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The struggle for women empowerment through education : in the novels *Second Class Citizen* (1974) by Buchi Emecheta and *Das verborgene Wort* (2001) by Ulla Hahn

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# The Struggle for Women Empowerment Through Education

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Mary Rose-Claret Ogbuehi

African Women Writer | Education of Women  
**German Women's Movement**  
Pre-Colonial Igbo Traditional Society | Violence  
Objectification | Non-Formal Education  
Second Class Citizen | Freedom | Der  
Women's Rights | Justice | Culture | dan  
Community | Peace | knowled

**The Struggle for Women Empowerment  
Through Education**



**The Struggle for Women Empowerment  
Through Education**

in the Novels

*Second Class Citizen* (1974) by Buchi Emecheta  
and *Das verborgene Wort* (2001) by Ulla Hahn

Mary Rose-Claret Ogbuehi

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## *Dedication*

Dedicated to Professor Monsignor Dr Obiora Ike, through whose empowerment and encouragement this work can see the light of the day.

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*How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?  
I will raise the cup of salvation and I will call on the Lord's name.*

Psalm 116

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## INTRODUCTION

To a great extent and in many cultures, women have always been looked down on. Their natural attributes, when compared to those of their male peers, are considered to be weaker, hence their general designation as the weaker sex. Consequently, women are more likely to be treated as objects, often as physical objects for the gratification of men. In many cultures, patriarchal practices shape and encourage gender inequality and strip women of every form of control, even that of their sexuality. These practices impact so negatively on feminine sexuality that in certain cultures, women often accede to this denigration. This cultural bias is strengthened by roles the boy child and the girl child are given, roles that limit the girl child from the outset. The boy is taught to be strong and head the family while the girl is taught to be a wife and mother, and, as some customs require, submissive and dependent on her husband. Many women grow up with this cultural indoctrination and accept it as the status quo.

Consequently, in many cultures, a boy child is preferred to a girl child. A family in the Igbo culture with only female children is seen as cursed and looked upon with ignominy. An Igbo girl child sees herself as an unwanted child and would prefer to be a boy to bring joy to her parents. In the same culture, a boy child rules the family as the head. Even if he is not the first child, he assumes the responsibility of looking after his sisters as laid down by societal norms. These societal attitudes and cultural practices make women feel inferior to men. Because the male child is *ipso facto* the head of the family, he is given opportunities naturally denied to a girl child. For instance, boys are sent to school

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before the girls. If there are economic constraints on the parents, only boys are allowed to go to school, while the girls sit at home and learn domestic chores from their mother. This is further strengthened by the belief that the girl will be married off and be occupied with catering for her husband and children.

Although this disparity in gender is no longer evident in many cultures, the subjugation of women by their male counterparts is still rampant in other forms in many societies. Many girls are still deprived of basic education and human rights. Yet, despite efforts to narrow the gender divide in developed countries, there remains a glaring disparity in the ratio of men to women that occupy leadership positions globally. Women are the minority in parliament in most countries and, in some countries such as those designated as theocracies, it remains impossible for women to rise to such roles.

Beyond the disparity of roles, and as one of its consequences, women are subjected to all kinds of violence, such as rape, forced marriage, forced identity, dependence, and a lack of freedom of expression, giving rise to the status of women as second-class citizens. Despite this gloomy picture, women across cultures agree that this denigration can only be stopped and reversed if those who are victims are educated so that they can discuss the problems, proffer solutions, and see to their implementation. Many female authors write about the trauma that women undergo and the various ways in which women are marginalized in a male-dominated society. It is along this line that this thesis examines certain factors which engender and promote the suppression of women in society and explores how the suppression can be stopped by educating women.

This thesis is based on novels by two female authors, *Second Class Citizen* (1974) by Buchi Emecheta from Ibadan, Nigeria, and *Das verborgene Wort* (2001) by Ulla Hahn from Kirchhundem, Sauerland, Germany. It critically discusses the subjugation of women and violence

against them through the prism of the novels' main characters. Buchi Emecheta portrays the condition in which women found themselves after the British colonization of the Igbo of Nigeria from 1901 till 1960. The role of Igbo women in pre-colonial times complemented those of men and were not dependent. When the British came with their Victorian-era culture, the colonialists did not work with women. Their position in the pre-colonial era was disregarded, and roles were reversed. Women, deprived of political and economic power, became dependent. Men were seen to be superior to women, hence women were treated as inferior beings, a situation whose vestiges subsist to the present era.

In her novel *Das verborgene Wort (The Hidden Word)*, German-born Ulla Hahn portrays the subjugation and violence meted out to a girl who wants to be educated, a girl who wants to have an identity different from the unlearned status of her parents, a girl who wants to carve a niche for herself in society through reading and writing. This girl is beaten and taunted by her father. Her parents cannot understand why she wants to attain higher qualifications; after all, she is a girl. Hahn's discourse springs from the wider narrative of a predominant theme in her time. A consideration of female authors from the former East and West Germany after WWII, reveal that their themes gravitate towards women's liberation, women's identity, the integrity of women, emancipation, and equal treatment and rights for women, etc. These authors use their protagonists to portray the subjugation of women. Between East and West Germany, though equal rights for women was proclaimed in both, their realization was far from the norm. There existed a wide margin between the general position and treatment of men and of women in society. Among such writers are Christa Wolf, Irmtrud Morgner, and Maxie Wander. Their perspective is that women's emancipation and empowerment can only be achieved with a passion arising from personal experiences and by making women the flag bearers for any effective emanci-

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pation. Wolf categorically sums up this perspective and gives valid grounds for it in “Weibliches Schreiben” (1989: 19), stating:

Inwieweit gibt es wirklich `weibliches `Schreiben? Insoweit Frauen aus historischen und biologischen Gründen eine andre Wirklichkeit erleben als Männer. Wirklichkeit anders erleben als Männer, und dies ausdrücken. Insoweit Frauen nicht zu den Herrschenden, sondern zu den Beherrschten gehören, jahrhundertlang, zu den Objekten der Objekte, Objekte zweiten Grades, oft genug Objekte von Männern, die selbst Objekte sind, also ihrer sozialen Lage nach, unbedingt Angehörige der zweiten Kultur; insoweit sie aufhören, sich an dem Versuch abzuarbeiten, sich in die herrschenden Wahnsysteme zu integrieren. Insoweit sie, schreibend und lebend, auf Autonomie aus sind.

Buchi Emecheta, in her novel *Second Class Citizen*, recounts how her protagonist Adah (whose life mirrors her own) bears the stigma of a second-class citizen from birth simply because she was born a girl. Adah fights her way to school alongside her younger brother. Yet as there is no money to send her to the university, she is forced to marry at 16. Once married, her parents-in-law decide what happens in her marriage. She tells the story of how she believes in her dream of going to the United Kingdom. She is often beaten by her husband, abused sexually, and by the time she is 21 years old, she has already had five children. She has no rights over her body. Her husband does not want her to be an author, so he burns her manuscripts and beats her for daring to write. Her quest for autonomy and self-identity leads her to divorce her husband. Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* is the first recorded book by a female author of Nigerian origin that openly discusses the suppression of women. It gives courage to other women to speak out and write so that the marginalization which women experience can come to an end. Published in 1974, it is still recommended reading in secondary schools and higher institutions.

In *Das verborgene Wort*, Hahn also writes an autobiographical novel in which she recounts Hilla's experiences as a growing child who wants to go to school. She is obsessed with reading and having to learn High German, so different from the *Kölsch* (dialect) spoken in her hometown. At the age of five, she learns the alphabet in a Catholic school run by nuns. She is so obsessed with learning that she frequently goes into the backyard and reads words aloud to improve her language. She is beaten by her father, who is not happy that she wants to find an identity different from his as an uneducated worker. Her interest in literature is manifested in reading canonical authors such as Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing, and memorizing their works by heart. This interest earns her frequent beatings and bodily injury. After completing basic school, Hilla is forced to be an apprentice in a factory. Her father forbids her to attend secondary school which would prepare her for university. Frustrated, she starts to drink. Her schoolteacher notices and invites her to his house to see what her problem is. She opens up and tells him about not being allowed to further her education. She talks about her trauma at work and her recourse to alcohol. Consequently, her schoolteacher, along with a priest and another teacher presses her father to allow her to continue her education. She receives a scholarship and is invited to take the secondary school entrance examination.

While remaining original in their settings and narrative styles, *Second Class Citizen* and *Das verborgene Wort* share a common theme: the suppression of women in their search for identity and empowerment through education. Their differences lie in the fact that Hahn is from Germany, a country contending with the post-war repercussions of modern civilization, industrialization, innovation, media, and technology, while Emecheta hails from Nigeria, a country with culturally enshrined disparities between men and women and confronted with a crisis of relevance, attendant on the impacts of urbanization and contact with western civilization. Their protagonists Adah and Hilla fight for their

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autonomy and liberation from their male-dominated societies. Their unity in diversity gives rise to the possibility of a fruitful comparative analysis.

### **Goal of the Study**

This research is aimed at demonstrating that literature is a tool for social emancipation. Using their autobiographical novels, *Second Class Citizen* and *Das verborgene Wort*, Emecheta and Hahn address the problem of gender inequality and emphasize the importance of education as a key to women emancipation. The work also highlights the suffering and intimidation women undergo in their efforts to create an identity for themselves. Outlining the importance of education, this research helps me to conclude that education is the only means by which women can develop their potential and liberate themselves from patriarchal norms. Women empowerment through education leads to self-fulfilment, self-confidence, self-identity, economic independence, involvement in politics and decision-making policies, and equal treatment between the sexes.

The two texts represent two different worlds and cultures and show that women's problems cut across cultures and continents. Women in different parts of the world are victims of violence, suppression, child marriage, and dependence, and lack access to education. They are vulnerable to men's dominance and authority. Irrespective of colour and race, women worldwide are socially, culturally, religiously, politically and economically marginalized to different degrees.

The aim of choosing these two novels as objects of analysis is to prove that education is an indispensable weapon by which women can liberate themselves from societal norms that infringe on their human rights and to show that violence against women is a global problem. The

two novels indicate the extent of violence and intimidation women are subjected to in their efforts to be educated and rid themselves of the marginalization and subjugation effected by patriarchy. Through their protagonists, both authors equally demonstrate that education is the key to women empowerment. Education gives women voice, recognition, and identity and helps them gain a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Education gives them access to resources and hence makes them independent. Access to resources reduces their subjugation to their partners, giving rise to an egalitarian society instead of the patriarchal norms that promote women's subjugation and oppression in the first place. In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah divorces her husband to escape her abusive marriage and pursue a university education, which becomes the source of her independence. In the same vein, in *Das verborgene Wort*, Hilla insists on creating a new identity for herself by continuing to read despite the floggings from the father; her determination earns her a scholarship to higher education.

Though the two novels have different cultural backgrounds, both converge on the theme of the subjugation and suppression of women, existent in many cultures today. To better understand the novels, the social history of both countries is taken into consideration. Igbo women in Nigeria had complementary roles alongside their men before the advent of colonialism. They were socially, culturally, religiously, and economically independent and took part in decision-making. The colonial experience turned the tables on Igbo women by structurally depriving them of their rights and making them dependent on their men for their livelihood. Men became the breadwinners while women were confined to motherhood and housework. In the past, German women were also confined to motherhood and housework. Their emancipation came after WWII, during which women took charge of various functions as the men were at war. Having experienced this independence, the women did not want to be relegated to motherhood and housework once the war

was over. They wanted to be fulfilled and have a career. This led to the formation of various women's movements that fought for the freedom of women. In an attempt to understand the reason behind women's suppression in a patriarchal society, this thesis uses the feminist theories of Simone de Beauvoir and Hélène Cixous.

## **Structure of the Work**

The work is divided into four parts, with a total of eight chapters. Part I, comprising chapters 1 and 2, examines the backgrounds of *Second Class Citizen* and *Das Verborgene Wort* and traces the history of the Igbo culture between 1800 and 1960 and the history of West Germany between 1945 and 1970. The colonial life of the Igbo and the historical life in Germany, which form the background of the novels, are surveyed, to ensure a better understanding of the novels.

Chapter 1 begins with a brief history of the Igbo, their identity and culture. It describes the economic power and control of women in the pre-colonial era as well as the complementary role of women before the advent of the colonial masters. Women's economic relevance was relegated to the background during the colonial era, making them dependent. Igbo women were thereafter given the traditional roles of mother and wife.

Chapter 2 deals with the position of women in Germany after WWII. German women were also seen in the traditional roles of mothers and wives and conditioned to be dependent. The gradual emancipation of women began after WWII and reached a climax during the second women's movement, also known as second-wave feminism. The movement led to various demonstrations in which women fought for freedom, identity, and equality. Being a comparative work, Part I concludes by affirming that the oppression of women is a global problem; women,

irrespective of colour, culture, and race are marginalized in the social, political, religious, economic, and political spheres of their societies.

Part II of the work, comprising chapters 3–5, focuses on methodology and the interpretation of *Second Class Citizen* and *Das verborgene Wort* as well as the lives, motivations, and styles of both authors. In chapter 3, the feminist theories of Simone de Beauvoir and Hélène Cixous are presented. In her book, *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir discusses how women are treated as objects and considered as ‘the other’. Society has made women inessential and dependent. Over time, women have accepted the second status imposed on them. Men are active; women are passive. A woman is judged by her gender and not by her abilities. Beauvoir concludes by saying that “one is not born but rather becomes a woman”. Hélène Cixous is one of the best known French feminists whose writings such as *La Jeune Née* (1975), *Le Rire de la Méduse* (1975), and *Le Sexe ou la tête?* (1976) explore the relationship between women, femininity, and the production of texts. According to Cixous, feminine writing (*écriture féminine*) serves as the most powerful means of destroying patriarchal language, and through language, the social and cultural suppression and oppression of women. Cixous implores women to write their own stories. She believes that by writing, women will not only go a long way in changing what men have written about them, but they will also discover themselves. Chapter 3 concludes with an examination of the application of these theories to both novels, *Second Class Citizen* and *Das verborgene Wort*.

Chapter 4 undertakes a brief biographical sketch of Buchi Emecheta and her motivation for writing. Emecheta’s writings expose various means through which the rights of girls and women are infringed in a patriarchal society. The themes of her writing include the quest for equal treatment, self-confidence, and dignity as a woman; motherhood; violence against women; slavery; female independence; and freedom through education. The chapter also discusses African female writers

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and asks why women only started writing in Africa only after 1960. The inability of women to write earlier, as their male counterparts did, is because as young girls, they were not allowed to go to school. The aim of African female writers joining the literary world is to describe reality from a woman's perspective. Since the novel *Second Class Citizen* is a literary work, chapter 4 also focuses on narrative structures and perspectives. For example, the novel is a heterodiegetic narrative, meaning that the narrator is not the protagonist.

*Second Class Citizen* is an autobiographical novel. Although the name of the author is not the same as the protagonist, the author writes about her own life experience. This chapter analyses the stylistic devices and characters in the novel. Emecheta frequently uses hyperbole, coinage, idioms, proverbs/sayings, reiteration, indigenous language, allusions, and direct and indirect speech, in addition to figures of speech which include similes, metaphors, irony, and euphemisms. These stylistic devices are used to embellish her work and make her novel simple and interesting to read.

Chapter 5 presents a brief biography of Ulla Hahn, author of *Das verborgene Wort*. Hahn's motivation for writing is anchored in the joy it gives her. Reading and writing are part and parcel of her life. Unlike Emecheta, her writings are not only based on women but also the need for a just and peaceful world. Hahn writes to contribute positively to the world. The themes of her writing include identity, violence, personal experience, and the importance of literature. Chapter 5 focuses also on German female writers. German women have been writing since the Age of Enlightenment. The literary and social emancipation of women also began during this period and formed part of their work. Women used their writings to show the suppression of women in society and their quest for freedom.

As *Das verborgene Wort* is a literary work, its narrative structures and perspectives are also examined. The novel is autodiegetic; the au-

thor is the narrator, giving an account of an adventure she was personally involved in. The novel is also autobiographical since the name of the protagonist bears no resemblance to the name of the author on the cover page. This chapter examines the stylistic devices of the novel as well as the characters. To bring out the cultural life of the people of Monheim in the 1950s, Hahn uses dialect (Kölsch) on every page. Other stylistic devices such as metaphors, biblical quotations, idioms, and proverbs are used which make her work authentic and unique. Both novels, *Second Class Citizen* and *Das verborgene Wort*, are Bildungsroman, i.e., formation novels in which the protagonists attain personal growth, self-identity, and maturity amid difficulties.

Part III comprising only chapter 6, explores how both novels deal with the theme of the suppression of women. It dwells on various aspects of suppression which the female characters are subjected to. These include sexual violence, physical violence, social violence, economic violence, objectification of women, racism, and exclusion. Women in many cultures, across continents, live in suppression. They are given limited opportunities in comparison to their male counterparts in sociocultural, educational, political, and economic activities. Girls are deprived of equal education with boys, as seen in both novels. Many women are subjected to violence in their homes. Violence against women is one of the common forms of human rights violations practised all over the world. Many women die as a result of the violence of their partners or family members. It is the responsibility of government to protect girls and women from violence and to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Part IV, comprising chapters 7 and 8, is concerned with the evaluation and conclusion of the work. Chapter 7 deals with the importance of education in the lives of women. Education is the key to women empowerment and the autonomy of women. It reduces poverty levels and makes women active participant in the welfare of their families. Education creates job opportunities, through which women have access to

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resources, thereby becoming economically independent. It gives women identity and raises their self-confidence and self-esteem. It paves the way for gender equality and gives women a sense of belonging. The various forms of education, such as formal, non-formal, and informal, are examined in this chapter.

Chapter 8 brings the work to a conclusion by noting that the two novels are unanimous in asserting that education is the key to women empowerment. Having noted that women in many parts of the world are socially, economically, religiously, and educationally subjugated and excluded, this thesis proposes that through a commitment to the education of women, women can realize themselves and positively impact their lives and their societies. Afterall, women form a greater percentage of the world's population.

## **PART I.**

### **BACKGROUNDS OF *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN AND DAS VERBORGENE WORT***



# CHAPTER 1

## HISTORY OF THE IGBO BETWEEN 1800 AND 1960

### 1.1 Igbo of Nigeria: A Brief History, Identity, and Culture

An understanding of the background of the *Second Class Citizen* presupposes a brief sojourn into the history, identity, and culture of the Igbo people of Nigeria. Emecheta, and the major characters in her fictional novel, are all Igbo. The Igbo are often erroneously referred to as the Ibo as pronouncing the diphthong “gb” is difficult, especially for Europeans. The Igbo are an indigenous linguistic and cultural people of southern Nigeria (Lovejoy 2000: 58; Cassidy and Le Page 2002: 168). Their language, also known as Igbo, has diverse igboloid dialects (Obichere 1982: 207; Hugh 1911: 223).

Geographically, the Igbo live in Southern Nigeria. Their homeland is divided into two unequal parts by the River Niger (from which the name Nigeria is derived). The eastern part is much larger than the western part and surrounded by other Nigerian ethnic groups, such as Ijaw, Edo, Isoko, Ogoni, Igala, Tiv, Yako, Idoma, and Ibibio. Emecheta comes from the western part of the divide. Her town was originally named Igbuzo (Igbo-uzo) but was anglicized to Ibuzo.

The Igbo people, like any other nation, group, or cultural entity in the world, have sought to understand themselves, trace their origins, and reconstruct their history. Afigbo captured this when he noted that “the origins of the Igbo people have been the subject of much speculation, and it is only in the last fifty years that any real work has been carried out in this subject (Afigbo 1975: 28). Afigbo further notes that the colonial experience and eventual independence emphasized for the Igbos “the reality of their group identity which they want to anchor into authenticated history” (Afigbo 1975: 28).

Consequently, speculation and research about the origins of the Igbo people have branched into diverse regions. But principal among them are those that relate the Igbo people to the Nri Kingdom and those that relate the Igbo people to the Jewish nation. As Isichei puts it, “Nri and Aguleri and part of the Umueri clan are a cluster of Igbo village groups which traces its origin to a sky being called Eri” (El Fasi 1988: 254). Archaeological findings suggest that the Eri hegemony dates as far back as the ninth century with royal burials dating back to the tenth century (Lovejoy 2000: 62). The Nri Kingdom was a sort of a theocratic state that developed in the heartland of the Igbo nation, the present Anambra State of Nigeria, with a lineage of kings who can trace their origins to the Eri (Onwuejogwu 1981: 5). Pottery dated at around 2500 BCE which bore similarities with the work of the Igbo was discovered around Nsukka and Ibagwa (the present Enugu State of Nigeria). Later research in the 1970s based on linguistic and cultural evidence determined that there were separate “Igbo heartlands” in the Owerri, Okigwe, Orlu, Awgu, Udi, and Awka divisions (Apley 2017: 2).

Another burgeoning account of the origins of the Igbo nation is the tradition that links the Igbos with the Jewish nation. The tradition of Igbo descending from the Jewish nation has been traced to an early influential statement from an Igbo man, Olaudah Equiano, a Christian-educated freed slave, who suggested a migratory origin of the Igbo Jews.

In his autobiography of 1789, he wrote that there are strong similarities between “the manners and customs of my countrymen and those of the Jews, before they reached the Land of Promise, and particularly the patriarchs while they were yet in that pastoral state which is described in Genesis—an analogy, which alone would induce me to think that the one people had sprung from the other” (Equiano 1837: 26–27). Equiano further cites the authorities of other sources to validate his claim as well as similarities in such practices as government conducted by chiefs and judges; a family organogram reminiscent of Abraham and the patriarchs; the tradition of circumcision, sacrifices, and burnt-offerings; the washings and purifications that take place on the same occasions as the Jews (Equiano 1837: 26–27). However, critical historians and researchers have mainly regarded these claims as mere speculation. While there is no doubt that Jews were present in Saharan trade centres during the first millennium AD (Hunwick 1985: 155–183), the proposition that Jews were directly linked to the Igbo people in ancient times has no documentary evidence and may forever remain controversial.

In traditional society, the Igbos are very religious people. They believe in *Chukwu* (God Almighty) who made all things and who has other small gods as His servants to carry out His instruction in the world. Each man has his own *chi* (spiritual guide) and each village has its own sacred shrine. Yet despite the religious nature of the Igbos, their egalitarianism manifests itself even in their relationships with their deities. Apart from *Chukwu*, the small gods (*alusi*) can outlive their relevance and be discarded. Their relationships with the *alusi*, it a type of *quid pro quo*.

The Igbos are also known to be a very enterprising and hardworking people. Prior to colonialism and their contact with Christianity, like most ancient civilizations, they were mainly an agrarian society. A man’s worth was measured according to his possession of the staple food crops. Every man tried to build barns and grow yams as it was by this his wealth was measured, and the abundance of which allowed him

to become titled in the land. Women were not left behind in this egalitarianism; they grew cocoyams.

Generally, in the pre-colonial era, southern Nigerian women were not simply subordinate to their men; they worked alongside them. As such the two worlds of men and women were complementary. Women were equally active in the social, economic, political, religious, and educational development of society. Igbo women in pre-colonial times represented and were indeed compared to the Mother Earth that gives life. This symbolizes the role of women as givers of life. Not only does a mother give birth, but she also nourishes her baby. Being originally an agrarian society, the woman was seen as the nourishment that the earth gives to society. She was considered to be the *Ala* (the earth/land), a great spirit and a merciful mother, who made sure that the fertility of the soil was increased and delivered the fruit of the earth for man's sustenance and livelihood. The worship of the earth goddess formed part of the Igbo cosmology, in which a woman was always the priestess of the earth goddess.

