obstacle to her schooling. Instead of encouraging her husband to send Adah to school just like they are planning for her younger brother, she turns up to be rigid against her daughters' education. This shows that some older women are very oppressive to the new generation than men. In Adah's case, as the passage tells, Pa does not mind her going to school. The opposition comes from Ma. And Ma's opposition comes from her conviction that a woman's place is not at school but at home where she could help doing the house works. This is the reason why she struggles hard to keep her daughter at home in order to model her to a good house woman. Her opinion is that "Even if she was sent to school, it was very doubtful whether it would be wise to let her stay long. A year or two would do, as long as she can write her name and count... Adah had heard her mother say this many, many times to her friends" (Emecheta, 1974, p. 3).

In the words of Adah's mother, a reader can understand that women should not stay long in school or have big dreams. She should content herself with petit jobs, staying at home only to support and appreciate the big ambitions and success of men around her (brother, father, husband). This shows how women are educated to have low self-esteem and how older women become stumbling blocks for the new generation of women who struggle for self-realization. In the novel, the enlightened Adah argues against women's low self-esteem as follows,

Pa would be alright: he would probably cane her, you know, just a few stokes- six or so, not much- but Ma would not cane; she would smack and smack and then nag and nag all day long. She thought that it was these experiences with Ma so early in life that had given her such a very low opinion of her own sex. Somebody said somewhere that our characters are usually formed early in life. Yes, that somebody was right. Women still made Adah nervous. They had a way of sapping her self-confidence. (Emecheta, 1974, p.6)

Adah's mother, just like many women, clearly has low self-esteem and is struggling to transfer it to her daughter in the name of a good education. As a woman, the logic demands that she should rather be the one to fight for her daughter's formal education. But this is not the case; Ma rather turned to be the first antagonist of Adah's struggle for formal education. Through this, it is clear that some women constitute obstacles to the progress of their fellow women. By so doing, they unconsciously support the hegemony of the patriarchal culture.

The foregone excerpt makes plain that Adah's mother is one of those women who have regressive spirits as she views that only male children should be ambitious and that women should be contented to depending on men for their needs. She is the epitome of those women in societies who accept to be men's properties and encourage other women to do so. When Adah's father died, like a mere property, "Ma was inherited by Pa's brother" (Ibid, p.12). Ma passively accept every dictate of her patriarchal society, which tells her that a woman cannot stand alone and get value; she should be with a man whether she is happy or not. It is certainly why she accepted the second marriage in which the novel says she will suffer and finally lose her life. Obeying her education, which values male being and belittle female one's, Ma puts all her hope in her son, Boy.

It was decided after Pa died that "the money in the family, a hundred pounds or two, would be spent on boy's education" (Ibid, p.12) to the detriment of Adah's. For her, their family's future salvation could only come from a male child like 'Boy.' As for a female like Adah, spending on her is just a waste of money. Boy is an asset, and Adah is a liability; thus, she is just a useless expense. The above quotation sheds light on how she has been neglected, belittled, and oppressed in collaboration with her mother since her early age. Men taking such an attitude towards Adah is understandable because of the patriarchal background in which she lives. But her mother helping or even being the backbone in the oppression of Adah is questionable. It simply shows that she sees oppression as normal, and as a member of her community, she becomes the protector of the patriarchal norms and becomes, by so doing, the oppressor of the younger generation of women like Adah who rebel against the female dependent culture and struggle to be independent women.

In addition to Ma's attitude, in the same novel, one also comes across the same oppression and belittlement of the female child and the godlike way in which the male child is revered by women themselves in the difference Adah puts between her kids. Adah does not have the same consideration for both her boys and female children. It displays that she loves and cares more for her boys than she does for her female children. If she cares less for Titi than she cares for Vicky, it means that losing her daughter will not matter as much as if it is her son. In other words, for her, Titi is less human than Vicky. She has previously shown this through her conversation with the nurse when she was asked to know whether Vicky was her only child. Surprisingly, Adah responded: "Vicky was not; there was another, but she was only a girl" (Emecheta, 1974, p.62). The word "only" carries the belittlement of Titi. Clearly, the mother insinuates that Titi is not as priceless as her brother Vicky. She is only a girl simply means that she is useless, less human than her male child. This view of her daughter is simply the replication of the subjugation that she herself has often witnessed with her mom, Ma.

Thus said, in both novels, through characters like Mara and her Mother in *Beyond the Horizon* and Adah and hers in *Second -Classe Citizen*, one can understand that, in matters of female subjugation, some women stand as stumbling blocks to the progress of their fellow women. In patriarchal societies, older women, women of power, contribute a lot, knowingly or unknowingly, to the perpetration of the ill- treatment of their fellow women, which negatively impacts the lives of women in general and reinforces their subjugation.

4. Conclusion

In a nutshell, one can say that some African cultures, with their radical norms, constitute an obstacle to women's emancipation in their communities. It only praises the male domination over women and forges women to a stereotypical life condition. Nevertheless, this paper enables us to underline the fact that men are not all the time the only perpetrators of female women's oppression. Women themselves play a great role in their own subjugation. Instead of challenging the patriarchal hegemonies in their communities, some women rather blindly take it for granted. They thus contribute through their passivity to the continuation and the flourishing of their marginalization. Having grown up in cultures where women are taught to accept whatever decision men make about them, older women like Ma in *Second Class Citizen* unknowingly become a collaborator of men in female beings' oppression as they take it on their shoulders to stifle the resistant spirits in the younger ones like Adah who are aware of the injustice in the treatment between men and women and decide to stand against it. These naïve older ones become, unfortunately those who push their little ones to their destruction, like in the case of Mara, where her mother implicitly encourages her to accept a man who will finally cause her destruction as he transforms her into a prostitute, making money on her back. As for the Adah's, those women become stumbling blocks on their way to being financially independent women.

The whole work has shown that the influence women have on each other is not to be neglected. It is thus necessary to, in the struggles for female emancipation, decolonise the mind of those women who are colonized by patriarchal norms and become oppressive to those women who fight to free themselves from the claws and chakles of these embedded traditions in Africa. The fight against patriarchal norms should take into consideration the relationships between mother and daughter, senior and junior sisters, the madams, and their house helps in order to raise the alarm and find ways and means to save those women who suffer martyrdom in the hands of their fellow women. For those women who join hands with the patriarchal men to subjugate their fellow women, there is a need for consciousness raising. They need to know the ill-treatment of women is not traditionally or culturally normal. It is an abuse of power that should not be taken for granted. They need to know that it is sisterhood, loving and caring for the less privileged, that can enable women to attain self-realization and equal opportunities for men and women in Africa.

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