In traditional Igbo society, women played a greater role in economic power and control. The economy of any nation was measured by its monetary organization and its resources, especially in terms of the distribution and consumption of goods and services. The traditional Igbo economy had a system to distribute goods and services and deliver them to the desired consumers. With agriculture as the mainstay of the economy, women played a key role in agricultural production and distribution. The success of agriculture at that time was based on the involvement of the entire household. Husbands, wives, and their children were all involved in agriculture. According to Joseph Chukwu, "the family provided the basic unit of labour for agriculture. Thus, it was virtually impossible for a man to become a celebrated wealthy farmer without the complementary role of his wife or wives in farming activities, and for the long term motive of procreating children that would provide the

needed agricultural labour in the nearest future” (Chukwu 2015: 38). The agricultural process was divided into the various units of procuring the land, providing labour, providing crops, cultivating crops, weeding the farm, harvesting the crops, and storing crops in the barn.

Land procurement and ownership in the pre-colonial Igbo society were communal. Thus, while land could be apportioned to individuals for personal use such as the construction of a house or seasonal farming, there was no real individual land ownership. At the beginning of the farming season, the elders decided which land was to be used for the farming season. This also ensured the practice of shifting cultivation that left some land fallow to maintain soil fertility. Every year before the planting season, members of each kindred would come and receive portions of land that would be used for farming. These lands were normally shared according to grown-up male counts in each family. However, widows were not left out since a portion of land was also allocated to them in the name of their late husbands or first sons.

Various kinds of crops were cultivated in the pre-colonial period. The principal ones were yam, cocoyam, cassava, trifoliate yam, and vegetables. The men cultivated yams and monitored their growth. The yam was king of the agricultural produce. So, the men, who were heads of families, undertook the planting of yams. They became the capital base of the man. He sorted them, separating those he wished to sell, choosing the tubers he wanted to preserve for the next planting season, before giving for the rest to his family to consume.

Women took charge of planting other types of crops. Igbo women were known to be hardworking. Hard work was highly valued and one of the determinant factors for marriage. Customarily, after the marriage ceremony, a woman would be given a piece of land to farm and cultivate crops, such as cassava, trifoliate yam, vegetables, cocoyam, and a host of others which she would use to feed her husband and children. By engaging in the production of various kinds of crops, women not only

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averted the risk of being too dependent on yams, but also showed their ability to provide a well-balanced diet made up of tuber and vegetable crops rich in protein, vitamins, and other nutrients.

The family was the basic source of labour. Women and children would normally go to the farm to weed. There were other kinds of labour, such as the co-operative labour force and clientage labour. Women were also members of these kinds of labour groups. Various duties were associated with agricultural tasks, including bush clearing, mound making, crop planting, weeding, yam staking, and crop harvesting. Within these various duties, women specialized only in crop planting, weeding, and harvesting.

Women planted other kinds of crops such as cocoyam, cassava, fluted pumpkin, local beans, and maize, anything but the yam, which was usually planted by the men with the help of their wives. The wives' assistance was needed if the man had a big farm with large quantities of yam to plant.

Weeding was among the most difficult tasks. Women used small hoes to do the work, three to four times each year. Weeding removed the wild grass which prevented the plants from getting enough nutrients from the soil.

Yam harvesting was done by men and stored in the yam barn. The other crops were harvested by women and stored in a suitable place either inside or outside the hut. The women also helped to carry the harvested yams from the farm and packed them in heaps of various sizes which were later arranged in the barn. The family as a labour force assisted in carrying the yams, but if the farm was large, some women's groups were usually asked to help.

It was also the women's duty to ensure that food cultivated was well preserved, stored and sold in the market if need be. All this was made possible due to the dynamic nature of Igbo women.

Women played a key role in the non-agricultural sectors of the Igbo economy, too. These included smithery, mat-making, salt-making, cloth-weaving, sculpture, cloth-dyeing, and fish-smoking. Some of these crafts were done by men, most were done by women, and others by both. The work explicitly done by women included making pottery, sleeping mats, and salt. Weaving and dyeing cloth and smoking fish were jointly done by both men and women. There was a lot of cotton in Igboland. Outstanding among them was the Akwete Cloth. The weaving industry helped teach the people to cover their nakedness. Women weavers contributed immensely to the growth of the economy.

The pottery industry was exclusively reserved for women because of certain conditions required for this business to thrive: the availability of clay and skill. Potters produced different kinds of earthenware, designed for various uses.

Making sleeping mats was also managed by women. The plant used as the raw material was scarce, so those eager to learn the trade had to pay for their apprenticeship. They produced and sold various sizes of mats. The money from their sales was used to help their husbands pay workers on the farm and take up various titles in the village.

Salt was an essential commodity in the ancient Igbo agrarian society. Common in many Igbo communities, not all the communities had salt-lakes or a stream where the raw materials were collected. These lakes and streams were owned by the kindreds on whose land the water was found. Women acted as salt boilers but not all women could partake. Tradition had it that women who were menstruating were not allowed to go there. As salt was an ingredient for cooking, men stayed away from such business; it was regarded as a woman's job. The salt produced could last for years if it were well preserved beside the fire and had no contact with water. The salt was usually sold at both local and distant markets.

Local trade in the form of commercial transactions normally took place within a particular market in a given community. Each community had its market day in a central place. Food items were predominantly sold, which included yam, cassava, and various kinds of vegetables. Other products such as brooms, hoes, matchets, and cutlery were also displayed. Women were mainly in charge of the marketplace; they produced the majority of what was sold. In local markets, prices were not strictly fixed. There was always room for bargaining. Women were generally viewed as being better at bargaining which required some patience from both parties. According to Basden, cited in Chukwu, Igbo women were “the most inveterate bargain hunters; indeed, marketing together with the preparation of goods constitute the chief occupation of the women. Practically, the whole of the women.... Practically, the whole of the trade in the Ibo country is in the hands of the women and they are extremely capable” (Chukwu 2015: 44). Sales were executed via barter as well as for currencies which included cowries (shell money), manillas (bronze or copper coins), and brass rods.

Long-distance trade was also undertaken by women who sold their goods in other towns and villages to maximize their profit. There were several towns in which long-distance trading took place, including Ogu-ta, Onitsha, Uburu, Ibagwa, Nsukka, and Asaba among others. Women who engaged in long-distance trade often moved in the company of men to avoid being kidnapped and sold into slavery. They usually moved in a group. The ability of Igbo women to trade in local and long-distance markets gave them economic independence; hard-working women could become very wealthy.

Women could own land, but they could not inherit it since the Igbos had a patrilineal culture. Wealthy women were also allowed to take titles which gave them some privileges and influence. According to Theodora Ezeigbo, Igbo women in the traditional Igbo society were described by Leith-Ross as a “rare and invaluable force, thousands upon thousands of

ambitious, courageous, self-reliant, hard working and independent” (Ezeigbo 1990: 154). A remarkable characteristic of wealthy women in the ancient Igbo society was their motherly generosity. Some of these wealthy and independent women used their wealth to help those less privileged.

Women were also priestesses of one deity or the other. The deity increased their influence and prestige. The deity chose her priestesses from those who made sacrifices to her. There was also some code of conduct that guided the priestess. With the coming of the colonial masters and Christian missionaries, women were excluded from participating as priests in the Christian religion, a role they played in the traditional religion.

In some parts of Igboland, wealthy women who could not give birth to children could marry another woman through whom their husbands bore children. Barrenness was looked on as an abomination. Childless women went through a lot of difficulties, including taunts from their in-laws. To avoid these taunts, such women were encouraged to concede another wife to their husbands. While polygamy was permitted in Igbo society, most couples ended up being monogamous out of affection for each other. In some Igbo communities, male daughters also existed. Since the Igbo cultural society was patrilineal, a man having only daughters who would eventually be married created some peculiar problems. In such circumstances, it was the practice that one of the girls (preferably the eldest) was encouraged not to get married but to bear children through concubinage for her father to fill in the patrilineage. The girl chose her lover and it was known that any child she begot belonged to her and not to the lover. These practices had some strong implications for the role of women in Igbo culture as we will see later in this chapter.

Educationally, women contributed to training their children. In pre-colonial times, there was no formal education or literacy that involved

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reading and writing. Nevertheless, there was a non-formal education in which mothers taught their children morals and other practical life skills. It was in the family that the basic code of conduct was learnt. When children reached the age of 13 or 14, there occurred another mode of learning - the apprenticeship. Science and technology were present in traditional education. Science was practised in some activities like farming, food preservation, salt-making, pot-moulding, traditional medicine, and hunting. Others included the preparation of palm oil and the production of local gin from crude palm wine. Girls learned from their mothers while boys learned from their fathers or distant relatives.

There were also different specializations in medicine. Some native physicians treated diseases with herbs. Orthopaedic doctors who could treat all kinds of bone problems were also found among women. Midwives specialized in child delivery.

As in most cultures, Igbo women were principally involved in art and aesthetics. Women undertook to teach their fellow women and daughters how to produce and use *uri* (clay) which in its variants was used for makeup and body decoration. Some types of *uri* were also used to decorate house walls. The art of producing pomade and soap was also transmitted by women.

All this serves to demonstrate that women played a very important role in traditional Igbo society. In most non-mechanized agrarian cultural societies, women were relegated to the background and the societal roles were male-dominated, but the Igbo, in their egalitarian and republican nature, presented a slightly different model. Despite being a patriarchal society, it was commonly understood that a person's last succour was his maternal home. Women, therefore, contributed immensely to the social, religious, political, and economic development of the Igbo traditional society in the pre-colonial era. This thesis argues that the position and role of women in the Igbo society were grossly affected by colonialism and Christianity. Christianity then did not favour the possibility of

female priests and the republican and representative democratic arrangement of traditional society was not amenable to the colonial administration. Together, through varied channels, they eventually turned the tables on the role of women in society, such that women to some extent became second-class citizens of their native society. For instance, being a patrilineal society, it was considered worthless investing in the formal education of a girl who would eventually marry out of the family. Yet to become anything in the emerging society fostered by colonialism and Christianity, women would have to have some formal education.

Besides any attempt at articulating the origins and culture of the Igbo people, certain historical circumstances shaped the current Igbo identity and affected the role of women in Igbo society. Among these are the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, Christianity, and the Nigerian-Biafran war of 1967-1970. The trans-Atlantic slave trade that spanned the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries forever changed the history of the Igbo. It destabilized the Igbo hegemony and caused war among the Igbo in the taking of captives for slavery. Slaves were taken from the Bight of Biafra/Bonny, which includes Nigeria, Western Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Northern Gabon (Talbot and Mulhall 1962: 5). A good percentage of these slaves were Igbo. Enslaved Igbos were known to the British colonialists to be rebellious with a high rate of suicide (Philips 2005: 412; Morgan and Hawkins 2004: 82). But most importantly there was evidence that traders sought Igbo women due to their peculiar characteristics, which they paired mostly with Coromantee men (from the Akan people of Ghana) to subdue these men. Igbo women, unlike women from nearby regions, were particularly emancipated and did not seem to view themselves as subjugated to men in this era. This would eventually change with colonialism.

Colonialism increased the contact of the Igbo with their neighbours but most importantly opened them up to Christianity and Western education. Unlike other regions in present-day Nigeria, the Igbo proved

decisive and enthusiastic in their embrace of Christianity and Western education (Ilogu 1974: 63; Sanday 1981: 136). This to a large extent was due to their decentralized system of government as opposed to the centralized system of government featured in other major cultures in Nigeria, such as the Hausa and the Yoruba. Yet for the same reason that the Igbos were open to Christianity and Western education, they were also in conflict with colonialism, more so than other cultures in Nigeria. The colonial government preferred the centralized form of government; it was more amenable to indirect control than the Igbo's representative democratic system of government. Colonial rule completely transformed Igbo society and culture through such practices as the introduction of warrant chiefs (Indigenous rulers that administered as kings) where there were no such monarchies (Rubin and Cotran 1970: 20). The Christian missionaries also transformed the Igbo culture by introducing and promoting some European ideologies and subjugating parts of the indigenous culture. These, as it were, would eventually erode the fabric of Igbo society. In his 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe tried to capture this resulting crisis of relevance in Igbo society in their contact with the colonial government and Christianity. It also affected women and their role in the emergent society. One good manifestation of this cultural crisis as it relates to women, was the massive revolt of Igbo women against the colonial government in 1929 often referred to as the Aba Women's Riot/War. It happened because of the perceived process of how women were taxed by the colonial government (Mathews 2002: 38). In the post-colonial era of direct rule in Nigeria after the independence of 1960, the Igbo immediately distinguished themselves by dominating the new middle class due to their earlier embrace of Christianity and, through the Christian missionaries, Western education; they had a head start. This dominance by the Igbo would eventually trigger hostility towards them, especially as they migrated beyond their original enclave of the South East to also dominate other parts of the

country, participating in the Nigerian-Biafra civil war with mainly the Igbo as Biafrans on one side and the rest of current Nigeria on the other. The Igbos eventually surrendered after three years of gallantry in a war fought with locally produced ammunition on the part of the Biafrans against the support of the colonial masters for Nigeria with starvation through blockades as a major instrument of that war. These circumstances and factors shaped and reshaped the role of women in Igbo society. These roles would be gleaned from the Igbo socio-political structure to which we now turn.

## **1.2 Role and Position of Women in the Pre-Colonial Igbo Traditional Society**

Before the advent of colonialism, the Igbos had an existing political arrangement that was very functional. As Judith Van Allen notes, “In the conventional wisdom, western influence has ‘emancipated African women – through the weakening of kinship bonds and the provision of ‘free choice’ in Christian monogamous marriage, the suppression of ‘barbarous’ practices, the opening of schools, the introduction of modern medicine and hygiene, and, sometimes, of female suffrage” (Van Allen 1972: 165). Contrary to this conventional wisdom, Allen also validly argues: “The experience of Igbo women under British colonialism shows that western influence can sometimes weaken or destroy women’s traditional autonomy and power without providing modern forms of autonomy or power in exchange. Igbo women had a significant role in traditional political life. As individuals, they participated in village meetings with men” (Van Allen 1972: 165). Allen further notes that their real political power was based on the solidarity of women as expressed in their own political institutions which the British colonial officers and missionaries failed to appreciate. As such, they weakened and in some cases destroyed women’s bases of strength: “Since they did not appreciate women’s political institutions, they made no efforts to

ensure women's participation in the modern institutions they were trying to foster" (Van Allen 1972: 165).

The role of women in traditional Igbo society was an outflow of the Igbo traditional political arrangement that gave rise to some women's socio-political institutions that were unappreciated by both the British colonialists and the missionaries and consequently were weakened and destroyed. Several authors (Ezeigbo 1990; Amadiume 1987; Mba 1982) agree with this stance and indeed demonstrate "how the role and status of women have changed drastically from what they used to be in traditional society to the subsequent political, cultural and economic powerlessness that characterized the colonial period and still characterizes the contemporary period" (Ezeigbo 1990: 149). Socialized as they were from Victorian England, these colonial officers and missionaries had "internalized a set of values and attitudes about what they considered to be the natural and proper role of women that supported this belief" (Van Allen 1972: 165).

### **1.2.1 Igbo Traditional Political Institutions**

The Igbo traditional political system has been variously described as "excess democracy" (Dike 1956: 37); "ultra-democratic" (Forde and Jones 1950: 24); "conciliar and democratic" (Coleman 1958: 336); a system in which political power was "diffuse" (Van Allen 1972: 166); and a democracy operated with a "system of checks and balances" (Ezeigbo 1990: 151). Generally, it was a form of representative democracy in which "there was no specialized bodies or offices in which legitimate power was vested, and no person, regardless of his status or ritual position, had the authority to issue *commands* which others had an obligation to obey" (Van Allen 1972: 166).

The Igbo traditional socio-political arrangement was an ascending level of individuals–families–wards–villages–clans. "The idea of town or city is modern in Igbo socio-political structure"(Ike and Edozien

2001: 177). In the traditional setting, a clan comprised many villages, and the villages, in turn, were made up of wards or sections (*ogbe*) where the various families lived. Generally, besides such exceptions as Onitsha and Aguleri, the Igbos had no traditional monarchs. The Igbo political system can be described as gerontology, a type of government organized around the council of elders who were representatives of the various families, wards, villages, and clans in the form of strict representative democracy. Decisions were usually taken together. Opinions were sought through voting by the raising of hands, and by such means the opinions of the majority were taken. According to Elochukwu E. Uzukwu: "The head of the eldest or principal clan presides over the assemblies of the village-group attended by other heads. But decisions that affect the lives of all the clans constituting the village-group necessarily involve consultation on family, kindred and clan levels (Uzukwu 1996: 15). The immediate implication is that "orders which come from top without prior discussion or negotiation are ignored. The saying *igbo enweghi eze* (Igbo have no king) simply means that Igbo do not tolerate autocracy" (Uzukwu 1996: 15).

The elders, therefore, served as the leaders of the people. A leader lost credibility if community affairs were not his priority. The intermingled individualism and communitarian consciousness, personal ambition, and openness to new ideas did not make the Igbo anti-community (Ike and Edozien 2001: 155). The main political institution for the Igbos in traditional society was the village assembly, a gathering of adults in the village. Within this political arrangement, women exercised some power in pre-colonial Igbo society. Igbo traditional society was made up of kingdoms and mini-states. Each of the polities had political structures that differentiated them. For a few, power and authority were in the hands of kings and titled men, while for the majority, they lay with the council of elders in cooperation with titled chiefs and age-grades. Wom-

en in these polities exercised important political power based on their unique organization.

### **1.2.2 Igbo Women's Political Institutions**

In the political arena, women's authority was structured to run parallel to those of men. Political power was divided between men and women in a complementary manner to foster peace, harmony, and the welfare of society. Women exercised power in all areas designated under their control. Such areas included women's courts, market authorities, and age-grade institutions. Women exercised both collective and individual power as members and heads of these organizations. One of the female political positions was the *omu*. The title *omu* (*Nneomumu* – mother of the society) was conferred on a woman with an outstanding character and ability usually measured in terms of her wealth and integrity. She acted as both the acknowledged mother of the community and the female monarch. She dressed like her male counterpart, the male monarch, and had her own palace, which was used as the female court. She also had her own council. She had other functions, such as taking absolute charge of the market and other responsibilities. According to Gloria Chuku, "the *omu* was in charge of the marketplace: fixing prices of goods, policing and settling all market disputes, maintaining market medicines, and performing occasional sacrifices for the peaceful and smooth operation of the market. She presided over women's matters and performed ritual sacrifices and propitiations for the peace and stability of the society" (Chuku 2009: 84). The *omu* was head of the *otu omu* (the *omu* society), the council of titled women. These women controlled local trading, the marketplace, and the cult of the marketplace. As Gloria Chuku also notes: "In such western Igbo towns as Onicha-Ugbo, the *omu* society was the custodian of the medicines that protected the town against all forms of evil and enemy aggression. The mystical powers of the *omu*, which were reinforced by regular consultations with powerful

diviners and mystics, enabled them to serve as diviners, spirit mediums, sorcerers, and ritual specialists to their people” (Chuku 2009: 84). The *omu* and her council imposed disciplinary measures in the form of fines and punishment on men and women who disturbed the peace of the marketplace as well as those who committed traditional taboos, such as incest and adultery. They also took part in state assemblies and village meetings where the welfare of the citizens was discussed.

However, the greatest political force of women was in their organizations and collective pressure groups. On a collective level, women exercised some freedom in governing themselves and taking decisions on what concerned the women themselves. This was accomplished through their organizations. They had the right and freedom to voice their grievances and take necessary actions whenever their rights were infringed by men. They also had the right to punish fellow women who misbehaved. Since political authority was diffused in the Igbo traditional political institution, women in this setting appropriated and wielded authority based on their groups. As such, “the power which Igbo women possessed emanated from the two strong women’s organizations in every Igbo community<sup>1</sup>: the *umuada* (organization of patrilineage daughters) and the *alutaradi* (organization of patrilineage wives). Both related to and cooperated among themselves and with other organizations. Complementing these two organizations were also the *otu ogbo* (age set meetings) and the association of adult women resident in a particular village which, according to Sylvia Leith-Ross, came to be called *mikiri* or *mitiri* (from ‘meeting’) under colonialism (Van Allen 1972: 169; Leith-Ross 1939: 106–108).

Within these groups, the *umuada* wielded final power on issues concerning women in the family and the community and in conflicts where men were unable to settle them. The *umuada* had the power to instil

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<sup>1</sup> The names of these group meetings vary from place to place based on the different inflections of the different igboloid dialects. However, the composition and objective are always the same.

discipline on erring wives in the patrilineage and punish them. They also acted as peace mediators in both their natal and marital lineages. The *umuada* was and remains one of the most organized, peaceful, and endowed women groups in Igbo culture and has survived the onslaught of modernity and Christianity. They engaged in the economic and cultural life of the people. They took care of village squares and places of religious worships. *Otu umuada* played a key role in ritual cleansing in their natal lineages and performed important roles in the burial rites. However, the resolution of conflict and enthronement of peace in the family was the principal function of the *umuada*. Within the political organization of *umuada* were the *isi ada* (eldest daughter of the lineage), royal women, and heads of women's organizations. The *isi ada* was not only regarded as the mother of the lineage, but she acted as the leader and spokesperson of women. She attended lineage meetings, took part in the decisions, and reported on all that concerned women. She would, in turn, take all the decisions made back to the women for them to implement. Royal women also played some political roles. Some were titleholders, whose political power and authority were equivalent to that of their male counterparts, the *ndichie* (the council of elders). According to Gloria Chuku, "Some powerful female Idibo title holders owned war canoes and sometimes exercised political authority and influenced state decisions more than male council members and men who held similar titles. Between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Ezenwanyi (female monarch/king) Nnenne Mgbokwo Oke Nnachi presided over the state government as the fourth ruler of Arochukwu" (Chuku 2009: 84).

The other organization *alutaradi* was not as strong as *umuada*. It served as the lower court, considering cases that involved lineage wives and their unmarried daughters, such as adultery or other breaches of marriage. Even though they were not as strong as the *umuada*, the members cooperated among themselves to make their grievances known by the action they took against the men, whenever they felt maltreated by

their husbands. Amadiume notes that women could conspire and go on strike with regard to cooking and having sexual intercourse with their husbands to press their points. This means was effective because in the Igbo culture, “men did not cook: control of food was therefore a political asset for the women. In sexuality, too, gender realities were such that it was believed that female provided sexual services; hence the political use of the threat of collective withdrawal of sexual services by women” (Amadiume 1987: 65).

Women’s political power was also reflected in their membership in all-female age-grades and title societies. The age-grade system was used to assign social duties to the members based on seniority. Authority and power were usually controlled by senior members of the age-grade while the juniors carried out lesser jobs. The seniors took decisions that affected the community.

The women’s titled societies wielded political power and influence on their members. Such titles include the *Otu odu*, the *Ogbuefi* society, the *Loloanyi*, and the *Ekwe*. These societies offered the women avenues to carry out religious activities in their various communities. Women took part in some political functions that complemented those of men. In this regard, women and their organizations acted as checks and balances in Igbo society.

The political power of women in Igbo traditional society emanated from their ability to stick together. Living in a patrilineal society, they stuck together to defend their interests against those of their male counterparts. In tackling men as a group, women used boycotts and strikes in a system which Van Allen describes as “sitting on a man”, to force a resolution about their individual and collective grievances (Van Allen 1972: 170). According Van Allen, “to ‘sit on’ or ‘make war on’ a man involved gathering at his compound, sometimes late at night, dancing, singing scurrilous songs which detailed the women’s grievances against him and often called his manhood into question, banging on his hut or

plastering it with mud and roughing him up a bit” (Van Allen 1972:170). A man could be sat on for such offences as mistreating his wife, violating the women’s market rules, or letting his cows eat the women’s crops. In such instances, the women would stay at his hut throughout the day and late into the night, if necessary, until he repented and promised to mend his ways (Van Allen 1972: 170; Harris 1940: 146–148; Green 1964: 186–190; Leith-Ross 1939: 109)

This practice of sitting on a man or woman spanned most Igbo societies and constituted a major political power of women. It is generally unthinkable that anyone or any group would attempt to stand down the women in this practice. The boycotts and strikes also stretched into a collective refusal to carry out domestic duties and in some instances, the collective denial of sex to men was used till their demands were met. For instance, Harris described a case in which after repeated requests by women to the men to repair the road leading to the market (a strictly male responsibility), all the women in a particular community refused to cook for their husbands until their request was carried out (Harris 1940: 146–147). Noteworthy is that in traditional Igbo society, men were not supposed to undertake certain kinds of cooking. In general, women bound together to protect themselves against male exploitation at all levels in traditional Igbo society. They were a formidable political force.

In traditional Igbo society, there was a political arrangement of diffused authority, fluid and informal leadership, and shared rights of enforcement which permitted a balanced male and female power play. But this was before their encounter with the colonial administrators and missionaries.

### **1.3 Changes in the Role of Women Among the Igbos in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Eras**

Southern Nigeria was declared a protectorate in 1900. The British immediately noted the difference between South-Eastern Nigeria and the

South-West and North. In the latter two, there were institutions of chiefs and emirs who wielded absolute authority. This made these areas easily amenable to administration by the colonial administrators as they had only to negotiate with the chiefs and emirs and not with the people. The British indeed perceived the organization in South-Eastern Nigeria as “ordered anarchy” (Van Allen 1972: 171). Ten years from the declaration of the protectorate, the British tackled this perceived “ordered anarchy” by displacing the functional diffuse power among the Igbos with colonial power. They did this by mirroring their experience with the emirs and chiefs in the North through the system of “native administration”. Consequently, the British colonial masters divided Igboland into Native Court Areas which violated the autonomy of villages by lumping many unrelated villages into each court area. By law, the British District officers were to preside over the courts. However, they were not always present as there were more courts than officers. The Igbo membership was formed by choosing a “representative” from each village who was given a warrant of office. These warrant chiefs also constituted the native authority (Van Allen 1972: 171)

The warrant chiefs were required to see that the orders of the district officers were executed in their villages. They were the only link between the colonial power and the people (Van Allen 1972: 172). By having one person represent the interests of the whole community and give orders to everyone else was an all-round violation of the concept of authority in Igbo traditional society. Further still, “the people obeyed the warrant chief when they had to, since British power backed him up” (Van Allen 1972: 172). Noteworthy is that in some places, warrant chiefs were lineage heads or wealthy men who were already leaders in the village. Yet in many other places, “they were simply ambitious, opportunistic young men who put themselves forward as friends of the conquerors. Even the relatively less corrupt warrant chief was still, more than any-

thing else, an agent of the British” (Van Allen 1972: 172. See also Ane-ne 1966: 259; Meek 1937: 328–330)

The immediate reaction of the people to the imposition of the warrant chiefs was to distance themselves as much as they could. Women particularly suffered under the arbitrary rule of the warrant chiefs and there was documented evidence of abuse. Some of these abuses were part of the events that led up to the Aba Women’s Revolt of 1929. To some extent, the colonial administration acknowledged that the native administration created more problems than it solved and so instituted some reforms in 1933 to address some Igbo grievances against the native administration. But the reform did little to change the situation. Within the reform, the warrant chiefs were replaced with “massed benches” which allowed large numbers of judges to sit at the same time thereby making it possible for many people to represent the village.

While this eliminated the corruption of the warrant chiefs, it provided no outlet for collective action which was the power base of the women. The political power of women had depended largely on the diffuse political power in the Igbo traditional political system. The colonial system of native administration outlawed all forms of group solidarity with no place for any form of group coercion, thereby leaving no place for women in a system dominated by men. Therefore, “by interfering with the traditional balance of power, the British effectively eliminated the women’s ability to protect their own interests and made them dependent upon men for protection against men” (Van Allen 1972: 178)

The effect of the colonial administration was complemented and reinforced by the Christian missionaries and mission schools. Though the Igbos embraced Christianity more than most tribes in Nigeria, this was not always the case. The missionaries had few converts at first. The situation changed when the missionaries exploited people’s need for Western education which provided the much-desired preparation for participation in the fast-growing new society and political structure

foisted on them by the British. As such, many converted and remained Christians to attend the mission schools. Regardless of how nominal the membership was, the new converts were required to obey some rules which included non-participation in pagan rituals and non-participation in most traditional groups which were perceived as avenues of pagan practice.

Coupled with this was that traditional Igbo society was patrilineal, whereby boys were favoured to attend schools which prepared them for the emergent political leadership of the society. The balance was further tipped against girls and women in this dimension by the missionaries' avowed aim of producing Christian wives and mothers, not female political leaders (Van Allen 1972: 180). Indeed Mary Slessor, the influential Calabar missionary noted: "God-like motherhood is the finest sphere for women, and the way to the redemption of the world" (Livingstone 1880: 328). Given this situation, even when girls could attend schools, they tended not to receive the same type of education as the boys. "In mission schools, and increasingly in special 'training homes' which dispensed with most academic courses, the girls were taught European domestic skills and the Bible, often in the vernacular" (Van Allen 1972: 179).

British colonial officers and missionaries generally failed to appreciate the political roles and the political power of Igbo women. They, therefore, weakened and in most cases destroyed the women's bases of strength. The British created specialized political institutions which displaced and monopolized the authority of the traditional Igbo political institutions. In doing so, they considered the institutions dominated by men but ignored those of women. Thus they shut women out of political power (Van Allen 1972: 166). The effects of this persist to date.



## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORY OF WEST GERMANY BETWEEN 1945 AND 1970

#### 2.1 Position of Women in the Federal Republic of Germany after WWII

For many decades, a woman's role in German society was summed up in three K-Words: *Kinder* (children), *Küche* (kitchen), and *Kirche* (church). Women were looked upon in their traditional roles as mothers and wives. A gradual change started to take effect after WWII when, in 1949, the three Western occupation zones namely, the American, the British, and the French, formed the Federal Republic of Germany. During the war, the absence of men made it possible for women to hold positions previously reserved for men. There were women in many leadership positions. They took over work in agriculture and factories, though most of them had no professional training. Angela Delille and Andrea Grohn in *Blick Zurück aufs Glück* (1985:15) write:

Im Frühjahr 1949, waren insgesamt 2,4 Millionen Männer in Kriegsgefangenschaft. Bereits aus diesen Zahlen ist zu schließen, dass Frauen Männer als Arbeitskräfte im Produktionsbereich ersetzen mußten, zusätzlich zu den enorm gestiegenen und erweiterten Anforderungen im Reproduktionsbereich. Nicht nur durch eine kritische Auslegung von statistischen Materialien, sondern auch durch die

## 50 *The Struggle for Women Empowerment Through Education*

Analyse fotografischen Materials aus dieser Zeit lässt sich der überdurchschnittlich hohe Einsatz von Frauen an der Gesamtheit der zu leistenden Arbeiten erkennen.

After the ravages of war, women found themselves to the greater number and enjoyed some self-reliance, which contrasted with the position they had occupied in the national socialist society. Being politically weak and inexperienced, they could not make use of their numbers to take an active part in the politics of the time. Though women received less pay for equal work, they still became the breadwinners of their families. Many of them were widows, their husbands killed during the war. Michaela Karl in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung* (2011: 117) gives a detailed account of the situation:

Viele Frauen blieben auch nach Ende des Krieges auf sich allein gestellt. Millionen Männer waren gefallen, galten als vermisst oder traten den Marsch in die Gefangenschaft an. Am Ende des Krieges gab es in Deutschland einen Frauenüberschuss von sieben Millionen. Vier Millionen Frauen ernährten sich und ihre Familien allein, zweieinhalb davon waren Kriegswitwen. Die Literatur spricht hier von einem „erzwungenen Matriarchat“. Waren zu Beginn des Krieges noch 50 Prozent der Erwerbstätigen Frauen, ging ihre Zahl in den 50er Jahren auf knapp 30 Prozent zurück. Noch aber waren männliche Arbeitskräfte knapp und Frauen sicherten in den ersten Nachkriegsjahren den Fortbestand der Produktion mit einem Lohnunterschied zu ihren männlichen Kollegen, der bis zu 50 Prozent betragen konnte! Dazu oblag den Frauen auch weiterhin die Hauptverantwortung für die Familie.

West Germany suffered severe socio-economic problems after WWII, caused not only by the decrease in the male population but also by the great number of people from former East Germany that came into

West Germany. This was coupled with the fact that in post-war German society, there was a lot of destruction; many men who went to war were wounded and many women were tending the wounded. After the war, women not only worked for the survival of their families but also to rebuild the German nation which lay in ruins as Karl (2011: 117) further states in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung*:

Doch Frauen sicherten nicht nur das Überleben ihrer Familien, sie trugen auch zu einem großen Teil zum Wiederaufbau des Staates bei. Die Trümmerfrau wurde zum Symbol für den Wiederaufbau des Landes und zum Beweis dafür, was Frauen psychisch und physisch leisten in der Lage waren.

The women who were employed to clear away the rubble after the war were the lowest-paid workers. The word *Trümmerfrau* has various definitions based on the perspective in which it is considered. Treber Leonie in *Mythos Trümmerfrauen* (2014: 21) opines:

Der Begriff der Trümmerfrau im engeren Sinne bezeichnet die Frau, die konkret an der Trümmerbeseitigung, vor allem in den Großstädten, beteiligt war. Zahllose Fotos zeigen Frauen, die mit bloßen Händen in den Mauerresten der zerbombten Städte Steine und Schutt wegräumen. Im weiteren Sinne steht die Bezeichnung allgemein für die Rolle der deutschen Frauen während der Trümmerzeit.

These women had no promotion and were employed due to the shortage of men. When men returned from war camps, many women had to leave the factories and place of work and return to their homes to create space for the men to be reabsorbed into the workforce.

Thus, one of the unintended outcomes of WWII on German society was the emancipation of women. The men returned home to meet wives whose emancipation had increased their self-reliance, self-assertion, and self-esteem. The short time in which women had worked made them

independent. They realized that they were being restricted from utilizing their potential. Earlier, women were not proactive in taking initiatives and relied mainly on men to direct them. Christine Feldmann-Neubert in *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948–1988* explains:

Die Frauen sind ja ganz andere geworden, ganz andere. Das ist ja nicht mehr dieses Warten auf den Mann, dieses Nur-in –der Familie leben. Sie alle fühlen ihre Bestimmung als Frau, aber sie sind zugleich in sich geschlossene Persönlichkeiten. (..) Muss es nicht ein seltenes Geschenk für einen Mann sein, so eine Frau zu besitzen? Um sie zu werben, die sich allein durchkämpft und mit dem Schicksal ringt und wartet. Bis er kommt, der eine (Feldmann-Neubert 1991: 114).

Women became heads of families during the war, playing the roles of both father and mother. The men who took part in the war often came home psychologically challenged, no longer able to adjust to their role in the family. Children were also affected by these changes and in most cases, could not adjust to them. This led to an increase in the divorce rate by 1948. In the same year, the American occupation authorities instituted a women affairs section to help women's groups to organize themselves politically. These groups had limited objectives when compared with their peers in the Soviet-Union areas in the east that had a practical approach to women's issues.

In 1949, the issue of women's rights, the basic law of equality between men and women was first brought into the parliament by Dr Elisabeth Selbert. When it was rejected, she initiated protests by different groups of women. After sustained discussions and protests, the basic law of 1949 was finally enacted, which affirmed that men and women are equal. Karl (2011: 121) explains in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung* what the basic law stands for:

Damit wurde formal der Gleichberechtigungsgrundsatz für die komplette Rechtsordnung eingeführt und die Regierung dazu verpflichtet, die familienrechtlichen Bestimmungen des BGB, die der Verfassung widersprachen, zu überarbeiten. Für die Änderung aller davon betroffenen Gesetze wurde eine Übergangsregelung geschaffen.

With the enactment of the basic law in which men and women were proclaimed equal, all laws which discriminated against women were suspended. Notwithstanding, the state was slow in tampering with the existing norm in society. Marilyn Rueschmeyer and Hanna Schissler (1990: 73) state that “There was an inherent tension between the principle of gender equality and the principle of freedom of contract which was guaranteed by the basic law to both employers and workers. There was also the question of how much the state should interfere in society – which after the excesses of the Nazi period was a particularly sensitive issue.” Consequently, the relationship between men and women, as well as the question of women’s place in society, was perceived as being beyond the state’s control. The norm then became that the state should set up general norms but should intervene as little as possible not only in the citizen’s private sphere but also in the freedom of social contract. This put to question the possibility of implementing the principle of the basic law that men and women are equal.

In 1957, the law concerning the family was amended by the act on equal rights for men and women (*Gleichberechtigungsgesetz*). Men’s notions about issues concerning marriage were abolished. This gave women the right to take up a paid job. Previously, by law, women needed to obtain their husband’s permission before taking any job or they would not be accepted. In *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung*, Karl (2011: 122) gives an insight into what it used to be like before the new law was enacted:

Nur mit der Zustimmung ihres Mannes konnte eine Frau erwerbstätig sein, der Mann konnte ein bestehendes Arbeitsverhältnis seiner Frau jederzeit ohne ihr Einverständnis kündigen, wenn sie seiner Ansicht nach ihre häuslichen Pflichten vernachlässigte. Der Ehemann hatte den Stichentscheid, sprich das letzte Entscheidungsrecht in allen Angelegenheiten, während die Ehefrau der Folgepflicht unterlag.

The civil code of 1900 had given the husband the right to dispose of his wife's property. The new law nullified this. In 1977, a new law on marriage partnership was enacted, as Karl (2011: 122) further states:

Erst von 1977 an wurde mit dem Ersten Gesetz zur Reform des Ehe- und Familienrechts die Arbeitsteilung privat geregelt und die vorrangige Pflicht zur Hausarbeit für Frauen abgeschafft. Erwerbsarbeit, Haushaltsführung und Kindererziehung wurden zu Aufgaben beider Partner erklärt, mit individueller Arbeitsteilung.

Although these laws were put in place, women were still bound to their traditional gender roles not only as mothers and wives but also as being solely responsible for household chores.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there were campaigns against double-wage earners. The man was considered to be the breadwinner and provider of the family, thereby entitled to the so-called *Leistungslohn*. His earnings were supposed to support his wife and children. Such support could not be given to both spouses. As such, women stood the chance of losing their jobs when they got married, as their earnings would have been unnecessary and a duplication. Such dismissal not only occurred in factories but also in the civil service. Consequently, women who were in the civil service were mainly single women normally addressed as *Fräulein*. Given this background, career-oriented women would decide to

live their lives without a male breadwinner to retain their jobs. Single women were marginalized. No law was enacted to support them, but laws were enacted to promote and protect the family. Married women, who were working outside their homes, were considered to be negligent of their duties, and so their children were nicknamed *Schlüsselkinder* and became objects of pity. Ute Frevert in *Frauen-Geschichte: Zwischen Bürgerlicher Verbesserung und Neuer Weiblichkeit* (1990: 256) explains:

Sozialwissenschaftler, Kirchenvertreter und Politiker beobachteten voll Sorge und Mißtrauen, dass die Sozialisationsfunktionen der Familie hinter materiellen Orientierungen zu verschwinden drohten, und übten scharfe Kritik an den erwerbstätigen Ehefrauen und Müttern, die um des Geldverdienens Willen Haushalt und Kinder vernachlässigten. Das Wort von den „Schlüsselkindern“ machte die Runde, und eine ganze Nation bedauerte die armen Kleinen, die nach der Schule allein und unbeaufsichtigt blieben, während ihre Mütter für einen neuen Fernsehapparat arbeiteten.

Though gender equality was granted by the constitution, marriage, children, and family life were seen as a woman's priority and responsibility. The government was in full support of this idea, and so provided tax incentives for married couples. In 1960, the government set up a three-phase model which portrayed the role of working women in Germany: 1. Unmarried, educated, and employed. 2. Married but stopped career for 10–15 years to look after children and household. 3. Employed but with household as the primary responsibility.

Despite these classifications and higher taxes on unmarried women, it did not deter women from working. Instead, the number of women who had entered the workforce increased. In *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung*, Karl (2011: 125) explains the rationale behind the three-phase-model:

Das Drei-Phasen-Modell ermöglicht der Wirtschaft den Rückgriff auf eine ungeheuer große industrielle Reserve-armee, die je nach Konjunkturlage wieder in den Arbeitsmarkt integriert werden kann. So liegt der Schwerpunkt von Frauenpolitik je nach Bedarf der Wirtschaft einmal auf der emanzipatorischen Seite der Erwerbsarbeit, einmal auf den psychologischen Vorteilen einer engen Mutter-Kind-Bindung.

Shehla Jamal, in *A Socio-Economic Overview of German Women since the Division and Reunification of Germany*, notes the ratio of women in work between 1950 and 1975 increased from 47.4% to 54%. The ratio of married women working rose from 25% in 1950 to 42% in 1982, while men's employment rate declined from 63.2% to 53.1% during the same period. Almost 90% of women married to industrial workers took up employment. Jamal also notes that until the 1950s, overall wages remained very low. Approximately 33% of families earned more than 600 marks, while 25% earned between 250 and 400 marks, and 11% of men had salaries of less than 250 marks. Yet the female worker earned 43.7% less than her male colleague despite some women being head of the family. The numbers of working women in different sectors varied from 1950 to 1985. In the agricultural sector, the female workforce decreased from 34% to 7%. In the services sector (industries and professions), it increased from 12% to 32%, but in the manufacturing industry, the ratio was constant at 25% (Jamal 2016: 103). This implies that post-war Germany experienced issues which affected the lives of women and became a national problem. Thematically, these would include but were not limited to gainful employment, motherhood, and housework.

### **2.1.1 Employment**

Employment wise, in the Federal Republic, women could take up paid jobs after the war. This was a result of their experience of having worked effectively in the absence of most men during the war. However, permission was given with the understanding that the work taken should not deter them from carrying out their domestic household chores, which was considered their primary duty. As such, the work women did was viewed as a complement to the economic resources brought in by their husbands. In some cases, however, the circumstances necessitated a different approach. Many single mothers whose husbands did not return after the war were forced to work to take care of their children. Also, many whose husbands came back sick or disabled after the war had no alternative than to work to sustain their families. The expectation was that the woman should become a good wife. Girls were allowed to undertake primary education, after which they took up a job that would help them to be good mothers and wives, as Delille and Grohn in *Blick Zurück aufs Glück* (1985: 25) state:

Da ich keinen Beruf gelernt habe, kann ich nur Hilfsarbeiten machen. Ich habe keinen Beruf gelernt. Als Mädchen schon gar nicht, das war früher so. Erst bei jüngeren Jahrgängen war das üblich, dass Mädchen Berufe erlernten, Hauptsache, du warst eine gute Hausfrau.

Once a working-class woman got married, she faced the challenges of family life (looking after her child and husband), in addition to those of the workplace. In some instances, women were accused of neglecting their children because they were working. Career-oriented women were condemned as selfish. Factories did not employ married women because of the difficulties they would run into once the woman became pregnant. Getting married and staying employed became a tough decision for

women. Delille and Grohn in *Blick Zurück aufs Glück* (1985: 29) recount further the experience of one woman:

Mir war aber klar, wenn ich heiraten wollte, dass ich dann meinen Beruf aufgeben müßte, und das wollte ich eigentlich nicht so gerne. Ich merkte dann im Spätherbst 1953, dass ich schwanger war. Ich hatte damals als Krankenschwester nicht die Möglichkeit weiterzuarbeiten. Man hatte ja auch keinen Mutterschutz. Wenn bekannt wurde, dass man schwanger war, mußte man aufhören zu arbeiten.

The law protecting pregnant mothers had not been enacted by then. Married women stood to lose their jobs once they became pregnant and had difficulty being reabsorbed into the workplace after weaning their child. They were left with the option of taking part-time jobs, mainly reserved for those without job training. This option had a bad influence on their social and retirement insurance. The inability to get back into the workforce left most women with no option but to return to their basic roles as wives and mothers.

Yet some factors motivated women to work. Such factors include the incentive which the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s brought into the families. Many women wanted to improve their living conditions after the devastation caused by the war. They wanted to earn money to help themselves and their families. Their earnings improved the welfare and living standard of their families. Other women were drawn by the self-fulfilment and satisfaction they derived from their jobs. These women were criticized and seen as deviating from their principal duties. Consequently, many women chose to remain unmarried but happy. Many of these women were teachers, doctors, and artists.

Though women were working and earning money for the upkeep of themselves and their families, this urge to work was criticized by their menfolk, who thought women were losing their womanhood. Feldmann-Neubert in *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948-1988* (1991: 119) illustrates:

Und wie kann man verhindern, dass Gleichberechtigung zur Gleichheit wird? Wir wollen doch keine Frauen als Bergarbeiter haben, wie in der Sowjetzone. Frauen sollen ihren Mann stehen aber fraulich bleiben.

Die wohlthuende Weiblichkeit, die fehlt unseren Frauen, Schwestern und Berufsgenossinnen, äußern viele Männer mit Bedauern, die sich von der burschikosen Art in Ton, Bewegung und leider auch oft im Empfinden abgestoßen fühlen. Das Ewigweibliche... ist die schöne, wohlthuende Ergänzung ihres Wesens. (...) Sie ist und bleibt das Fundament, auf dem ein unumstößliches Naturgesetz beruht.

Over time, between 1955 and 1964, women who had the chance of working before getting married were appreciated by men. They were classified as good partners and competent women who would be in a better position to discuss intelligibly with their husbands, understand the stress their husbands were going through, be at the service of their husbands, and be good mothers to their children. Feldmann-Neubert in *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948-1988* (1991: 141) explains:

Sie wußten selbst genau, was es hieß, einen anstrengenden Berufstag mit Konferenzen und Sitzungen hinter sich zu haben, und verstanden darum ihren Mann sehr gut, der nach einem solchen Tag weder Lust zum Tanzen noch zum Kino hatte. Es gab überhaupt eine Menge Dinge, auf die sie in ihrer Ehe ziemlich leichten Herzens verzichteten, einfach, weil sie diese Dinge schon aus ihrer Jungesellinnenzeit kannten. (...) So seltsam es klingen mag: diese Frauen genossen sogar die Gleichförmigkeit ihres Alltags, ihre ständig wiederkehrenden Hausfrauenpflichten.

Noteworthy is that the emphasis in this quotation lies on the well-being of the husband and the ability to take care of the home, which was

considered the primary role of a woman. As such, one of the reasons women took up jobs was that it was seen as an advantage to their future partner. Such prior employment was supposed to make women conscious of keeping themselves beautiful and minimize their nagging at home. It made some women conscious of their behaviour in public places, as well as their gait and manner of speaking. This perceived advantage notwithstanding, frustrations at home made some women return to the job market. After some years, many women who were confined to their homes became psychologically sick and unhappy. Their lives became unfulfilled and frustrated, as cited by Feldmann-Neubert in *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948-1988* (1991: 171):

Du bist 32 Jahre alt, hast einen netten, gescheiterten Mann, zwei hübsche gesunde Kinder von drei und fünf Jahren, eine Dreizimmerwohnung, keine finanziellen Sorgen (...), Trotzdem bist Du keine fröhliche Junge Frau, sondern ein nervöses, unlustiges Geschöpf, dem der Seufzer: „Ich werde nicht fertig! Ich schaffe es nicht! Mir wächst die Arbeit über den Kopf!“ ständig auf den Lippen schwebt. (...) Ist dieses Arbeitspensum ein Grund, dem Mann immer wieder vorzuhalten, wie entsetzlich viel und vielerlei man doch täglich bewältige, während er nur acht Stunden im Büro sitze? Oder liegt der Fehler vielleicht woanders? An der falschen Einteilung oder vielleicht sogar an der falschen Einstellung!

In the late 1960s, some men supported their wives to take up jobs, to minimize the nagging at home and to avoid them idling away. In 1963, the law which compelled women to seek the permission of their husbands or partners before taking up any job was abolished.

In 1969, the employment promotion law brought about equal opportunities in the workplace. It was introduced on 25 June 1969 and enforced by the SPD government. The legislation wanted to facilitate the reintegration of the unemployed into the workforce. It included state-

funded training programmes, educational initiatives, and provisions for the unemployed. Women were to be beneficiaries of such a programme. In §2/5 it states: “Women who find it difficult to be placed under normal labour market conditions because they are married or because they have currently or had in the past other domestic obligations, shall be integrated into the labour market.” Eva Kolinsky in *Women in West Germany: Life, Work and Politics* (1989: 56) explains further: “To enable women to return to the labour market and update their skills or acquire new ones, the law envisaged regular pay, refund of expenses for child-minding and transport, and reimbursement of additional costs for food or accommodation. In short, housewives without an income of their own and young mothers should be helped to qualify and re-enter the labour market” (Kolinsky 1989: 56).

This promise of helping women to enter the labour market was unfortunately not met due to the oil shock of 1973 and the consequent economic recession, followed by unemployment. This turned the good intentions of the *Employment Promotion Act* into a scenario of victims of circumstance. The money that should have been used for training was to be supplied by the Federal Labour Office. The fall in revenue from national insurance contributions forced the Federal Labour Office not only to reduce expenditure on courses, retraining, and occupational innovation but also to impose certain stern conditions of acceptance onto the programmes. Between 1969 and 1987, the Employment Promotion Act which concerned training or retraining measures was amended severely. Some incentives initially given to women were reduced. It was originally stated that three years after the birth of the youngest child, women could retrain and receive some monthly payments. It was later reframed in 1981 to read that women could only be admitted to the course with proof that their domestic duties would not deter them from working at least 20 hours per week. Such conditions were not required for men. Kolinsky in *Women in West Germany* (1989: 58) states clearly

that, while in the cases involving men, the intention to seek employment was assumed as a matter of principle. In the case of women, the obligations of housework and family were regarded as “personal circumstances” which put to doubt the very intention of seeking employment. Consequently, women were required to provide a special written declaration which has to be assessed by a relevant official at the labour exchange as to its credibility.

The desire to advance the opportunities of women in the labour market, one of the key intentions of 1969, was not fulfilled because of the pressures of unemployment.

Kolinsky notes some shortcomings which deterred women from active participation in her study of the effectiveness of training and retraining programmes for women. According to her, “women who receive unemployment benefit are not entitled to take part in retraining measures; women whose husbands are unemployed are forced to look for immediate employment to make ends meet since the remuneration paid for retraining is too low to support a family” (Kolinsky 1989: 166).

In 1977, women got the legal right to be employed outside their family. §1356 of the civil code which defined housework as a woman’s sole duty was abolished. Before then, women remained close to home due to social pressure. The choice of outside occupation was limited to specified jobs and professions attributed to women. With the new government headed by the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) from October 1982, new amendments to the 1969 legislation, including the *Employment Promotion Act (Beschäftigungsförderungsgesetz)*, were made. Some of these measures opened more opportunities for women. For example, the right to financial support for retraining and employment programmes was increased to five years from three, to include women who had left their previous jobs to raise a family. Contract conditions and laws concerning part-time employment were strengthened. The regulations on part-time employment favoured

employers who did not want to take permanent workers and who had the power to increase or decrease their workforce through part-time workers. Though women had always been mostly engaged in part-time employment, the 1985 legislation could be seen as a road to equality between men and women in this regard.

### **2.1.2 Motherhood**

The exigency of motherhood was another factor that affected the position of women in post-war Germany. Every woman was expected to be a mother. Motherhood was viewed as a natural function of a woman. In the 1960s, a girl who had reached 18 years of age was expected to get married and bring forth children. The idea of giving birth to children was seen as the priority and task of every woman, just as Feldmann-Neubert in *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948-1988* (1991: 151) explains:

Fast jede Frau möchte Kinder haben (...) Für sie ist Unfruchtbarkeit so etwas Ähnliches wie für den Mann die Untauglichkeit im Beruf. Schon ihr Körper weist sie immer wieder darauf hin, dass es ihre Berufung ist, Kinder zu bekommen. Sie wünscht sich ein Kind zunächst einfach, um sich bestätigt zu sehen und den Sinn ihrer Ehe zu erfüllen. Man kann diesen Instinkt nicht ohne seelischen Schaden unterdrücken. Der Mann, der seiner Frau die Mutterschaft vorenthält, betrügt sie deshalb nicht nur um ihre Lebensaufgabe, sondern auch um die natürliche Entwicklung ihrer Persönlichkeit.

This eagerness to have children was the wish of many women but when the children arrived, many could not cope with the stress of bringing up their children and doing only housework. Women over time realized that having children alone did not give them the fulfilment of being women. It became clearer for some women that they would have to

decide between motherhood and taking up jobs. This intention did not go down well with the ruling CDU who believed that motherhood led to self-realization “*Mutterarbeit ist mehr als Erwerbsarbeit und Mutterarbeit führt zur Selbstverwirklichung der Frau*” (Vinken 2007: 80). Women who had been only mothers and housewives desired to take up gainful employment. Within this context, the relationship between husband and wife became as important as the mother-child relationship. Christine Feldmann-Neubert in *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948-1988* (1991: 179) illustrates further:

So viel Zeit das winzige Wesen auch in Anspruch nimmt, soviel Fürsorge und Zärtlichkeit es fordert- nie sollte die Frau den Satz der amerikanischen Psychologin Maxine Davies vergessen, dass die Ehe eine Gesellschaft von zwei Partnern ist, nicht von dreien. Das Kind ist kein Partner. Es braucht uns, wir dürfen es lieben, umsorgen, heranwachsen sehen- aber der wichtigste Mensch, den es für uns gibt, ist und bleibt der, den wir geheiratet haben.

Women were seen as good wives only when they were at the service of their husbands, doing household chores like ironing and cooking and taking care of the children, as Feldmann (1991: 179) further explains:

Wer kennt sie nicht, die Frau, die in ihren Kindern und ihrer Familie aufgeht? Die es längst aufgegeben hat, darüber nachzudenken, was ihr Mann empfindet, worüber er sich sorgt, was ihn bedrängt? Von außen betrachtet, ist sie eine wundervolle Frau, ihr Haushalt läuft reibungslos, die Kinder sind gut erzogen, sie opfert sich geradezu auf für deren Wohl, und ihr Mann hat selbstverständnis immer korrekte Bügelfalten und gutes Essen.

The principal role of a woman was taking care of her husband and their children. Nothing was mentioned about the self-fulfilment of the

woman. Her work was reduced to household chores of ironing, cleaning the house, and taking care of the children.

The emphasis was on being a good mother and wife. The task of holding the family together, otherwise known as the nuclear family, was the primary responsibility of the wife and mother. Discussing the nuclear family and its association with women caused a hefty debate between two political parties namely CDU/CSU and SPD. The CDU referred to East Germany, where the economy was not only destroyed by central planning but by the rejection of the Christian values in addition to women's incorporation into the workforce which in turn had destroyed families. The SPD emphasized that democracy was tantamount to providing equal rights for women. The CDU with their Christian values shaped the understanding of West German politics on the position of women after the war. Robert Möller in *Protecting Motherhood, Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (1993: 79) states:

The powerful ideological themes of Christian values, anticommunism, and the immutable and fundamental difference between women and men that made motherhood and housewifery women's natural obligations profoundly shaped the West German discussion of "woman's place" in the fifties, pushing to the margins visions like those outlined by Klaje and labelling as anomalous the millions of adult women who were not married.

Situations like these reinforced limits to visions of women's equality and seemed to favour a return to the preferred narrative of re-establishing the "normal family" understood to be two married adults with at least two children, which had been threatened by the crisis of war and the post-war period.

In the discussion over the laws that governed married life, women were given the right of equal claim to property if the marriage ended in divorce. As head of the family, the husband was responsible for providing financially for his wife and children. The wife's contribution would

be her non-wage work. In the debate concerning the place of women in the family, Catholic bishops maintained that marriage was a Christian sacrament, and that overemphasis and demand for equality would lead to a crash of marriage as an institution. Robert Möller (1993: 89) states that highest ranks of the Catholic church were concerted in their warnings that an individualist or liberal perspective on marriage reform might bring West Germans dangerously close to the radical changes that certain states with materialistically oriented governments had undertaken in the area of family law. This perspective seemed to earn some currency from the consideration that in the Federal Republic's East, economic expansion was achieved by robbing the family of its spiritual essence. It argued that a failure to designate the home as the woman's primary workplace would destroy family life. The opinion of the German Catholic bishops was met with opposition. Some women like Helene Weber did not conform to the opinions of the bishops. Many who relied on the scriptural interpretation of the fundamental function of a woman emphasized the basic role of a woman as wife and mother.

In the 1970s, there were tremendous changes in the mindset of people concerning motherhood. Women were no longer interested in staying at home and the act of giving birth to children was no longer considered the primary aim of womanhood. Words such as *Hausmütterchen* were coined to buttress the rejection of housewifery, in which a woman dedicated herself only to the house and children. Feldmann-Neubert explains in *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948-1988* (1991: 211):

Eine gute Mutter ist fleißig. Eine gute Mutter zieht ihre Kinder sauber an. Eine gute Mutter plagt sich und ist müde. Eine gute Mutter denkt nie an sich selbst. Hat sie überhaupt einen Mann, die gute Mutter? Ach ja, natürlich, den Vater ihrer Kinder. Vergessen wir ihn. Denn das Mutter-Standbild stellt eine Frau ohne Geschlecht dar(...) Die Psychologie ist längst der Ansicht,

dass Mutterliebe nicht automatisch angeknipst wird wie eine Lampe.

Nicht dieses moderne Frauenbild ist falsch, sondern das traditionelle, an dem wir noch immer teilweise hängen. Die Frau, die in ihren Fähigkeiten beschränkt, für verantwortungsvolle Posten untauglich und daher für ihre vier Wände geboren ist- die gibt es nicht. Die Frau, deren tiefste und ausschließliche Bestimmung es ist, Kinder zu bekommen,- nicht einmal die gibt es.

The act of giving birth ceased to become the purpose of marriage. The mentality of bringing forth children as the essence of motherhood began to fade gradually. The feeling of being a mother came to be seen as not being an innate characteristic, but rather an acquired one that grew with time. This was reinforced by the fact that there were mothers who were not happy. They were frustrated with their situation, which had a negative influence on their children. Motherhood was therefore not only associated with giving birth. A woman who adopts a child and brings up the child is a mother. By the same token, motherhood can be extended to women who have no children of their own, but who have children entrusted to their care. And so, motherhood came to be disassociated from the essence of marriage.

The 1970s were filled with mind-boggling questions on how the constitutional demand for equality could become a reality. It was believed that women's equality depended on the equality of opportunities in employment. The state was then to create some facilities such as healthcare facilities, schools, training, and retraining programmes which were to promote access for women to equal opportunities with men. The change of government from the SPD/FDP coalition with left-of-centre tendencies to CDU/CSU and FDP with their centre-right policies in October 1982 changed the focus of this demand to the traditional role of women as perceived in society. The social democrats believed in the

assertion that work brought about equality, while the Christian democrats anchored their belief on the bourgeois women, who believed that women had a special place in society, and their potential would be developed in performing female-related caring work. Motherhood took a special place in the CDU/CSU. To solve the problem of home and work, laws and funding were introduced to make it easier for women. Kolin-sky in *Women in West Germany* (1989: 68) explains the steps taken in this dimension. Worthy of note was the insurance scheme, whereby pension rights were allocated to housewives and giving birth to children was equalled to paid employment. The Law stipulated that women were entitled to a pension for childbearing if they have been in paid employment and paid national insurance contributions for at least five years before becoming housewives. This law, however, had a caveat. Each child was equivalent to one year's employment, i.e., a woman with three children would only need two year's national insurance contributions, a woman with one child would need four and so on. Women who never worked before childbirth were not included in the pension entitlement.

All the laws enacted were aimed at making motherhood more attractive. More laws were enacted in 1986 which abolished social male/female roles. A man could decide to be a carer and receive the remuneration that accrued to him, while the wife went back to work. The child-rearing payment could either be given to men or women who had taken it upon themselves to look after the household on a full-time basis and who had been in employment before the birth of their child. All these measures were taken to allow women to move freely between motherhood and work, to increase birth rates, and to allow the men to have a share of domestic work as well.

### **2.1.3 Housework**

After WWII, West Germany put in place policies which supported women's responsibility for the home and their economic reliance on a

male breadwinner. As such women were relegated to unpaid homemaking and home caring and men to breadwinning. The woman became a housewife through marriage. In the 1960s, women who were getting ready to be married were sent to do courses lasting from four to ten months where they were taught how to cook and how to take care of the home. The concept of doing only housework demanded that the woman stayed in the house and did only house chores which included cooking, washing, and ironing clothes for her husband, going for shopping, beautifying herself for her husband, and once children were born, taking care of them as well. The woman had earlier enjoyed her freedom of going to work and interacting with colleagues, but the social constraint of marriage that confined her to sit the whole day at home, while her husband went out to work created boredom and unhappiness. Feldmann-Neubert in *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948-1988* (1991: 150) comments:

Bisher war sie die Anspannung ihres Berufes gewöhnt, Gespräche mit Kollegen, Anerkennung durch den Chef und das stolze Bewußtsein, etwas zu leisten und Geld zu verdienen. Nun ist sie plötzlich den ganzen Tag allein in ihrer kleinen Wohnung mit Haushaltspflichten, die sie innerlich nicht ausfüllen.

The act of staying at home all day became unbearable for many women. They railed against staying at home, demanding equal rights with men and the right to seek jobs outside their homes. The Catholic Bishops Conference maintained that the family was to be protected and women should be at home to do their work as mothers and housewives. Kolinsky (1989: 46), notes that “the Catholic Church had voiced misgivings that equality legislation might undermine the stability of the family, and the place of women as mothers and homemakers within it.” Subsequently, in January 1953, the Fulda Conference of Catholic Bishops appealed to the government “to protect marriage and family as institutions in the new legislation and to express clearly in the forthcoming legislation, in accordance with the natural image of marriage and family,

that the prime task of the wife and mother consists of homemaking for the common good of all members of the family” (Ibid: 47).

Although the bishops and naturally some men wanted women to stay at home and look after their families, the women intensified their clamour to return to work. Some women developed psychological depression as a result of staying at home. Feldmann-Neubert in *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948-1988* (1991: 192) states:

Die Bezeichnung ‚Hausfrauensyndrom‘, wie die Psychotherapeuten die Koppelung von typisch weiblichen Beschwerden wie Müdigkeit, Kopfschmerzen, Nackenschmerz, Kreislaufstörungen nennen wird nun als typisches Symptom für die Unzufriedenheit und Unausgefülltheit des Hausfrauendaseins gewertet. Es ist vorerst vor allem die Leere, die viele Hausfrauen empfinden- und die sich steigern wird, sobald die Kinder einmal aus dem Haus sind-, die sie zur Berufstätigkeit motiviert.

To overcome this emptiness which women felt by remaining at home until their children were old enough to leave the house, the women pushed on for the permission to be allowed to go back to work. They saw going back to work as the beginning of their emancipation. In a bid to comprehend the feelings of women on the discussion on going back to work, a questionnaire was developed in 1969, in which 7000 women were asked of their opinion. Ninety-three percent said that working in an enterprise or establishment would make them happy. Other women maintained that they were happy to stay at home and train their children. A children’s allowance was introduced in 1954 and given to wage earners with three or more children.

Women, especially mothers, were considered as the best educators of their children. They always made sure that the children had their lunch on their return from school and that their homework was done before they were allowed to play. Mothers were not paid for the work they did.

Their work was considered an unpaid job. In the 1970s, people's perception of women who devoted themselves fully to the care of their husbands and children changed. They were seen as not working. People were judged socially on their occupational position and so the private sphere had no impact.

It was the 1977 legislation law that permitted women to take up paid jobs. The SPD government abolished the concept of 'house-wife-marriage' and based the laws that concerned marriage, family, and parenthood on equal rights and responsibilities between both couples in the society. Kolinsky enumerates the laws (1989: 50):

§1356/1: The partners (Ehegatten) agree on the running of the household. If the household is left to one of the partners, then this partner runs the household in sole responsibility.

§1356/2: Both partners have the right to take on paid employment.

§1357/1: Each partner is entitled to enter into business agreements linked to the needs of the family also on behalf of the other partner.

§1360: Both partners are obliged to support the family adequately by working or using their financial means. If one partner runs the household, the obligation to contribute to keeping the family through employment is normally met through running the household.

These laws granted women some rights and changed the position of male-breadwinner/female-carer to dual-earner/dual-carer. The laws simply meant that caring for the family was no longer the exclusive work of the woman. Either partner could decide to look after the house and the children, and they were entitled to a children's allowance. The roles could later be changed. All these positive steps were taken to en-

sure equality among men and women. Since the enactment of the 1977 law, paid jobs included women unlike the 1950s when they were taunted as workers. Barbara Vinken (2007: 95) narrates in *Die deutsche Mutter: Der lange Schatten eines Mythos*:

Heutzutage ist die Berufstätigkeit der Frau in den Mittelschichten wie gesagt zu einem wichtigen Statussymbol geworden. Die Erwerbstätigkeit der Frauen hat nicht nur wirtschaftliche Gründe, sondern ist auch Ausdruck einer veränderten Einstellung zur Berufstätigkeit bei Frauen.

This changed attitude can be attributed to the fact that the ability to be gainfully employed added to the personal contentment of the woman, who did not want to be a shadow of her husband.

## **2.2 Second German Women's Movement**

The first German women's movement, a movement that was founded on freedom, equality, and independence was founded by Louise Otto-Peters (1819–1895). She was deeply involved in fighting for the rights of women and canvassing for the liberation of women and the involvement of women in politics. In 1843 she addressed women and encouraged them to take part in politics. Rosemarie Nave-Herz (1993: 11) states in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*:

Die Teilnahme der Frauen an den Interessen des Staates ist nicht ein Recht, sondern eine Pflicht. Selbständig müssen die deutschen Frauen werden, nur dann werden sie auch fähig sein, ihrer Pflicht, teilzunehmen an den Interessen des Staates, immer und auf die rechte Weise nachzukommen. Diese Selbständigkeit kann nur durch individuelle Bildung befördert werden.

With the clarion call for women's independence, achieved mostly through education, Otto-Peters founded the first German women's

movement in 1865. Prior to the founding of the movement, she had already established a women's newspaper with its motto "*Dem Reich der Freiheit werd'ich Bürgerinnen*" (1993: 11). Her aim of founding this newspaper, which was for the interest of women, is aptly narrated by Nave-Herz in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* (1993: 12) as follows:

Die Geschichte aller Zeiten, und die heutige ganz besonders, lehrt: dass diejenigen auch vergessen werden, welche an sich selbst zu denken vergaßen! (...) Dieser selbe Erfahrungssatz ist es, welcher mich zur Herausgabe einer Frauenzeitung veranlaßte. Mitten in den großen Umwälzungen, in denen wir uns alle befinden, werden sich die Frauen vergessen sehen, wenn sie selbst an sich zu denken vergessen! Wohlauf denn, meine Schwestern, vereinigt Euch mit mir, damit wir nicht zurückbleiben, wo alles um uns und neben uns vorwärts drängt und kämpft. Wir wollen auch unser Teil fordern und verdienen an der großen Weltlösung, welche der ganzen Menschheit, deren eine Hälfte wir sind, endlich werden muß. Wir wollen unseren Teil fordern: das Recht, das Rein-Menschliche in uns in freier Entwicklung aller unserer Kräfte auszubilden, und das Recht der Mündigkeit und Selbstständigkeit im Staat. Wir wollen unser Teil verdienen: wir wollen unsere Kräfte aufbieten, das Werk der Welterlösung zu fördern, zunächst dadurch, dass wir den großen Gedanken der Zukunft: Freiheit und Humanität ... auszubreiten suchen in allen Kreisen, in den engeren der Familie durch Beispiel, Belehrung und Erziehung.

With the noble intention of working for the independence and women empowerment, many believed in her aim to fight for the emancipation of women. Among such women were Alice Smith (1833–1903) and Henriette Goldschmidt (1825–1920), who worked closely with her to realize such a noble dream. The trio had also this perception: "*Die*

*Befreiung der Frau sollte jedoch nicht Selbstzweck sein, sondern der Gesellschaften nutzen und dem Fortschritt der Menschheit bis hin zur Verringerung des bestehenden sozialen Elends und dem Abbau der sozialen Klassengegensätze dienen*” (Nave-Herz 1993: 13).

Women of the nineteenth century were quite aware of the marginalization to which women were subjected. It was also very clear to them that women could only be emancipated when they were absorbed into the workforce and hence the demand: “*Wir verlangen, dass die Arena der Arbeit auch für uns und unsere Schwestern geöffnet wird*” (Nave-Herz 1993: 13). Women were also aware that political office and most public offices were controlled by men and they were seen as male appendages. Some prominent women like Agnes von Zahn-Harnack spoke to the women and reminded them of their status as second-class citizens and the need to be at the forefront in fighting for their rights. These words of enlightenment were succinctly expressed by Nave-Herz in her work *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* (1993: 13):

Die Frau des 19. Jahrhunderts erkannte, dass sie in einer Männerwelt lebte: Sie sah, dass die Familie, der Beruf, die Bildungsmöglichkeit, die Stadt, der Staat, die innere und die äußere Politik, ja auch die Kirche von Männern nach Männerbedürfnissen und –wünschen eingerichtet waren; und sie sah weiter, dass alle diese Bildungen mit schweren Mängeln behaftet waren. Unter diesen Mängeln litt die Frau; aber das war nicht das Schlimmste; unter diesen Mängeln litt die Menschheit; sie verkümmerte, sie vergrößerte, ihre Schöpfungen wurden Mechanismen, ihre Mittel waren roh, ihre Wirkungsmöglichkeiten gering. Um mathematisch zu reden: keine Gleichung, kein Exempel stimmte, denn im Ansatz fehlte immer ein Faktor. Und es erwachte in der Frau die Überzeugung, dass sie selbst, ihre Eigenart, dieser fehlende Faktor sei; dass sie sich einsetzen müsste mit ihrem Können,

ihrer psychologischen Feinheit, ihrer Logik, ihrem Mut, um die Aufgaben zu lösen, die mit dem Grundfehler im Ansatz unlösbar sein müssten.

In the context of this call on women to rise up against inequality in which they found themselves in society, it is worth mentioning that some men vehemently opposed the struggle for the emancipation of women with the argument that women were incompetent and so could not be entrusted with the work reserved and made for men. Nave-Herz (1993: 18) further states:

Gegner der Frauenbewegung waren von sehr wenigen Ausnahmen abgesehen-zwar einerseits die Männer, die z.T. mit wissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen und Argumenten die Unfähigkeiten der Frauen zu beweisen glaubten, zum anderen aber auch viele Frauen, die an der männlich orientierten Welt nichts auszusetzen fanden, sich in ihrer gottgewollten Abhängigkeit wohlfühlten oder zu einem Nachdenken über die ganze Frage überhaupt nicht kamen.

Since the inception of the German women's movement in 1865, there arose two different women movements, *die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung* and *die proletarische Frauenbewegung*. Although they had divergent missions and visions, they shared the same aim of achieving equality between men and women, equal opportunities for boys and girls, equal pay for the same job, and the incorporation of women into the workforce. Nave-Herz (1993: 49) further explains in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*:

Die bürgerliche und die proletarische Frauenbewegung verfochten trotz ihrer verschiedenen gesamtgesellschaftlichen Konzeptionen auch gleiche Ziele: Sie setzen sich für die politische Gleichberechtigung, für die Forderung nach gleichem Lohn bei gleicher Arbeit, für bessere Arbeitsbedingungen, für

den Mutterschutz, für die privatrechtliche Gleichstellung, für gleiche Bildungschancen und für das Recht auf Erwerbsarbeit ein. Die Forderung nach Recht auf Arbeit seitens der Frauen verschärfte auf allen Ebenen die Konkurrenzsituation auf dem Arbeitsmarkt. So kämpfte die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung um die Neuaufnahme von ledigen Frauen in mittlere und höhere Berufspositionen, die proletarische gegen Ausschluß der Arbeiterinnen vom Arbeitsprozeß, wie es von einigen Vertretern sogar innerhalb der eigenen Arbeiterorganisation gefordert wurde.

Between 1933 and 1945, the standard in which women had attained in society from its inception in 1865 experienced a setback. Hitler introduced patriarchal-authority, in which women were to be subjected to men and treated as subordinates.

Notwithstanding the gains and based on the opposition, in 1933 the German Women's Union was dissolved. The women's rights which they'd fought for, were also lost. *“Ihnen wurde das passive Wahlrecht genommen und die Zulassung zur Habilitation an Universitäten und Hochschulen. Weiterhin wurden Frauen nicht mehr neu zum Beruf als Richterin und als Rechtsanwältin zugelassen”* (Nave-Herz 1993: 54).

Consequently, women came to be looked upon only as mothers and housewives. They were only needed because of their biological function. Their role was greatly reduced to housework, as Nave-Herz also notes in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*:

Der wesensgemäße Einsatz reduziert das weibliche Berufsbild auf geschlechtsspezifische Handlungsmuster der Mutter- und Familienrolle: pflegen, behüten, erziehen, gemütgeleitet auf der Basis menschlicher Wärme handeln, mit derartigen Wertorientierung ergänzt durch die wahren Aufgaben wie Kochen, Hauswirtschaft und Nähen- sind die

nationalsozialistischen Vorstellungen weiblicher Ausbildung und Erziehung durchdrungen gewesen (Nave-Herz 1993: 56).

This was the situation of women on Hitler's ascent to power. His reign further destroyed the independence which women had fought for. The new predicament in which women found themselves remained after WWII. During WWII, when all able-bodied men were conscripted to fight, women took over the industries and parastatals. Even though they had little or no training, they were able to manage the economy until the end of the war.

The experiences which women had after WWII allowed them to taste independence. The way women worked in industries, cleared the rubble of war, and even undertook leadership positions counteracted the stereotypes spread against women, which held that women had poor management skills and so were only good for housekeeping. Nave-Herz (1993: 59) states the same in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* :

In der Nachkriegszeit haben die Frauen eine sehr bedeutende Rolle gespielt. Vor allem beim Wiederaufbau wurden an alle Frauen derart hohe Erwartungen und Forderungen gestellt, wie Disziplin, Aktivität, Organisationstalent, Durchstehvermögen, Härte, psychische Kräfte etc.

Die Trümmerfrau wurde zur Symbolfigur, dass der Widerspruch zwischen dem, was Frauen de facto vermögen und dem ihnen zugeschriebenen Bild von „Weiblichkeit“ und vom „weiblichen Wesen“ offensichtlich wurde. E. Scheffer schreibt „Es bedurfte zweier Weltkriege, um uns die Chancen zu geben, durch Leistungen im Krieg und in den desolaten Jahren verrichten können wie die Männer, and dass wir sogar in außergewöhnlicher Gefahr und Not für uns und unsere Kinder einzustehen vermögen. Unter dem frischen Eindruck dieser

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Leistungen konnte man nicht umhin, uns für voll zu nehmen und uns deshalb auch volle eigene Rechtspersönlichkeit zuzugestehen.

Post WWII, women who had been managing industries and offices returned home. As men returned from war camps and took up their jobs, many women went back to continue their housekeeping and looking after the children.

In 1949, the German Women's Parliament (*Deutsche Frauenrat*) was founded by Theanolte Bänish as the highest body to oversee other women's associations. In 1951, the association was duly recognized as a full member of the International Council of Women in Athens. Their main duty was to look into the situation of women and to strive for the betterment of women in society. The mission and vision of the parliament include (Nave-Herz 1993: 62).

- *vertretung gemeinsamer Forderungen der Mitgliedsverbände;*
- *informierung über aktuelle Fragen der Politik;*
- *koordinierung von Aktivitäten der Mitgliedsverbände;*
- *förderung staatsbürgerlicher Bildung zur Sicherung der Demokratie, Toleranz und Völkerverständigung;*
- *beobachtung aller mit der Stellung der Frau zusammenhängender Entwicklung auf politischem, wirtschaftlichem, sozialem, rechtlichem und kulturellem Gebiet;*
- *durchführung gemeinsamer Aktionen und Unterstützung der Vorhaben seiner Mitgliedsverbände im Hinblick auf die gesetzgebende körperschaften in Bund und Länder.*

*Der Deutsche Frauenrat vertritt auch folgende gemeinsame Forderungen:*

- *gleiche Rechte und gleiche Chancen für die Frau;*
- *partnerschaft in Familie, Beruf und Gesellschaft;*

- *beteiligung der Frau an den Entscheidungsgremien in Politik, Wirtschaft und Verwaltung;*
- *gleiche Bildung und Ausbildung für Mädchen und Jungen;*
- *gleicher Lohn für gleichwertige Arbeit;*
- *steuergerechtigkeit;*
- *entlassung erwerbstätiger Mütter*
- *ausbau des Beratungswesens u.a.m.*

The beginning of the new women's movement can be traced back to the student's movement of 1967/1968. Though the movement started in the USA, the economic situation in Germany which was experiencing a recession under the coalition between the CDU and the SPD worsened the situation. The German student movement had many complaints against the government. According to Katharina Karcher (2016: 50) central among these complaints were university reforms, German rearmament plans, the Vietnam War, fascism, imperialism, and internationalism. These students were inspired by demonstrations in the USA and political struggles in the Third World. The students in West Germany undertook several innovative forms of protest such as sit-ins, teach-ins, and civil disobedience. "The SDS played a central role in the planning and coordination of student protest in West Germany and in the debate about violence and counterviolence in the student movement. The theoretical framework underpinning this debate included Marxist thought, psychoanalysis, the social theory of the Frankfurt School, and the writings of revolutionary thinkers from the Third World" (Karcher 2016: 54).

In the early 1960s, some younger generations were no longer satisfied with the activities of the ruling class and with the position of women. An opposition group known as *Außerparlamentarische Opposition* was formed (Nave-Herz (1993: 66). The Student's movement later joined and opened up discussions which were not only based on studies

but also on the economy, as Nave-Herz (1993: 66) states in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*:

Sie beschränken sich nicht allein auf den Hochschulbereich, sondern schloß innen- und außenpolitische Probleme ein und deckte Widersprüche auf zwischen Anspruch und Realität der Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftsordnung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Unterschiedlichste überlieferte Werte und Normen wurden auf ihre heutige Gültigkeit hinterfragt. Der Abbau aller autoritären Strukturen, die antiautoritäre Erziehung, eine liberale Einstellung zur Sexualität u.a.m. wurden innerhalb der Studentenbewegung vehement gefordert.

Following the worsening economic situation as well as the unequal treatment meted out on people especially women, students and the citizenry at large joined massive demonstrations. The government was further criticized based on their attitude to private relationships. "*Die vorherrschende Trennung von privat und öffentlich sollte aufgehoben, geschlechtsbedingte Hierarchien sollten in allen Bereichen abgebaut werden*" (Karl 2011: 136). This gave rise to the slogan *Das Private ist politisch*.

The slogan, which was used by an American radical feminist Carol Hanish in 1969, became the slogan of the new German Women's movement. "*Gerade im Privatbereich lagen nach Ansicht vieler Feministinnen die eigentlichen Wurzeln der Frauenunterdrückung*" (Karl 2011: 136). According to Lottemi Doormann in *Die neue Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik* (1979: 17):

Wichtig war dabei, dass das private nicht als das Individuelle verstanden wurde, sondern gesellschaftliche Bedeutung gewinnen sollte. Es wurde die Aufhebung der Trennung zwischen Privatleben und gesellschaftlichen Leben gefördert.

Die Unterdrückung der Frauen in der Familie wurde nicht mehr als private, sondern als strukturell ökonomische verstanden.

War was therefore declared on the patriarchal system of leadership and governance, in which only men exercised political power while women were suppressed and subjugated. The movement to this effect was formed in 1968 and the Action Council for Women's Liberation (*Aktionsrat für die Befreiung der Frauen*) was established in West Berlin. The second German Women's Movement that originated from the universities was a product of the antiauthoritarian student movement; they were fed up with the activities of the ruling class, and influenced feminist ethics, politics, and tactics strongly in the FRG (Karcher 2016: 58).

In the course of their discussions, women students noticed that their male counterparts were only interested in fighting against class distinction and not about the problems of women; their male colleagues were in support of the patriarchal subjugation of women. Karl (2011: 130) states in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung*:

Unter den Aktivistinnen der Bürgerrechtsbewegung waren viele Studentinnen, die sich in der *Students for a Democratic Society* (SDS) oder im *Student's Nonviolent Coordinating Committee* (SNCC) engagierten. Ebenso wie ihre Genossinnen im deutschen SDS oder in der französischen Studentenbewegung stritten sie Seite an Seite mit ihren männlichen Kommilitonen für eine gesellschaftliche Veränderungen. Bald jedoch mussten sie erkennen, dass diese Veränderungen nur die Klassenunterschiede, nicht aber die Geschlechterunterschiede ändern würden. Nachdem sie dies als Missstand erkannt hatten, bemühten sie sich, die Frauenfrage neben der Klassenfrage in der Theorie der Neuen Linken zu verankern.

Over time, women noticed that their male colleagues were only interested in discussing what would be beneficial to men, in such a way that the movement failed to address the issues of the woman question. According to Karcher (2016: 59), “The ideas of free love and sexual liberation, which promised freedom from repressive sexual morals and authoritarian family structures, were put into practice in ways that reinforced sexist structures: many women in the antiauthoritarian student movement were insulted as ‘frigid’ or ‘counter-revolutionary’ if they refused to be promiscuous. Given this scenario, ‘The woman question was, as Timothy Brown highlights, a significant blind spot of the movement; for all that activists in the movement “attempted to upset authority relationships in society one such relationship- the one between men and women- proved remarkably resistant to such interventions” Karcher (2016: 59). This lack of interest by the menfolk in their situation led the women in the movement to revolt.

Consequently, between 1968 and 1969, there existed already some dissatisfaction from the female members of the student’s movement over the activities of the male members. At meetings, the women were not listened to and their contributions were not taken seriously. They felt sexually harassed and exploited in their role in the political terrain. The female students described the behaviour of the male section of SDS as a reflection of the relationship between men and women in society. In *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung*, Karl (2011: 131) summarizes the behaviour of the male students as follows:

Die Studentinnen mussten feststellen, dass ihre männlichen Kommilitonen dieselben patriarchalen Verhaltensmuster an den Tag legten wie die Autoritäten, die sie bekämpften. Die Genossinnen wurden nicht ernstgenommen, verlacht, in den Hintergrund gedrängt. In allen Diskussionen überlagerte der Klassenantagonismus immer die Geschlechterdifferenz.

This attitude of male students encouraged the female activists in West Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, and other university cities in West Germany to set up women's groups which would not only analyse political theory but would focus and discuss the problems women face in their day-to-day lives.

Edith Hoshino Altbach reported in *The New German Women's Movement* (1984: 455) that Helke Sander, a feminist filmmaker and co-editor of the journal *Women and Film*, speaking to women in a delegated conference, outlined the main reasons for the establishment of the movement as "the injustice of patriarchy, women's purely token presence in situations of power, the political implications of personal life, the rights and needs of mothers". Further, she noted that women constituted more than half of the population and must be taken on board in all future plans, or they would be forced into a power struggle, which the women would win because they were historically in the right. Sander's speech gave rise to the throwing of tomatoes in the direction of the male SDS authorities who were present at the conference.

The effort of the Action Council was short-lived. There was a meeting of the group in 1969, in which the SDS was heavily criticized for concentrating more on children and education would hinder their political growth. Other goals, such as human autonomy and exploitation were perceived differently from the group which later led to a split from the SDS to the Action Council for women's liberation; the Frankfurt women's council to socialist women union.

Furthermore, the enactment of various laws in the Federal Republic brought an emergence of widely based women's movements that undertook a nationwide campaign against the abortion law contained in §218. After WWII, abortions were forbidden in Western Europe and America. The state and the church were united in insisting that women keep their foetus in the womb. It was estimated that a million women sought abortions annually. These women usually engaged quack methods, since

they could not by law engage the services of medical doctors. It also led to the early death of women. Those who survived the quack methods also stood the risk of being thrown into some psychological trauma. This gave rise to demonstrations, as Karl (2011: 134) narrates in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung*:

Ende der 1960er Jahre begannen sie sich gegen diese Form der Entmündigung zu wehren und forderten das Selbstbestimmungsrecht über ihren Körper zurück. „Mein Bauch gehört mir“ wurde ihr Slogan. Es begann eine lange Auseinandersetzung mit Rückschlägen, Resignation und Stagnation, welche die neue Frauenbewegung entscheidend prägte.

To draw the attention of women to the need to own their bodies and take decisions on their sexuality, journalist Alice Schwarzer organized a self-accusation campaign with the caption “I have had an abortion” (Karcher 2016. 60) as a point of departure against anti-abortion law contained in §218.

Although there were disagreements among various women’s groups on other topics, all were united against the abortion law. Consequently, many groups named themselves “218 Action group” in the following years. Thus, §218 became the agenda for the new women’s movement. Horton (1979: 288) states §218 of the criminal code:

- A woman who kills her foetus, or allows another kill it, will be punished by imprisonment for up to five years.
- Whosoever else kills the foetus of a pregnant woman will be similarly punished. In especially serious cases, imprisonment will range from one to 10 years.
- Whosoever provides a pregnant woman with a substance or object for the killing of her foetus will be punished with imprisonment for up to five years, in especially serious cases from one to 10 years.

- Any attempt is punishable.

The consciousness which women had developed about their bodies, and their claims over it led to a new insight into sexuality. The contraceptive pill was made available to all. “*Die Verbreitung der Anti-Baby-Pille ermöglichte eine vom Zeugungsakt unabhängige Sexualität und brachte vor allem für Frauen neue Freiheit*” (Karl 2011: 134). Though women were delighted and signed up for the use of the pill, the disadvantages of taking contraception were not communicated. The 1960s were acclaimed as the year of sexual enlightenment, as Karl (2011: 134) explains in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung*:

Allerdings barg die Pille neben all ihren Vorteilen auch die Gefahr der ständigen sexuellen Verfügbarkeit von Frauen in sich, von den gesundheitlichen Risiken der hormonellen Verhütung ganz zu schweigen. Doch nicht zuletzt die neue sexuelle Freiheit durch die neue Verhütung führte dazu, dass die 1960er Jahre zur Dekade der sexuellen Aufklärung werden konnten. Ob der amerikanische Kinsley-Report oder Oswald Kolles Aufklärungsfilme, all dies trug zu einem vermeintlich freien Umgang mit Sexualität bei, der vor allem von Männern genossen wurde. Der viel zitierte Satz „Wer zweimal mit derselben pennt, gehört schon zum Establishment“ macht dies deutlich. Trotzdem fanden viele Frauen in diesen Jahren zu einer freieren Sexualität. Sie erforschten ihren Körper und begannen ihre eigenen Wünsche und Bedürfnisse zu artikulieren.

The campaign against §218 gathered more momentum in the Federal Republic of Germany in the early 1970s and took many forms. Karcher (2016: 62) narrates that these protests for the decriminalization of abortion included large rallies, walk-ins at medical conferences, public self-declarations, and organized trips to legal abortion clinics in the Netherlands. Karcher reported that initially, the protests seemed to work as growing parts of the population declared themselves in favour of deleting §218. The social-liberal government in West Germany proposed

legislation that exempted abortions within three months of pregnancy from legal consequences. Consequently, in April 1974, the parliament approved the reform with a narrow majority. However, in February 1975, the Federal Court of Justice decided that the decriminalization of abortions was incompatible with true sanctity of human life as defined by the constitution. Though this verdict was a victory for the church representatives, conservative politicians, and the German Medical Association, it was met with disappointment and anger from the numerous women who had campaigned for reform.

Many feminists described the decision as an act of violence against women. The court's decision sparked demonstrations in many German cities. In Berlin, some of the demonstrators engaged in activities like pouring red paint on the stairs of the Kaiser Wilhelm memorial church, a famous church in Berlin; other demonstrators in Frankfurt burned three rag dolls, one dressed as a clergyman, one as a doctor, and one as a judge, representing those against the freedom of women. Some groups of women protested on the day of judgement by chaining themselves to the gate of the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin, while others protested with physical attacks at the Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe and other groups of protesters wrote in big letters "My belly belongs to me" on the glass façade of the reception hall. Of particular note was the feminist attack against the Federal Court of Justice. Karcher in her text *From Students Riot to Feminist Firebombs: Debates about Counterviolence in the West German Student Movement and Women's Movement* (2016: 63) reports that on 4 March, a group of women attached a time bomb with magnets to one of the steel girders on the glass façade of the reception hall. The explosive device detonated when no one was in the building but caused estimated damage of 150,000 German Marks. In a short text, Women of the Revolutionary Cell (*Frauen der Revolutionären Zelle*), a formerly unknown group, claimed responsibility for the attack. "The authors of the statement claimed that they

had planted the bomb to protect themselves from a constitution that illegalizes women and that incites the death of many women, who do not want to accept that the mafia of doctors and judges decide about their relations to their own bodies and the number of children they have” (Karcher 2016: 65). The tone of the women’s writing was more offensive than those opposing the abortion law. It was filled with name-calling of all sorts beginning with politicians and judges. Politicians and judges were openly referred to as “sleazebags” (*Widerlinge*) and women were encouraged to beat up doctors who made money through abortions.

The Women of the Revolutionary Cell did not spare the church. They accused it of being a “fascist institution” (*fascistische Struktur*) dividing women into “mothers and whores, purified by or punished for their sexuality with pregnancy”, and referred to priests as “pitiful chick-enfuckers” (*armselige Hühnerficker*) (Karcher 2016: 65). “We have not forgotten that, in the middle ages, they, churchmen, burned our feminist sisters at the stake” (Ibid: 65). The authors recommended that the only reason women should still go to church was to use chants, placards, firecrackers, stink bombs, and other disruptive forms of protest to desecrate these “breeding grounds of sexism” (Karcher 2016: 66).

In an attempt to speak with one voice and fight for women’s rights, individual groups constantly held meetings. In March 1972, a national women’s conference was held in Frankfurt. Annette Kuhn states the aim of convening the conference in *Politeia: Szenarien aus der Deutschen Geschichte nach 1945 aus Frauensicht* (1998: 168):

Auf dem Kongreß kamen wir überein, uns separat zu organisieren, so lange Frauen in besonderer Weise und mehr unterdrückt sind als Männer. Über unsere Forderung nach ersatzloser Streichung des §218 hinaus fordern wir die Gleichstellung in allen gesellschaftlichen Bereichen. Darum kämpfen wir für die Ermöglichung einer Berufstätigkeit für alle Frauen... für gleichen Lohn für gleichwertige Arbeit und

bessere Ausbildung. Wir rufen alle Frauen auf, sich für die Durchsetzung ihrer berechtigten Interessen selbst zu organisieren.

After the conference, various groups were formed to continue the struggle and demonstrate for the emancipation of women. They were exhorted to use §218 to start their demonstration activities.

About the same time, lesbian movements also sprang up and the first women's cinema, as well as a café for prostitutes, were all erected in West Berlin. Lesbians demanded general recognition from society. Lesbianism was categorized as another form of sexuality, in which women find sexual fulfilment in their fellow women. It was described as the opposite of the patriarchal system. Karl (2011: 135) explains the lesbian mission in detail in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung*:

Die neue Frauenbewegung verteidigte die verschiedensten Spielarten der Sexualität. So forderte sie unter anderem die freie Entscheidung bei der sexuellen Orientierung und damit einhergehend die gesellschaftlichen Anerkennung von Homosexualität. Frauen suchten sexuelle Erfüllung jenseits von Mutterschaft und Ehe und fanden diese vielfach bei ihresgleichen. Der Lesbianismus leistete einem neuen weiblichen Selbstverständnis Vorschub, indem Frauen sich nicht länger über ihre Beziehung zu einem Mann definierten. So erlangten Frauen nicht nur die ökonomische, sondern auch die emotionale und sexuelle Unabhängigkeit vom Mann. Vielen galt der Lesbianismus deshalb als höchste Form des Feminismus. „Feminismus ist die Theorie---Lesbianismus die Praxis!“ wurde zum gängigen Slogan. Lesbischsein war mehr als eine andere Lebens- und Liebesform, es wurde als politische Alternative betrachtet, als Negation des patriarchalischen Systems.

Due to the massive protests by women in the cities of the Federal Republic, the Federal Constitutional Court on 21 July 1976 modified §218 and allowed abortion for women with specific medical or psychological conditions. Women demonstrated against sexual abuse in marriages, in the workplace, and incest. Violence against women usually perpetrated by men was also spoken against. This led to the opening of the first women's centres in 1972. Karl (2011: 135) explains in *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung*:

In jenen Jahren wurden jedoch nicht nur die Befreiungschancen der Sexualität thematisiert, sondern auch lange im Verborgenen blühende Missstände angeprangert. Es liefen aufsehenerregende Kampagnen gegen Vergewaltigung in der Ehe, sexuelle Belästigung am Arbeitsplatz und Inzest. Männliche Gewalt gegen Frauen in ihren verschiedenen Formen rückte ins Licht der Öffentlichkeit. Häusliche Gewalt wurde der Tabuzone entrissen und sichtbar gemacht. So entstanden erste Frauennotrufe und Frauenhäuser, die misshandelten Frauen Zuflucht boten. Frauen begriffen es als ihr Recht, sich gegen männliche Übergriffe in jedweder Form zur Welt zu setzen.

After the women's centres opened in 1972, they were later followed by other projects such as a house for battered women. Health handbooks like *Brot und Rosen* were published in 1974 as well as other feminist books

To educate women more on feminist activities, two journals were founded. *Courage* was founded in 1976 in West Berlin while *Emma* was founded in Cologne in 1977. Since the mid-1970s, some feminists have used films and literature to engage in an attack on patriarchy, a system in which women are subjugated and oppressed.

In 1977 a feminist subgroup in the Revolutionary Cell was formed, *Rote Zora*. It was strongly believed that this group was responsible for

the bomb planted at the office of the German Medical Association in Cologne on 28 April 1977. The bomb was accompanied with a pamphlet which read: “Women rise up and the world will see you” (Karcher 2016: 67), which was a theme at the Federal Women’s Conference in 1972, upon which “the aims and self-conception of the women’s movement” were discussed (Ibid: 67).

The aims and objectives of the Rote Zora included the encouragement of women for counterviolence. As Karcher (2016: 69) states, “the group demanded physical autonomy for themselves and other women and declared that they did not want to accept that ‘rapists in white coats’ (*Vergewaltiger in weißen Kitteln*) and pharmaceutical companies had the power to decide what happened to their bodies.” Inspired by a children’s book with a red-haired protagonist, *Die Rote Zora und ihre Bande* (Rote Zora and her gang), Rote Zora sought to encourage women and girls to form gangs to fight back against the many forms of violence and abuse that they experienced in their everyday lives. In the novel by Jewish communist writer Kurt Kläber and published in 1941 under the pseudonym Kurt Held, the leading character was unconventional, wild, subversive, but also responsible and caring. She provided an example of female leadership as Rote Zora envisioned it. Rote Zora approved the use of counterviolence, backing it up with some feminist perspectives. They opined that the ruling political regime was imperialistic and encouraged women to use violent means and defend themselves against all forms of abuse and exploitation. They believed that the use of violent means would bring success to their feminist struggles and most importantly their violent tactics would make women stand up for their rights, fight for themselves, and avoid self-pity. Women would no longer see themselves as victims of patriarchy. The militant feminists believed that counterviolence would go a long way in helping women to overcome fear and powerlessness and resist all repressive gender norms.

Many feminists, however, rejected the use of violent protest tactics as suggested by Rote Zora. There had been no cases of such protests in the history of German feminism and considering the history of the development of the German Women's Movement which was, "as Ute Gerhard highlights, no continuous process, but a history of repeated setbacks, stagnation and of many new beginnings under constantly changing social and political circumstances" (Ibid: 70).

Following the conflict which arose between armed leftist groups and the West German state, and reached its peak in 1977, resulting in the death of several prominent people like the Federal Prosecutor General Siegfried Buback, Bank CEO Jürgen Ponto, and the President of the Association of German Employers Hanns-Martin Schleyer, "the feminist magazine *Courage* published a feminist polemic against violence and counterviolence, in which the following was sounded: You cannot shoot power. You cannot shoot countervailing power. You can only shoot people" (Karcher 2016: 71).

In the 1980s, feminists played a major role in West Germany's peace movement. Much of the current literature on the new women's movement maintains that there was a need to distinguish between peaceful feminist protest and bad patriarchal violence. Though the violent attacks by Rote Zora were rejected, it did not stop them from carrying out attacks for the cause of women workers in another country. A vivid example was the case of German women championing the cause of women in South Korea, through a series of arson attacks against the German clothing chain Adler in 1987. On 15 August 1987, members of Rote Zora planted incendiary devices in nine stores in response to a letter from trade unionists from Korea in May 1986. In the letter, the trade unionists described the poor working conditions in a garment factory that produced a significant portion of the clothes that Adler sold at low prices to customers in West Germany and other European countries. The call for "sisterly help" (*schwesterliche Hilfe*) from South Korea sparked a thriv-

ing solidarity campaign in West Germany that involved groups across the political spectrum (Karcher 2016: 72).

There was no concrete answer to the questions of which forms of protest were peaceful or legitimate during the protest movements in West Germany. Counterviolence was encouraged and adopted as a means of resisting violence. Counterviolence “failed to consider the organizational and interpersonal forms of violence that created and reinforced patriarchal structures” (Ibid: 75). The practice of Rote Zora, nevertheless emphasized the well-known patterns of discrimination and marginalization within the feminist movements by confirming the universal ideas of patriarchal oppression and feminist resistance. The feminist responses to the attacks against Adler showed that to have feminist solidarity, there ought to be constant dialogue and political struggle, whereby similarities and differences among women can be discussed.

Having discussed the student movement of 1968 and the feminist movement and activities that emerged from the student riots in which women openly demanded equality in various spheres of life and sought various rights, especially rights over their bodies, equal pay for equal work, and the rights of equal education between boys and girls. The inequality in the educational system, where boys were given more opportunity of attaining higher education, is the focus of the next section.

### **2.3 Education of Women**

After WWII, women were disadvantaged in all spheres of life, including social, political, economic, and education. Educational opportunities were made available mostly to boys despite the constitutional law which declared men and women equal. In the 1960s and early 1970s, educational opportunities in the Federal Republic of Germany attracted a lot of attention. There existed much inequality in educational attainment based on social origin, sex, religion and region. As noted by Sigrid

Metz-Göckels *Die Deutsche Bildungskatastrophe und Frauen als Bildungsreserve in Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung in Deutschland. Vom Vormärz bis zur Gegenwart* (1996: 374):

Kinder der unteren und mittleren Schichten, ganz besonders aber Mädchen, die in der Endphase des Krieges und in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit geboren worden waren, hatten in den 50er und 60er Jahren wenig Chancen, über Bildung und Weiterbildung Fähigkeiten zu entwickeln, die sie zu einem familienunabhängigen beruflichen Leben befähigten.

Equal opportunities were not given to young people in matters of education and development of potential. It was believed that women did not need much education. All they needed was to be taught was how to please a man, since they were fashioned and created to satisfy men as Ruf (1998: 35) states in *Bildung hat kein Geschlecht. Über erzogene und erziehende Frauen*:

So muss sich die ganze Erziehung der Frauen im Hinblick auf der Männer vollziehen. Ihnen gefallen, ihnen nützlich sein, sich von ihnen lieben und achten lassen, sie großziehen, solange sie jung sind, sie trösten, ihnen ein angenehmes und süßes Dasein bereiten: das sind die Pflichten der Frauen zu allen Zeiten, das ist es, was man sie von Kindheit an lehren muss.

Women were looked upon as male appendages, so their education was not considered important. They were allowed the minimum knowledge that could help them in their married homes but their worth as individuals were not respected. Ruf (1998: 23) further explains in *Bildung hat kein Geschlecht. Über erzogene und erziehende Frauen*: Ihre Bildung und ihre gesamte Existenz wurden auf Männerbedürfnisse hinausgerichtet und sollten komplementär zu der Jungen ablaufen. Die Würde des menschlichen person gründet aber darin, dass sie niemals nur Mittel für etwas, sondern stets Selbstzweck ist.

Gleichgültig, ob ich Mann, Weib oder Neutrum bin, das Geschlecht ist Privatsache- vor allem bin ich. Ich, eine bestimmte Individualität, und mein menschlicher Wert beruht auf dieser Individualität.

The individuality of the person which should have played a key role was poorly adhered to.

*Die Ausbildung von Individualität divergierte mit der sogenannten natürlichen Bestimmung der Frau zu Hausfrau, Gattin und Mutter. Die traditionellen Geschlechterstereotypen engten die Frau ein und behinderten und begrenzten sie systematisch in ihrem Potential durch die kognitive Unterdrückung (Ruf 1998: 23).*

One of the social factors which played a key role in the chances of a woman attaining education was also the religion she professed. It was observed that Catholic girls were more disadvantaged in matters of education than their counterparts from the Evangelical churches.

Ein Vergleich der 11 Bundesländer zeigte eine fast doppelt so starke Benachteiligung der Katholischen Mädchen gegenüber den katholischen Jungen sowie der katholischen Kinder gegenüber den evangelischen. Katholische Mädchen haben in den bayerischen Landkreisen mit überwiegend katholischem Bevölkerungsanteil in der Bundesrepublik vergleichsweise besonders geringe Chancen für eine weiterführende Ausbildung (Metz-Göckels 1996: 376).

The fact that Catholic girls were more disadvantaged might be in connection with the strong belief of the Catholic church that looked on women in their traditional roles as mothers and housewives. Therefore, girls did not need higher education.

Education in the 1960s was expensive and many girls whose parents were peasant farmers could only attend state schools. Private schools were reserved for those from noble or middle-class families who could

afford the fees. In the 1960s, girls attended middle schools (*Realschulen*) and schools such as *Berufsfachschulen* which would channel them to female-type jobs. It was difficult for parents to invest in the job-training school for girls. The girls would get married, so it was better to train boys instead. Many girls in the 1960s, therefore, left before secondary school, since they were not allowed to study and take exams that would lead them to a university education, even though they were the best.

At university level, boys were in the majority. The statistics taken confirm that girls were more in female-type subjects as stated in *Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung in Deutschland. Vom Vormärz bis zur Gegenwart* (Kleinau and Opitz 1996: 380):

Zu diesem Zeitpunkt betrug der Anteil der Studentinnen an den Hochschulen in Westdeutschland 26,3%. Die Studienfachwahlen der Studentinnen galten den Kulturwissenschaft (43,3%), den Sprachwissenschaften (42,2%), der Allgemeinmedizin (35,4%) sowie zu 60,5% in den Studiengängen, für das Volksschul- und Berufsschullehramt. Die relativ geringeren Anteile von Frauen an den Staats- wie Diplomprüfungen (23%) und Promotionen (18,1%) ließen geschlechtsspezifische Ausgliederungsprozesse vermuten, zumal die Quote der Studienabbrecherinnen ebenfalls überhöht war.

Following the educational reforms of the 1960s, of which women were the beneficiaries, West Germany experienced a breakthrough for women in educational participation, known as *Fräuleinwunder* in which access to education and opportunities were extended to women. In their quest for equality, women entered secondary school and caught up with their male counterparts. They even overtook them by having better grades. Though women had better grades, their chances of getting better jobs which corresponded with their grades were still restricted with the

gender-based differences in opportunities. This was later followed by mass unemployment in West Germany caused by the world economic recession further restraining women from being absorbed into higher positions in the workforce.

In the 1960s, the West German school system consisted of an elementary school, (*Grundschule*) for all children from six to ten or twelve years of age. This was followed by a compulsory secondary part, known as *Hauptschule* or main school, which educated young people up to the age of fifteen. This basic secondary part was followed by compulsory vocational schooling, which could be part-time or full time (*Berufsfachschule/Fachschule*). The dual system of vocational training, which combined an enterprise-based apprenticeship with part-time *Berufschule*, was the backbone of the industrial, artisan, and administrative labour force in West Germany and the recognized entry-route to skilled employment. Kolinsky explains further the different functions of the schools (1989: 103): “a similar function of preparing young people for the skilled segment of the labour market falls to the network of intermediate schools, the *Realschulen*. Their focus is more clearly vocational than that of the *Hauptschulen*, with a special interest in clerical and administrative tasks, and public services.”

If the *Hauptschulen* and the *Realschulen* were the basic institutions provided to enable education for all, the grammar schools were meant to prepare a small number of intellectual elites for university education. It was in this regard that Dahrendorf clamoured for change in educational reform which would grant many people access to secondary and higher education. Some changes were made to allow girls to have access to education. With the restructuring of the school system, pupils took examinations which qualified them to enter another level of education. This paved the way for women to indulge in various levels of education as they set their goals beyond the traditional role of housewife and mother, to finding an appropriate job in the labour market. Equal access

to education reduced some myths about the intellectual ability of women or some gender-related stereotypes, in which girls were described as not being assertive like boys.

With the opportunity for equal education, girls who would normally leave the educational system earlier than boys, stayed longer to acquire a university education. Since the mid-1970s, women have participated in evening colleges to upgrade themselves to obtain A-level-equivalent examinations. All these shows that equality in access to education has been obtained in West Germany. Women are no longer relegated to *Hauptschulen* and vocational training but have the opportunity to attain a university education depending on the ability of the individual. This thesis examines how German women in general, irrespective of their social status, have progressed from being only mothers, taking care of husbands and children, to attaining higher education in universities to empower themselves and actualize their dreams, thus finding their self-identity.

Having examined the social-historical backgrounds of both Igbo women and German women, the next section aptly discusses the differences and the similarities between them to find the position and status of women in both cultures.

### **2.3.1 Differences and Similarities between the Status of Igbo Women and German Women**

Before the advent of colonialism, Igbo women participated actively in the political, economic, religious, and cultural development of their community. Politically, they played a significant role in the traditional political life of the people. The political power was divided between men and women in a complementary manner to foster peace and harmony. The women had their unique political institutions in the form the organization of patrilineage daughters (*umuada*), and the organization of patrilineage wives (*alutaradi*). These institutions took care of issues

concerning women in the family, imposed punishment and discipline, and acted as peace mediators.

Women also played an important role in the economic development of their communities. They engaged in trade across villages and towns. They produced salt, brooms, creams, and pomades which they sold to help their families. Women did not rely on men for their maintenance. Being an agrarian society, women planted cassava, vegetables, and cocoyam, which they harvested and sold. It is important to note that women kept the money realized from the proceeds. They were self-reliant and highly independent. They were not restricted to taking care of children and doing household chores. Though they had the principal duty of training their children, this did not prevent them from trading.

Women participated in the religious and cultural activities of their communities. In the traditional religion, a woman was usually chosen as the priestess of a goddess. She made her divination and told the people what was required of them.

Women had organizations which bound them together and defended their interests. They had a collective way of making men do their bidding using boycotts and strikes. Since men in Igboland were not allowed to cook, the women could collectively refuse to cook for their husbands and could deny them sex until their desires were met. Igbo women were independent, self-reliant women who had complementary roles to those of men before the coming of colonial masters.

During colonial rule, the British came with their mentality of relegating women to the background. They did not want to work with women. Igbo women were disrobed of their political power. Power was vested in the men. The joint meetings between men and women in which decisions were taken came to an end. With the introduction of Christianity and education, men were chosen to work with pastors or priests in the church. Boys were preferred to be sent to school since they would take up administration while girls who went to school were taught cooking

and knitting. Girls were taught how to be good wives and mothers and how to take care of their children. They were taught that men were the breadwinners. Since women were no longer in charge of the market, they were made dependent on their husbands thereby losing their independence, self-actualization, and self-identity. Boys were taught in school that they were more important than girls since they would be trained as administrators and heads of units. Women began to see themselves as second-class citizens.

The position of women in the German society of the 1950s to the 1970s showed that women experienced independence after WWII, when women took over the position of men in various offices as men went to war. After the war, they came back to see emancipated women who had increased their self-reliance, self-assertion, and self-esteem. Women were asked to go back to their homes after the war so that men could take up their job positions. The role of women was summarized using three Ks: *Kinder* (children), *Küche* (kitchen), and *Kirche* (church). Women were looked on in their traditional roles as mothers and wives. They (women) should be concerned about taking care of their husbands and their homes. Married women were not allowed to work. The man was considered to be the breadwinner making the wife dependent. The principal role of a woman was reduced to cooking and looking after the children and her husband; anything else resulted in a loss of womanhood. Before a woman could take up a job, she was supposed to get written permission from her husband. If the husband were not supportive, she would not be given a job; her ability to work and be self-fulfilled depended on her husband. It was no wonder that many women remained unmarried to be allowed to work, be independent, have self-actualization, and created their own identity. Once a female worker married, she was expected to give up her job. It was only in 1977 that the law that defined housework as a woman's sole duty was abolished. It was also in 1977 that women were permitted to take up paid jobs.

Education in the 1950s and 1960s in Germany was expensive. Since it was expensive, it was the boys who were usually sent to higher education except for girls who came from rich families. Girls only attended a basic education. Those who came from poor families had no chance of attaining higher education. Women were generally seen as those who did not need much education. All they needed was to be taught how to please men, satisfy them, and look after their children.

A closer look at the summary of the Igbo women and German women shows the differences and similarities between these two cultures. Igbo women before the advent of colonialism were independent, self-assertive, and creative. They were living in their own culture which had a complementary role between men and women. When the British masters came, they brought along their European culture in which women were suppressed and imposed it on Igbo women. A critical look at the position of Igbo women during colonialism shows similarities with the position of German women. The principal role of women was reduced to taking care of children and the husband. The man was the breadwinner; the woman depended solely on the man for her livelihood. As a married woman, she was not allowed to work. Educationally she was only taught cookery and embroidery. Her education was learning how to prepare dishes and knit. Nothing was mentioned of her self-fulfilment. Boys were taught to be administrators. They saw themselves as those who have better opportunities than girls.

In conclusion, the subjugation and oppression of women are the same across various cultures in the world. Women are deprived of access to education, economic resources, equal rights with men, and managerial positions. Women are looked on in their biological function of giving birth than for their natural endowment and what they can achieve. In many societies, boys are still preferred to girls. Many women are still dependent on men due to lack of meaningful jobs, access to resources, and education. When they are given jobs, they occupy low-paid jobs.

Moreover, colonialism played a role in imposing foreign cultures. Many European nations colonized many African nations and other countries and imparted their cultures to them, making them lose their basic cultures. It is therefore not a surprise that different cultures across the globe have similar opinions on some issues. They learnt from their colonial masters and lived with it for years, imbibing it as part and parcel of their way of life before gaining their independence.

Buchi Emecheta, the author of *Second Class Citizen*, writes about her own life experiences as a girl and as a married woman thus describing the position of women in Nigeria in the 1960s. It is good to note that Britain ruled Nigeria from 1900 till 1960 when Nigeria got her independence.

Ulla Hahn, the author of *Das verborgene Wort*, writes about her childhood experiences as a girl in Monheim in the 1960s. Both authors showcase the low position of women in their countries in the 1960s and 1970s, characterized by dependence, low self-image, lack of identity, inequality between men and women, a lower percentage of women in politics and managerial positions, lack of access to economic resources, unequal pay, lack of self-actualization, violence against women, and a preference of boys to girls resulting in minimum access to higher education for women. To analyse the treatment meted out on women for decades, it is important to find out why women were relegated to the background, the causes, and the effects. This analysis will be made using some feminist literary theories which will be discussed in the next chapter.



**PART II.**

**METHODOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION  
IN *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN* AND  
*DAS VERBORGENE WORT***



## CHAPTER 3.

### FEMINIST LITERARY AND GENDER THEORIES

#### 3.1 Simone de Beauvoir: Nora or Womanhood as a Patriarchal Myth

*The Second Sex* written by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949 analyses the facts and myths of women's lives, using various methodologies which include Literature, History, Biology, and Philosophy to review not only the problems of women but also the possibilities open to them. Beauvoir develops some basic terminologies to differentiate both sexes, which feminist theorists still use to this present day, i.e., one/other, transcendence/immanence, biological gender/social gender. She reflects on some basic questions, which have been the bone of contention for a long period of years. These include the question of equality or difference, women's subjectivity, the social construction of womanhood, the meaning of the body, and the relationship between discursive and social structures. Even as these questions get divergent and contradictory answers, she concludes unequivocally that western culture is a man's culture. Lena Lindhoff reiterates Beauvoir's opinion in her *Einführung in die feministische Literaturtheorie* (2003: 2):

Daß in Standesamtsregistern und auf Personalbogen die Rubriken`Männlich, Weiblich, gleichgeordnet erscheinen, ist rein äußerlich. Das Verhältnis der beiden Geschlechter ist nicht das von zwei Elektrizitäten, zwei Polen: Der Mann ist so sehr zugleich der positive Pol and das Ganze, dass im Französischen

das Wort `homme (Mann)`den Menschen schlechthin bezeichnet. Die Frau (...) wird bestimmt und unterschieden mit Bezug auf den Mann, dieser aber nicht mit Bezug auf sie; sie ist das Unwesentliche angesichts des Wesentlichen. Er ist das Subjekt, er ist das Absolute: sie ist das Andere.

This opinion that the woman is referred to as the “other” is not new. Some writers had already depicted the woman as not being the subject. The notion of being the other is given from a man’s point of view, thus “man defines a woman not in herself but as relative to him” (Heinämaa 1997: 27). The woman is looked upon as the “other”. According to Beauvoir (1989: 139), “History has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchy, they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her; and thus, she has been definitely established as the other.”

The concept of the “other” forms the basis of human thinking. Beauvoir (1989: 38) explains that according to the philosopher Hegel, reality is made up of the interplay of opposing forces. For a being to define itself, it must define something in opposition to it. So, when man defines himself as a subject and a free being, the idea of the other arises. This is the basis of existentialism. Therefore, for every subject, there must be an object; for every “one”, there must be “other” as well. Lindhoff (2003: 2) succinctly explains in *Einführung in die feministische Literaturtheorie*:

Die Konstitution gesellschaftlicher Kollektive sieht Beauvoir in der des einzelnen Subjekts vorgebildet, wie Hegel sie in der *Phänomenologie des Geistes* modellhaft mit der Dialektik von Herr und Knecht beschrieben habe. Beauvoirs Theoriebildung liegt eine vereinfachende Hegellektüre zugrunde, die dessen Philosophie für ihre Zwecke nutzbar zu machen sucht. Sie geht davon aus, dass das Subjekt sich nur setzt, indem es sich

entgegengesetzt: es hat das Bedürfnis, sich als das Wesentliche zu bejahen und das Andere als das Unwesentliche, als Objekt zu setzen.

The “other” is represented as a suppressed group, class or race. Man is the “one” and woman is the “other”; man is the subject and woman is the object. Man can think of himself without a woman, but a woman cannot think of herself without a man. She is just what man decrees; she is called the sex, meaning that she appears to the man as a sexual being; “she is the flesh, its delight and dangers” (Beauvoir 1989: 143). “Woman thus seems to be the inessential who never goes back to being the essential, to be the absolute other, without reciprocity” (Ibid: 141). Man is the essential creature, he is defined but the woman is a non-essential creature. Man is then the absolute, the one; while the woman is simply the other. Man occupies the role of the self or subject. He is essential, absolute and transcendent. The woman is inessentially incomplete and mutilated. “No man would consent to be a woman, but every man wants a woman to exist. Thank God for having created a woman; Nature is good since she has given women to men” (Ibid). With these words, man in his pride and arrogance thinks that “his presence in this world is an ineluctable fact and a right, that of woman a mere accident- but a very happy accident” (Ibid: 142).

Beauvoir surveys the reason why women are seen as objects. It becomes clear that from birth till adult age, the external forces and the environment condition the girl into accepting dependence and inwardness. Various myths are associated with women. A woman who is having her monthly menstruation is regarded as being impure. In many primitive societies, it is believed that the flow could upset social activities and ruin crops, therefore a woman who is menstruating stays away from these functions. It is believed in these societies that the blood could be used for love potions and medicines. Beauvoir (1989: 149) reiterates that “since patriarchal times only evil powers have been attributed to the

feminine flow. Pliny said that a menstruating woman ruins crops, destroys garden, kills bees, and so on; and that if she touches wine, it becomes vinegar; milk is soured, and the like.” Beauvoir also notes that an ancient English poet put the same notion into rhyme thus: “Oh! Menstruating woman, thou’st a fiend, from whom all nature should be screened” (Beauvoir 1989: 149).

Furthermore, some cultures consider as taboo any kind of sexual relations with a menstruating woman. The offenders are themselves considered impure for some time and have to undergo some cleansing to be free and fit. “It has been supposed that masculine energy and vitality would be destroyed because the feminine principle is then at its maximum of force” (Beauvoir 1989: 150). Even in the biblical narration of the creation, Eve was created from Adam’s side and given to him as his companion. Thus, in the act of giving, Eve was given to Adam for him to possess and fertilize her, as he owns and fertilizes the soil. Beauvoir captures this image of woman noting that “in sexual acts, it is not only a subjective and fleeting pleasure that man seeks, he wishes to conquer, to take, to possess. To have a woman is to conquer her; he penetrates into her as the plowshare into the furrow; he makes her his even as he makes his, the land he works; he labors, he plants, he sows” (Beauvoir 1989: 152). In this imagery, “Woman is like the field, and man is like the seed, says the law of Manu. In a drawing by André Masson, there is a man with a spade in his hand, spading the garden of a woman’s vulva. Woman is her husband’s prey, his possession” (Beauvoir 1989: 152). Consequently, society deprives the woman of subjective roles, independence and creative fulfilment. She has no other choice than to accept the dissatisfying life of housework, childbearing and sexual slavishness.

With time, women accepted the myths imposed on them by men as being weak and dependent. They begin to see themselves as inferior beings, as those that are bound and tied to a man, a people without initiative and who cannot take responsibility. In *Einführung in die feminis-*

*tische Literaturtheorie*, Lindhoff (2003: 12) gives a further reason why women accept their fate as independent beings:

Sie leben verstreut unter den Männern, durch Wohnung, Arbeit, wirtschaftliche Interessen, soziale Stellung mit einzelnen von ihnen-Mann oder Vater-enger verbunden als mit den anderen Frauen.

Das Band, das sie an ihre Unterdrücker fesselt, kann mit keinem anderen verglichen werden.

However, it is noted that many women do not assume a subjective attitude. It is asserted that women sometimes lack the concrete means to organize themselves. According to Beauvoir (1989: 143), they have no past, no history, no religion of their own and no solidarity of work. They have no training that could build up their identity. They have no leader either. *“Die Frauen bilden keine Gemeinschaft und haben keine eigene Geschichte, die ihnen die Ausbildung einer eigenen Identität als Frau ermöglicht hätte”* (Lindhoff 2003: 3) All these factors make women see themselves as the “other”. Beauvoir advises that it is only by seeking their rights together that they could secure independence for all women and replace oppression with relationships of reciprocity between men and women.

Women as the “other” have been described as immature and also incapable of taking decisions, a description which has long been associated with suppressed races and classes. This description has been in favour of men and as time goes on, women begin to assimilate the humiliating description and think of themselves as so. The woman is defined as the other, from man’s point of view. Man defines a woman not in herself but as relative to him. They (women) have been made to see the world as a world of men and describe the world from the point of view of men, showing that women cannot bring out their own interpretation of the world which in reality is far from the truth. In *Einführung in die feministische Literaturtheorie*, Lindhoff states the opinion of Beauvoir in (2003: 4) categorically:

Die Frauen haben keine eigene Deutung der Welt hervorbringen können; sie haben keinen Mythos geschaffen, (...); sie haben keine Religion und keine Poesie, die Ihnen eigen ist; selbst wenn sie träumen, tun sie es durch die Träume der Männer.

This definition shows the inability of women to take up responsibility without recourse to the menfolk. It also shows the patriarchal views about women. Beauvoir asserts that womanhood is only a social construction and sums it up by saying that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman”, meaning that a woman is not born naturally to be servile, dependent, and incapable of being an achiever but is brought up (culturally and socially) to believe to be so. With the phrase “One is not born a woman but rather becomes a woman”, Beauvoir marks a clear distinction between sex and gender. “Sex is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas gender is the cultural meaning and form that the body acquires, the variable modes of that body’s acculturation” (Butler 1986: 35). Therefore, sex is “a wholly natural or biological category, independent of the cultural construction of gender” (Webster 2000: 1). It is presupposed that our gender is not determined by our sex. Sara Heinämaa (1997: 29) in her article “What is a Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of the Sexual Difference” states Butler’s notion on gender noting that “when Beauvoir claims that ‘woman’ is a historical idea and not a natural fact, she clearly underscores the distinction between sex, as biological facticity, and gender, as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity.” Thus, “to be female is, according to that distinction, a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have to become woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of ‘woman’.”

Gender is an identity which one chooses by oneself. It is not only a cultural construction that is imposed on identity but can be attributed as

a process of constructing oneself. “To become a woman is a purposive and appropriate set of acts, the acquisition of a skill, a ‘project’, to use Sartrean terms, to assume a certain corporeal style and significance” (Butler 1986: 36).

Women should, therefore, wake up and work on themselves and their psyche and reinterpret the cultural history imposed on them. Women should not allow themselves to be judged by their anatomy because anatomy does not pose any limit to the possibilities of gender.

Given the feminist discussion in which Judith Butler distinguishes between sex and gender, sex means human females and human males depending on biological features which include chromosomes, sex organs, and other physical features, while gender depicts women and men depending on cultural and social factors (social role, position, behaviour, and identity). Butler (1986: 35) states: “Sex is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas gender is the cultural meaning and form that that body acquires, the variable modes of that body’s acculturation.” This distinction implies that it is no longer possible to attribute the values or social functions of women to biological necessity. It would, therefore, be meaningless to refer to natural or unnatural gendered behaviour, as “all gender is, by definition, unnatural” (Ibid: 36).

This distinction between sex and gender helps to reduce the attribution given to a woman based on her physical anatomy. In support of Beauvoir’s analysis of sex and gender, Heinamäa (1997: 31) explains further that “sex is an analytic attribute of the human; there is no human who is not sexed; sex qualifies the human as a necessary attribute. But sex does not cause gender, and gender cannot be understood to reflect or express sex.” Heinamäa further affirms that for Beauvoir, “sex is immutably factic, but gender acquired, and whereas sex cannot be changed or so she thought, gender is the variable cultural construction of sex.”

It follows that the description of the woman as the “other” is a myth created by man. Women should not attempt to be like men, rather they should simply be themselves and seek self-fulfilment in transcendence. Butler (1986: 42) states that “woman is enticed by two modes of alienation. Evidently to play at being a man will be for her a source of frustration; but to play at being a woman is also a delusion: to be a woman would be to be the object, the Other- and the Other nevertheless remains subject in the midst of her resignation.” Butler concludes by stating that “The true problem for woman is to reject these flights from reality and seek self-fulfillment in transcendence.”

Beauvoir uses the opposition terms, transcendence/immanence, nurture/nature, production/reproduction to discuss different status in which men and women find themselves in society. She uses the term immanence to describe the position assigned to women, in which women are bound to be interior, passive, static, and immersed in themselves in opposition to transcendence where men are active, public, powerful, creative, productive, and projecting into the future. She opines that social norms grant men transcendence and place women in positions of constant immanence. Therefore, women are encouraged to be themselves but at the same time struggle to acquire these qualities of transcendence, the model of freedom embodied by the masculine gender.

In further explanation of the difference between transcendence and immanence, Karen Green (2002: 5) notes: “Transcendence involves objectifying the other and asserting one’s own subjectivity; immanence involves accepting objectification and attempting to rely on an exterior transcendence for justification.” Therefore “the one who is looked at accepts their object status and relies on the transcendent other as a ground of value and meaning” (Ibid: 5).

Realizing her inability to get fulfilled in herself, the woman is then “forced to find her reality in the immanence of her person” (Ibid: 6). She concludes by saying that in *The Second Sex* that an individual needs a

balance of both immanence and transcendence. “In truth, all human existence is transcendence and immanence at the same time; to go beyond itself, it must maintain itself, to thrust itself toward the future, it must integrate into itself” (Ibid: 10).

Beauvoir’s explanation of nature vs. nurture is that a woman’s inferiority complex is not based on natural differences rather on how she is brought up. The different manner in which a boy and a girl are brought up to suit society affect their behaviour. A woman is never born passive, but she is meant to believe that she has to deny her true self to be acceptable to society. This quest of being acceptable to society creates a tension between production and reproduction. The woman is so engaged in her work of reproduction, i.e., bearing children and bringing them up, that it clashes with her ability to participate in the labour force, be productive and contribute to her society.

The non-existence of the woman as a subject in stories corresponds to her being presented as a myth. Women have not always been represented as they are, rather as male imagination wants them to be. The imagined femininity in which a woman is represented in dual forms – positive and negative, as an angel or as a devil, as a saint or a sinner – was popular in the Romanticism period and served as a tool in patriarchal ideology production. The ideology is based on the assumption that women, unlike men, cannot alienate themselves from their natural state. They are always bonded and identified with nature. Women are considered therefore to be naturally inferior. Butler (1986: 45) notes that the patriarchal feminine myths are only resistant fantasies of men, a compromise between wish and fear, in which dreams and neurotic symptoms can be compared. In conclusion, women are called on to see themselves as subjects, to be proud of who they are and what they can achieve and more importantly to know that their biological sex cannot deter them from achieving their life goals and aspirations.

### 3.2 Hélène Cixous: An Imaginary Utopia

Hélène Cixous is one of the better known French feminists whose writings such as *La Jeune Née* (1975), *Le Rire de la Méduse* (1975), and *Le Sexe ou la tête?* (1976) explore the relationship between women, femininity, feminism, and the production of texts. Her contributions and questions in *écriture féminine* played a key role in the political and cultural debate of France in the 1970s. According to Cixous, feminine writing (*écriture féminine*) serves as the most powerful means for destroying patriarchal language, and through language, the social and cultural suppression and oppression of women. Cecile Lindsay in her article “Body/Language: French Feminist Utopias” (1986: 47) notes that “Cixous’s 1975 text ‘Le Rire de la Méduse’ serves as a manifesto of *écriture féminine*, elaborating the link between the body, sexual difference and language.” Thus for “Cixous, women have historically been silenced: made to assume the role of physically and materiality as a counter to masculine reason and discourse, women have been denied access to language and writing. They are, for Cixous, more fully physical than men; they more fully and furiously inhabit what she calls “*ces corps somptueux: plus que l’homme invité aux réussites sociales, à la sublimation, les femmes sont corps*” (Lindsay 1986: 47).

In her feminist theory, Cixous examines the dynamics of signs and analyses the patriarchal modes of thought, in which the male-dominated, Western world has relegated the woman to a position of otherness. Consequently asking “where is she” at the opening of “Sorties” in *The Newly Born Woman* (1999), the woman is seen as the negative pole of hierarchical oppositions. Toril Moi in *Sexual Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (1985: 104) cites a list of what Cixous refers to as patriarchal binary opposition: “Activity/ Passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Day/Night, Father/Mother, Head/Emotions, Intelligible/Sensitive, Logos/Pathos.” These binary oppositions are fixed in the patriarchal value system. Each opposition can be summed up as a hier-

archy, whereupon the feminine side is always denoted as the negative. Cixous notes that for one of the terms to be relevant and acquire meaning, the other has to be destroyed. It turns out to be a battleground where each struggles for supremacy. According to Moi (1985: 105): “In the end, victory is equated with activity and defeat with passivity; under patriarchy, the male is always the victor. Cixous passionately denounces such an equation of femininity with passivity and death as leaving no positive space for woman: Either woman is passive or she doesn’t exist.”

Cixous, in her works, tries to undo this ideology and affirm the woman as the source of life, energy, and power, and to promote the new feminine language that will suppress these patriarchal binary thoughts, where logocentrism join together with phallogocentrism to oppress and silence women. The theory of phallogocentrism is propagated by Jacques Lacan in which he explores human subjectivity in relation to language, using the oedipal family in a social and linguistic context. According to Lacan (Moi 1985: 99), the human subject is not only looked on as a speaking subject with the unconscious but also a masculine or feminine subject in connection to the Oedipus complex. Because the oedipal position introduces sexual difference in connection with the phallus as a signifier, men and women enter language differently. Lacan maintains that female entry into language is represented by lack, absence, and negativity as explains by Clara Juncker in her article *Writing with Cixous* (1988: 425):

At the oedipal moment of separation, however, the child enters into a symbolic system governed by the phallus, Lacan’s controversial term for the signifier of authority and “self-possession”, of presence and absence, that is characteristic of language.” In this scenario Juncker further writes that “The speaking subject is thus a gendered subject: while the male easily identifies with the parental authority of the Logos and

painlessly constitutes himself as a phallic “I”, the female must identify herself with lack, with absence, and with negativity. As Lacan puts it, “woman does not exist”.

Following this critique from Lacan, Cixous in *Castration and Decapitulation* rises against phallogocentric culture for designating the woman as “other”, as difference and negativity. She reminds men of the fear they are nursing of being castrated by the female body (Moi 1985: 100). Kuhn (1981: 37) states: “Let the priests tremble, we’re going to show them our sexts! Too bad for them if they fall apart on discovering that women aren’t men, or that the mother doesn’t have one.”

Cixous intends to say that the feminine approach to writing which she calls “sext” poses a threat to phallogocentrism. Consequently, to effectuate the urgent changes needed in society, the system has to be worked on and changed drastically if “woman” is to be a speaking subject of femininity (Moi 1985: 111). By the term ‘woman’, Cixous in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976: 875) “speaks of a woman in her struggle against the conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history”.

To achieve this feat, French feminists, Kristeva, Irigaray, and Cixous in particular, celebrate female sexuality and write about sexual difference to bring down the phallic/symbolic system. Women are therefore encouraged to write about their bodies to discover themselves, as Cixous (1976: 876) exhorts women: “Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I write woman, woman must write woman; and man, man.” Consequently, “to write as woman, is thus to join a group of poetic revolutionists seeking to overturn established Phallogocentric systems” (Raschke 1988: 822). In the words of Sue Thomas in “Difference, Intersubjectivity and Agency in the Colonial and Decolonizing Spaces of Hélène Cixous’s *Sorties*” (1994:53), a woman coming to writing means: a woman discovering reading, arriving at authorship, experiencing the *jouissance* (pleasure, bliss) of these activities, waking

to them from the “absolute powerless” passivity of dependence nonentity.

Cixous’s view about writing about the body is “a sufficient means for destroying patriarchal structures” (Raschke 1988: 823). Women should, therefore, write their stories. Telling their own stories will create a different history, politics, and economics. In her article, “Writing with Cixous”, Juncker (1988: 426) explains thus:

Woman must in other words, write her body in order to discover herself. She must explore her *jouissance*, her sexual pleasure, so as to bring down phallogocentric discourse and ultimately, change the world; “write your self. Your body must be heard,” calls out Cixous in her (wo)manifesto “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1976). In the *Newly Born Woman*, she elaborates on this new discourse of femininity: Woman must write her body, must make up the unimpeded tongue that bursts partitions, classes, and rhetorics, orders and codes, must inundate, run through, go beyond the discourse with its last reserves. As Cixous states in “Medusa”, the woman giving birth to herself “writes in white ink”.

Women ought to write about themselves, their feelings, and their perceptions of things since according to Raschke (1988: 822) “masculine discourse has very much defined the way we think, read and write, this seems at least for some of us like an exciting possibility indeed.”

The efforts of women in writing about their own selves and history will go a long way in changing some ideologies which the public have been fed for a long time. According to Lindsay (1986: 47): “Writing will help to challenge the oppression of women by dominant ideology and culture, proposing in its stead the pursuit of a more acceptable social order. Moreover, the pursuit of the new order must take place in language and writing, and must deal with the body.”

Furthermore, women are encouraged to begin their writing even with the selfish self, which means to write about their personal experiences. Raschke quoting Bolker's "Teaching Griselda to Write" agrees with this noting that "I push very strongly, writing that begins with the personal, with issues of great personal importance, that begins with the self, even with the selfish. Griseldas are superb at sensing and bending to the demands of the outer world" (Raschke 1988: 822).

Bolker's clarion call to her female students to write themselves even a "selfish self" can be seen "as a construct and a multiplicity of selves. A self that implies 'oneness/phallocentrism', the sign system Cixous is trying to deconstruct. When a woman writes in nonrepression, she passes on her others, her abundance of non-egos" (Ibid:823) To change patriarchal systems which have been in place for a long time, the language used must be changed.

In the quest of searching and conquering a woman territory, a feminine border to write themselves, Cixous and Kristeva chose the unconscious, the space of love and dreams absorbed in the mother's body. Cixous's text concentrates more on dreams and fantasies, moving into the unconscious and changing its signs and actions into feminine desire. Feminine writing according to Juncker (1988: 426) "takes on the qualities of the prelinguistic imaginary, the realm of bodily pleasures and drives untouched by castration and separation".

In Cixous' interpretation, woman's writing can be compared to a thief who "steals into language to make it fly" (Ibid: 427). Cixous constantly reviews masculine myths and rewrites them unconsciously from her own feminine border. "In the *Newly Born Woman*, she asks what is the other? If it is truly the other, there is nothing to say, it cannot be theorized. The 'other' escapes me. It is elsewhere, outside: absolutely other... can I imagine my elsewhere" (Ibid :427)

The analysis of the "other" in her writing contributes to her view of writing as bisexual or missexual. She does not seek the merging of self

and other into “selfsame” but rather “the possibility of extending into the other, of being in such a relation with the other that moves into the other without destroying the other and looks for the other where s/he is, without trying to bring everything back to myself” (Juncker (1988: 427).

Furthermore, Cixous together with Kristeva attributes to the female the identical ideological function of *dissidence* which logos denies and exiles. At the centre of this *dissidence* is her concept of a feminine libidinal economy, a system of exchange based on free expenditure. Her distinction between a masculine and a feminine libidinal economy is distinguished by the realm of the proper and the realm of the gift. Therefore, masculine value systems are arranged in line with an economy of the proper of which Moi in *Sexual Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (1985: 110) elaborates: “Masculinity or masculine systems are structured according to an economy of the proper. Proper-property-appropriate: signalling an emphasis on self-identity, self-aggrandizement and arrogant dominance, these words aptly characterize the logic of the proper according to Cixous.” The implication here is that the insistence on the proper, on a proper return, leads to the masculine obsession with classification, systematization, and hierarchization.

The masculine libidinal economy, which is associated with the realm of the proper is anti-biologicistic, tends rather to show the male fear of castration which signifies: “a fear of expropriation, of separation, of the loss of the attribute. In other words, the impact of the threat of castration” (Moi 1985: 111).

The realm of the gift which is attributed to the “feminine” is classified as an inequality – a difference – which shows an imbalance of power. The act of giving turns into an indirect means of aggression, thereby exposing to the other the risk of one’s show of superiority.

The woman gives freely without a thought of return. She has no fear of expropriation or castration anxiety as does her counterpart, the man. The woman gives generously.

Cixous advocates an economy of abundance, waste, and uselessness which counteracts the “masculine” systems of appropriation, profit, and debt. According to Juncker (1988: 428): “Cixous defines femininity as the ability to give of oneself without reserve, as the acceptance of loss, of no-deals: The more you have, the more you give, the more you are, the more you give, the more you have.” In the same place, Juncker writes that “Feminine writers are singers of spending and waste, advocates of a new, affective order of gift-giving, textually inscribed as poetic excess. Without gold or black dollars, our naphtha will spread values over the world, un-quoted values that will change the rules of the old game” (Ibid: 428).

In her analysis of feminine writing as both the source and the voice, Cixous maintains that there is a bond between feminine writing and the mother as the source and beginning of the voice seen in feminine writing. Femininity in writing can be dictated in the voice, therefore writing and voice are interwoven. Moi in *Sexual Textual politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (1985: 114) opines: “Woman is wholly and physically present in her voice – and writing is no more than the extension of this self-identical prolongation of the speech act. The voice in each woman, moreover, is not only her own, but springs from the deepest layers of her psyche: her own speech becomes the echo of the primeval song she once heard, the voice the incarnation of the first voice of love which all women preserve alive.... in each woman sings the first nameless love.” In further explanation of the attributes of the voice, metaphors are used whereby the voice is equated with the mother and the mother’s body. The voice is seen as the “inexhaustible milk” and the “lost mother” (Moi 1985: 114).

Cixous explains that women’s special relationship to the voice is based on their lack of defence mechanisms. She states: “No woman ever heaps up as many defences against their libidinal drives as a man does” (Moi 1985: 115). Though man suppresses the mother, woman does not,

for she is always close to the mother whom she considers the source of good. The attribute of the mother-figure aligns with what Melanie Klein designates as the good mother: a generous woman who gives out love, nourishment and plenitude. The writing woman is thus summed up by Moi (1985: 115): “The writing woman is thus powerful: hers is a *puissance féminine* derived directly from the mother, whose giving is always suffused with strength: the more you have, the more you give, the more you are, the more you give the more you have.”

### **3.3 Luce Irigaray: Speculum of the Other Woman**

This work, which is classified as one of the most important texts of feminist thought, whose publication in 1974 expelled Irigaray from Lacan’s *Ecole freudienne* and her university teaching position in Vincennes, aims at loosening the grip and counteracting the information that European metaphysics and Freudian psychoanalytic theory had on the construction of femininity. The book evaluates and condemns the basic texts written from the time of Freud back to Plato which defines Western culture as based on the suppression and oppression of women. Subjectivity is based on a hierarchized dichotomy between subject and object, in which the “woman” was looked on as the object and “man” on the other hand has always played the subject. The concept of man’s subjective role is central in Irigaray’s *Speculum of the Other Woman*, in the chapter “Any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the masculine” (Moi 1985: 129). Margaret Homans, in affirming the notion in *Reconstructing the Feminine* (1986: 12), reiterates that subjectivity indisputably “provides the financial backing for every irreducible constitution as an object: of representation, of discourse, of desire. The object is ultimately more crucial than the subject, for he can sustain himself only by bouncing back off some objectiveness, some objective.” Taking refuge in cosmological imagery, she further notes that “If the earth turned and more especially turned upon herself, the erection of the

subject might thereby be disconcerted and risk losing its elevation and penetration. For what would there be to rise up from and exercise his power over? And in?"

According to Irigaray, there exists a dichotomy between the subject and object of knowledge. Knowledge has two characteristics: a masculine gender identity represented by the masculine pronoun he; and the part of the subject of speech, the "I speak". Through the merging of these three categories – subject of knowledge, masculinity, and the speaking subject – the subject of knowledge has already taken the position of the male speaker, thereby making "male speaker" synonymous to "subject of knowledge". The meaning of this concept as explained by Ofelia Schutte in "Irigaray on the Problem of Subjectivity" (1991: 66) is thus summarized: "Any woman philosopher adopting the position of the transcendental subject is speaking with a male voice and articulating a masculine vision of the universe. Correspondingly, the object of knowledge, precisely because it is object for a subject and lacks a subjectivity of its own, is a being that does not speak." The object in Irigaray is the denied feminine, or fetishized woman. Irigaray uses the feminine pronoun *she* to refer to the object of knowledge, a reminder of the status of fetishized femininity as constructed by the masculine gaze.

The word *speculum* is derived from a Latin word *spicere*, which means to look and can also be called a mirror, "which resembles that of the concave mirror which is the *speculum* gynaecologists use to inspect the cavities of the female body" (Moi 1985: 130). The *speculum*, a male instrument used for penetrating the woman, is made up of a hollow cylinder with a rounded end which is divided into two parts. Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* is used to counteract the philosophies of Freud and Plato on femininity.

Freud in defining the mystery of a woman uses the imagery of light and darkness, showing his phallocratic tendency. His theory of sexual difference is based on the *visibility* of difference: It is the eye that de-

cides what is clearly true and what is not (Moi 1985: 132). By this statement, Freud refers to the genital organs of man and woman which Moi (Ibid) further notes that for Freud, the basic sexual difference is that the male has an obvious sex organ, the penis, and the female has not, in such a way that when Freud looks at the woman, he sees nothing. "The female difference is perceived as an absence or negation of the male norm. This point is crucial for Irigaray's argument: In our culture, woman is outside representation." Consequently, the feminine has to be deciphered as forbidden. Irigaray claims that the feminine is, "the negative required by the male subject's specularization" (Moi 1985: 133).

The specularization brings to mind not only the mirror image associated with the penetration of the speculum inside the vagina but also points at the primary presumption of Western philosophical discourse; whereby a subject that can reflect on its own being is greatly affirmed. Freud posits that there is no sexual difference in the pre-oedipal stage. Through the oral, anal, and phallic stages, there is no difference between the girl and the boy. The difference takes place at the moment of the oedipal crisis. While the little boy takes his mother as his object, the little girl who discovers that her mother cannot give her a penis, rejects her mother, turns from the attachment to the mother and looks upon her father as her love object. Nancy Chodorow explains the theory of penis envy further in "Mothering, Object-relations and the Female Oedipal Configuration" (1978: 140): "Whereas in boys the Oedipus complex is destroyed by the castration complex (a boy gives up sexual desires for his mother out of fear of castration by his father), in girls, it is made possible and led up to by the castration complex. Penis envy – the feminine form of the castration complex – leads a girl to turn to her father exclusively, and thenceforth to see her mother only as a sexual rival."

Freud's assertion of the "sameness" between boys and girls in oral, anal, and phallic stages robs the girl of her femininity and makes her a "little man". In the phallic stage, the girl considers the clitoris as an

inferior penis and feels castrated. This theory of Freud has been counteracted by many feminists who interpret it as a projection of the male fear of castration. Kate Millet and Irigaray maintain in Moi (1985: 133): “As long as the woman is thought to envy the man his penis, he can rest secure in the knowledge that he must have it after all”.

The male fear of castration which Freud tries to impose on women is thus explained further in Moi (1985: 133): “The function of female penis envy, in other words is to bolster up the male psyche. To castrate the woman is to inscribe her in the law of the same desire, of desire for the same. The thinking man not only projects his desire for a reproduction of himself (for his own reflection) on to the woman; he is, according to Irigaray, incapable of thinking outside this specular structure.”

The castration complex makes the woman not just the other but man’s other: his negative or mirror image (Ibid). Irigaray, therefore, opines that patriarchal discourse places the woman outside representation: She is absence, negativity, the dark continent, or at best a lesser man (Ibid). The woman has been called the “dark continent” which signifies a primitive virgin land without the penetrating light – the penis (Ibid). Conclusively the woman is defined as man’s specularized other. Freud reemphasizes the importance of “look” or gaze in a man which is linked to the anal desire to conquer the object. His inability to see heightens his fear of castration. “As long as the master’s scopophilia i.e. Love of looking remains satisfied, his domination is secure” (Moi 1985: 134) The woman is furthermore deprived of both the pleasure of self-representation and the desire for the same; that is to say “that a woman might desire a woman like herself, someone of the same sex, that she might also have auto- and homosexual appetites, is simply incomprehensible to Freud, and indeed inadmissible” (Homans 1986: 13). What the woman sees in the social and cultural structures are purely man-based, which is *hom(m)osexualité*. Homo in French signifies (same) and *homme* means man. Following her deprivation of all, the woman is

forced to be silent. Moi (1985: 135) explains that caught in the specular logic of patriarchy, woman can choose either to remain silent, produce incomprehensible babble, or to enact the specular representation of herself as a lesser male. The latter option, the woman as a mimic, is according to Irigaray, a form of hysteria. “The hysteric mimes her own sexuality in a masculine mode, since this is the only way in which she can rescue something of her own desire. The hysteric’s dramatization (*mise en scène*) of herself is thus a result of her exclusion from patriarchal discourse” (Ibid: 135).

In her theory of femininity, Irigaray maintains that in a woman, there is a relationship between her psychology and her morphology, which differentiates itself from her anatomy. The woman is deprived access to her pleasure. Male pleasure (Moi 1985: 143) “is seen as monolithically unified, represented as analogous with the phallus, and it is this mode that is forcibly imposed upon women”. In her book *This Sex Which is Not One*, Irigaray asserts that woman’s sexual organs comprise different elements such as lips, vagina, clitoris, cervix, uterus and breasts and so her *jouissance*, means of getting pleasure is multiple (Irigaray 1996: 77). The difference in autoeroticism between man and woman is highlighted by Diana Fuss in “Essentially Speaking: Luce Irigaray’s Language of Essence” (1989: 65):

Woman’s autoeroticism is very different from man’s. In order to touch himself, man needs an instrument: his hand, a woman’s body, language... And this self-caressing requires at least a minimum of activity. As for woman, she touches herself in and of herself without any need for mediation, and before there is any way to distinguish activity from passivity. Woman “touches herself” all the time, and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. Thus, within herself, she is already two- but not divisible into one(s)- that caress each other.

In view of this quotation, Irigaray brings into focus the female pleasure which is rooted in the body's genitalia. Therefore, the woman's privilege is not given to the visual but to the touch. In *Sexual Textual Politics. Feminist Literary Theory*, Moi (1985: 144) states:

The prevalence of the gaze, discrimination of form, and individualization of form is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman finds pleasure more in touch than in sight and her entrance into a dominant scopic economy signifies, once again, her relegation to passivity: she will be the beautiful object ... Woman's sexual organs are simply absent from this scene: they are masked and her 'slit' is sewn up.

Femininity which is plural and multiple has close ties with the woman's language which Irigaray calls "*le parler femme*" or "womanspeak" (Moi 1985. 143). According to Irigaray, *le parler femme* appears unconsciously when women speak together and disappears once the men are present. Furthermore, Irigaray sees women-only groups as a fundamental step towards liberation, but warns that the group should not see themselves as reversals of the existing order as (Moi 1985: 114) asserts: "If their goal is to reverse the existing order--even if that were possible---history would simply repeat itself and return to phallogocritism, where neither women's sex, their imaginary, nor their language can exist."

In writing about woman and language, Irigaray (1996: 68) enumerates in her book *This Sex Which is Not One* how the woman escapes patriarchal logic to show her femininity. Moi (1985: 145) states: "She is indefinitely other in herself. That is undoubtedly the reason she is called temperamental, incomprehensible, perturbed, capricious—not to mention her language in which 'she' goes off in all directions and in which 'he' is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning." Moi further notes that speaking in this manner, the contradictory words of woman seem a little "crazy to the logic of reason, and inaudible for him who

listens with ready-made grids, a code prepared in advance” (Ibid: 145). Thus, the language of woman requires a different grammar. One must listen to her differently to hear another meaning which is constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time ceaselessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid becoming fixed, immobilized. For when she says something, it is already no longer identical to what she means. In *Sexual Textual Politics. Feminist Literary Theory*, Moi (1985: 146) explains in detail:

It is therefore useless to trap women into giving an exact definition of what they mean, to make them repeat (themselves) so that the meaning will be clear. They are already elsewhere than in the discursive machinery where you claim to take them by surprise. They have turned back within themselves, which does not mean the same thing as ,within yourself’. They do not experience the same interiority that you do and which perhaps you mistakenly presume they share. ‘Within themselves’ means in the privacy of this silent, multiple, diffuse tact. If you ask them insistently what they are thinking about, they can only reply: nothing. Everything.

### **3.4 Application of the Feminist Theories in *Second Class Citizen* and *Das verborgene Wort***

Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray have in various ways analysed the patriarchal modes of thought, in which the Western world has relegated woman to a position of otherness. This sub-categorization of woman to the position of the “other” is found in most cultures in the world. Beauvoir develops some terminologies which are used to differentiate both sexes: one/other, transcendence/immanence, biological gender/social gender. The other is thus presented as a sup-

pressed group. Man is usually the subject and woman is the object. Man is the essential creature, but the woman is a non-essential creature.

Cixous in her writings portrays the various ways a woman is seen as the negative pole of hierarchical oppositions. These patriarchal binary oppositions according to Moi (1985: 104) include Activity/Passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Day/Night, Father/Mother, Head/Emotions, Logos/Pathos. The feminine side is always marked with a negative. Cixous tries to undo this ideology, by affirming the woman as the source of life and enjoins women to promote the feminine language, which will suppress these patriarchal binary thoughts through which women have been silenced and oppressed. Cixous sees in her feminine writing a tool for destroying patriarchal language and through language, the social and cultural suppression of women. Women are therefore encouraged to write about their bodies to discover themselves. Cixous (1976: 876) exhorts women: "Write! Writing is for you, you are for you, your body is yours, take it." According to Thomas (1994: 53), a woman coming to writing means "A woman discovering reading, arriving at authorship, experiencing the *jouissance* of these activities". Women ought to write about themselves to change the masculine discourse which has for long defined the way women think, read, and write.

In Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other*, subjectivity is based on a dichotomy between subject and object, in which the woman is looked upon as an object and the man as a subject. The castration complex makes woman not just the other but man's other, his negative image. "She is absence, negativity, the dark continent or at best a lesser man" (Moi 1985: 133).

For the interpretation and analysis of this dissertation, Beauvoir's *Second Sex* and Cixous's work on *feminine writing* (*écriture féminine*) are used. The views of Irigaray on women's subjectivity are matched with Beauvoir's notion to avoid repetition.

### **3.4.1 Application of the Feminist Theories in *Second Class Citizen***

The use of French feminist theory, for example Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, to analyse an African novel *Second Class Citizen* poses some questions: How relevant is it to a Nigerian novel considering the differences in culture and the time of its publication? Did the author Emecheta read *The Second Sex* and from there write her own novel?

The introduction of the book, *The Second Sex*, begins with the words: "The author discusses the treatment of women throughout history". It is not restricted to European women only.

Having published the book in 1949, Beauvoir studied the position of women across cultures and continents. In 1949, Nigeria was still a British colony and Nigerian women were given the same treatment meted out to British women, who also were Europeans. Emecheta, the author of *Second Class Citizen*, whose work was published in London 1974, came to London in 1960. Before she migrated to London, she was aware of the position of women in Nigeria. She equally witnessed the revolution in the United Kingdom and other European nations in the 1970s: women clamoured for equal pay, equal education and opportunity, free contraception, and abortion on demand. As a feminist, Emecheta read the works of Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and other feminists who were clamouring for the independence of women. I cannot prove that her work *Second Class Citizen* is based on the book *The Second Sex*. Her work is based on her own experience as a girl, in her own society, where she learns that a boy is worth more in society than a girl, thereby making the girl child the second sex. She learns the insignificance of women, and that the pride and identity of the woman is her husband. Consequently, in London, being black in the 1960s made her a second-class citizen and being a woman, reduced her to nothingness before her husband. She was reduced to being a wife and a mother whose primary duty was to please and gratify her husband.

Moreover, the plight of women in the 1940s to the 1970s was almost the same across cultures, since many African countries were colonized by European countries, such as Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain. Many of these African countries got their independence in the 1960s. How European men portrayed and treated their women was also imposed on the colonies. The role and position of women in the colonized countries reflect those of their colonialists. Therefore, Beauvoir's feminist theory in *Second Sex* is appropriate for the analysis of Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*.

*Second Class Citizen* projects the girl child, the woman, as the other. The girl child in the Igbo culture of the 1950s was a nobody. The birth of a baby boy was usually received with joy and gun-shots while the birth of a baby girl was seen as "is that all?" The birth of the protagonist Adah is received with much indifference as Emecheta (1974: 7) states: "She was a girl who had arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth." The phrases indicate the importance and preference of boys to girls as Beauvoir, in describing the childhood between boys and girls in *The Second Sex* (1989: 286), rightly states that most parents would prefer a male child to a female one. Consequently, "boys are spoken to with greater seriousness and esteem, they are granted more rights; they themselves treat girls scornfully; they play by themselves, not admitting girls to their group, they offer insults; for one thing, calling girls 'prissy' or the like and thus recalling the little girl's secret humiliation."

The preference of the boy child over the girl child is a phenomenon witnessed in many cultures across the globe. It is also seen in the Igbo culture and that is why Adah is worried about her son, Vicky, who is diagnosed and hospitalized with meningitis. Adah refuses to leave the hospital and go home as demanded by the nurses. She prefers to stay on a wooden chair and dozes off than leaving her son alone in the hospital.

On seeing her, the nurse asks if Vicky is her only child. Her response not only embarrasses the nurse, but shows the concept of a girl child from the culture Adah comes from, as seen in the conversation between Adah and the hospital nurse: “Is Victor your only child?” Adah shook her head, Vicky was not, there was another, but she was only a girl. “Only a girl? What do you mean by ‘only a girl’? She is a person too, you know, just like your son” (Emecheta 1974: 62).

This statement categorically states how boys are preferred in Igbo culture to girls. The security of a woman as “fully married” in Igbo culture is assured only by giving birth to a baby boy. Women, who give birth only to girls, stand the chance of losing their husbands. The men look for women who can give them boys, who will immortalize their names. The women are meant to understand and believe that they are inferior and are thus categorized as the “other”. That also explains the reason Adah’s younger brother Boy, is sent to school and Adah is left behind to stay with her mother. Her mother, who grew up in this culture, believes that there is no need for Adah to go to school. Even if she would go, it would just mean to learn how to count, and then learn a trade, or learn how to sew as a way of supporting her husband. Thus, Emecheta explains that even though the Igbos value education highly and see it as a way of escaping poverty, “boys were usually given preference, though. So even though Adah was about eight, there were still discussions about whether it would be wise to send her to school. Even if she was sent to school, it was very doubtful whether it would be wise to let her stay long” (Emecheta 1974: 9). In the midst of these circumstances, Adah’s younger brother began school before Adah.

Beauvoir furthermore analyses the myths in women’s lives, through which patriarchal societies use social construction to subjugate women and treat them as objects and as inferior beings. It is thereby accepted as a cultural norm, that a woman is under the authority of her husband. She is seen as a sex object and as one made to satisfy the sexual needs of the

man. Man defines a woman not in herself but as relative to him. This is justified in the manner Adah's mother is given to her brother-in-law as his property and sex object after the death of her husband. Her consent is not sought. This is a man she did not like. Her culture does not consider her feelings, she is indeed treated as an object. "Ma was not happy with her new husband and it was considered time that Adah started making a financial contribution to her family. This terrified Adah. For a time, it seemed as if she must give in to save Ma from the humiliating position she found herself" (Ibid: 18).

Women are meant to see themselves as second-class citizens and to have a low opinion of themselves. According to Beauvoir, women with time also came to believe the myths imposed on them by men and have a low opinion of themselves. Women are to take men as their confidants. Men are considered to be the stronger sex while women are the weaker sex. Adah's mother is brought up to believe that girls and women are subservient to men, which makes her have a low opinion of herself, and invariably take recourse to men when real issues come up. Emecheta states this in *Second Class Citizen* (Ibid: 11):

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. She did have one or two women friends with whom she discussed the weather, and fashion. But when in real trouble, she would rather look for a man. Men were so solid, so safe.

Beauvoir also asserts that womanhood is only a social construction and sums it up in *The Second Sex* by saying "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (1989: 267). In marriage, a woman is given to a man who sees her as "his property". The distinction between transcendence and immanence plays its role. The woman is not expected to be active. She takes care of the home and is expected to be passive, interior, static,

and immersed in herself. A woman is to be engaged in her work of reproduction, to the extent that it clashes with her work of producing and contributing to society, while the man becomes active, creative, powerful, and productive.

The notion of marriage and the manner in which a woman is perceived by society is encapsulated in the transformation that women undergo in marriage. Beauvoir (1989: 429) rightly notes that “in marrying, woman gets some share in the world as her own; legal guarantees protect her against capricious action by man; but she becomes his vassal. He is the economic head of the joint enterprise, and hence he represents it in the view of society.” This is true because in working out the marriage, as Beauvoir further opines, woman takes the man’s name, his religion, his class, his circle. She joins his family, becomes his “half”, follows wherever his work calls him, breaks more or less decisively with her past. Attached as such to her husband’s universe, “she gives him her person, virginity and a rigorous fidelity being required, she loses some of the rights, some of the rights legally belonging to the unmarried woman” (Beauvoir 1989: 429)

In some marriages, women suffer abuse from their partners. In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah is a victim of a slavish marriage. She is also a victim of domestic violence. Francis hits her in the smallest argument even when she is pregnant. Francis exploits her sexually whether she is in the mood for it or not, and when she refuses to give in to his sexual needs, she is thoroughly beaten. For Francis, “a woman was a second-class human, to be slept with at any time, even during the day, and, if she refused, to have sense beaten into her until she gave in; to be ordered out of bed after he had done with her; to make sure she washed his clothes and got his meals ready at the right time. There was no need to have an intelligent conversation with his wife because, you see, she might start getting ideas” (Emecheta 1974: 164).

Francis's notion of the woman corresponds with Beauvoir's concept of the woman as a sex object and as the "other". Adah has four children in five years. She is not allowed to use contraceptives and when she goes and gets one without the permission of her husband Francis, she pays for it with a beating. Francis calls their neighbours in London to tell them how Adah intends to turn into a prostitute, and he writes a letter to his parents in Nigeria informing them as well (Ibid: 145). Adah's peculiar circumstances lead to her going home with the wrong size of cap (contraceptive device) from the clinic. She has a sense of guilt. She does not even know how to put in the cap. She has just one room which she shares with Francis and the children and so has no sense of privacy. She fixes the cap as quickly as she can in their washroom. Being naïve and inexperienced, she fixes it badly which affects the way she walks. Later at night, Francis finds out and beats her to a stupor, stopping only at the instance of their neighbours. Francis is convinced that if Adah who came to London less than a year previously, could be smart enough to fit herself with the contraceptive device behind his back, a device he believes is invented for prostitutes and single women, then there is no gainsaying the fact that she would go behind his back to sleep with other men (Ibid: 146). After the disgrace which Francis subjected her to, by calling the tenants and exposing their family issues to them, Adah decides that this event is the last straw, the one that breaks the camel's back in their marriage.

Following the course of the narration in *Second Class Citizen*, it is clear that Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is suitable for the interpretation of the novel. *Second Class Citizen* portrays various ways in which Adah is classified as a second sex. Her birth is not significant because she is a girl. She is denied equal rights with her brother, who is sent to school before her. If she had not staged a drama and run away to school, she would not have attended school. After the death of her father, Adah is withdrawn from school and sent to one of her uncles, who enrolls her in a

poorly equipped primary school with the aim of marrying her off. She wants to fulfil her desire of going to the United Kingdom to study and so works hard in school and earns a scholarship to Methodist Girls Secondary School. When she can no longer afford university education due to lack of funds, she is forced into marriage; she believes she needs a conducive home to be able to read further. Her search of the home she never had makes her marry Francis, who becomes a torture to her. She gets a job as a librarian at the American consulate, where she is well paid. In pursuance of her dream of going to the United Kingdom to be trained, she is forced to send her husband first to London before joining him as prescribed by her in-laws. In London, she realizes that she is married to a fool who does not want to work, but who believes that Adah is meant to work to pay his fees and take care of all his needs. Francis abuses her sexually, physically, and psychologically. She is working to feed her children in London while he is living a life of debauchery. By the age of 21 she has five children. With the physical injuries she gets from Francis, she decides to divorce him in order to actualize her dream of attaining a university education and getting her freedom.

Cixous's *feminine writing* can be applied in *Second Class Citizen*. Cixous encourages women to write their stories because men have been writing on behalf of women for too long. Men have been writing according to their perspectives and have always been the voice. Since it is women who are relegated to the background and considered as the other, it is women who bear the brunt, signifying that women wear the shoe and know where it pinches. Evidently it is women who are victims that understand the plight of their fellow women better and proffer solutions to their problems. When women write about themselves, their problems, their experiences, and their bodies, other women will learn from them. The publication of the *Second Class Citizen* in 1974 encouraged women in Nigeria, who for so long had been dying in silence under the suppres-

sion of men to speak out. The novel was highly recommended to be used in secondary schools.

In exploring the relationship between women and the production of texts, Cixous maintains that the texts produced by women serve as a way of destroying patriarchal language, and through language, the social and cultural suppression of women. Women have been forced into silence and have been denied access to language and writing. Lindsay (1986: 47) thus opines that “Cixous’s 1975 text, *Le Rire de la Méduse*, serves as a manifesto of *écriture féminine*, elaborating the link between the body, sexual difference and language.” According to Cixous, women have historically been silenced and portrayed as a counter to masculine reason and discourse. Women have been denied access to language and writing. They are, according to Cixous, “more fully physical than men; they more fully and furiously inhabit what she calls ‘*ces corps somptueux*’: *plus que l’homme invité aux réussites sociales, à la sublimation, les femmes sont corps*” (Lindsay (1986: 47). Women are therefore encouraged to write about their bodies, so as to discover themselves. Cixous (1976: 876) admonishes women: “Write! Writing is for you, you are for you, your body is yours, take it. I write woman, woman must write woman; and man, man.”

This exhortation brings a sense of confidence to women, who are asked to write about their experiences, to talk about themselves, their problems, and their bodies without inhibition.

Adah, after the birth of her fourth child Dada, decides to stay at home for five months. Since all four children are under the age of five, she cannot bear to leave her kids under the care of another woman. After taking the eldest to school, she takes the remaining three to the park for an hour or two, and then she goes home. Her old dream and desire to write is gradually coming back to her, so she goes and buys materials which could help her realize her dream as narrated succinctly: “Then her old dream came popping up. Why not attempt writing? She had always

wanted to write. Why not? She ran to Foyle's and bought herself a copy of *Teach Yourself to Write* and sat down throughout all those months when she was nursing Dada and wrote the manuscript of a book she was going to call *The Bride Price*" (Emecheta 1974:162).

She buys the book *Teach Yourself to Write*, reads it quickly and starts enjoying her writing: "The more she wrote, the more she knew she could write and the more she enjoyed writing. She was feeling this urge: "write; go on and do it, you can write" (Ibid: 164). Adah puts everything that is lacking in her marriage into her book. "During the time she was writing it, she was oblivious of everything except her children. Writing, to her, was like listening to good sentimental music. It mattered little to her whether it was published or not, all that mattered was that she had written a book" (Emecheta 1974: 164). The urge to write and write more which Adah experiences as she begins writing her manuscript *The Bride Price* corresponds with the notion Moi (1985: 115) has about the writing woman: "The writing woman is thus powerful: hers is a *puissance féminine* derived directly from the mother, whose giving is always suffused with strength: the more you have, the more you give, the more you are, the more you give, the more you have."

Adah takes her manuscript to her colleagues in the library at North Finchley where she is employed. Her colleagues, especially Bill, commend her effort and ask her to publish it. Bill calls the manuscript her brainchild. Adah is so fulfilled in achieving this feat, but is considering in her mind if she could actually be a writer saying of herself: "I felt so fulfilled when I finished it, just as if I had just made another baby," she tells Bill, and he replies: "But that is how writers feel. Their work is their brainchild ... Books tell a great deal about the writers. It is your own particular child" (Emecheta 1974:166).

With this motivating spirit, Adah decides to show her manuscript to her husband as a way of sharing her achievement with him. She wants him to read it. She tells him that her colleagues have praised her work.

Francis snaps at her saying “You keep forgetting that you are a woman and that you are black. The white man can barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breast-feed her baby” (Ibid: 167).

Despite the demotivating words and insults from her husband, Adah decides to move on and continues with her writing. The words of Cixous in her *Laugh of the Medusa* (1976: 880) could be applied to Adah to encourage her: “She must write herself, because this is the invention of a *new insurgent writing* which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history...Our naphtha will spread, throughout the world, without dollars – black or gold – non-assessed values that will change the rules of the old game.”

Adah goes shopping one Saturday morning, comes back, and perceives the smell of a burning paper on their stove. On getting closer, Francis puts the last paper on the stove. He burns the entire manuscript. Adah has dreamt of reading the book eventually to her children when they grow up as well as to her grandchildren. “Then she said to Francis, her voice small and tired:

‘Bill called that story my brainchild. Do you hate me so much that you could kill my child? Because that is what you have done’.

‘I don’t care if it is your child or not. I have read it, and my family would never be happy if a wife of mine was permitted to write a book like that.’

‘And so you burnt it?’

‘Can’t you see that I have?’” (Emecheta 1974:165)

The burning of the manuscript puts a nail in the coffin of their otherwise dead marriage. She can never forgive Francis and can no longer live with him.

Though Francis burnt her manuscript, it did not deter Adah from rewriting the story which was later published in 1976. The burning of the manuscript could be attributed to fear and inferiority complex. Francis burnt her manuscript because he cannot achieve what Adah, whom he calls a brainless female, has achieved. But Adah's ability to bring her experiences to ink and paper has given her a voice, and helps to destabilize the phallogocentric system, as Susan Sniader Lanser (1992: 26) notes in *Fictions of Authority, Women Writers and Narrative Voice*:

In theory, the entry of women into writing seriously threatens prevailing patriarchal hegemonies, just as the emergence of "print culture" challenges other hierarchies of caste and class by providing an oppositional vehicle for (literate) persons without other access to power. Not only does print allow women publicly to challenge the terms of their own domination, but once they are identified as discursive "I's", such women become "individuals", occupying the position of privileged-class men. In the discourse of "Enlightenment", in other words, individual voice paradoxically offers a potential mediating ground for transforming "the sex"-a caste- into a "we," a body politic.

Therefore, women are encouraged to add their voices in writing so as to correct patriarchal myths which have been imposed on women, and which justify the suppression and oppression of women in various cultures across the globe.

### **3.4.2 Application of the Feminist Theories in *Das verborgene Wort***

The novel *Das verborgene Wort*, written by Ulla Hahn tells of the childhood experience of the protagonist Hildegard (Hilla) who wants to learn

and be educated so as to have an identity different from that of her parents. Her quest for learning becomes a source of her torture for her parents who cannot understand why Hilla, being a girl, should be educated. Her brother is encouraged to go to school. That Hildegard is more intelligent than her brother and strives to steep herself in literature and reading earns her a lot of physical abuse and beatings from her father. Though her story ends at the time she is given a scholarship to attend a *Gymnasium*, her escape into quiet and solitude to memorize and read the literary canons are, in this analysis, seen as a bold step in her writing career.

As a child in the nursery school, Hilla is highly motivated by her grandfather, who tells her stories from his head looking at a stone known as the “Buchstein”. The sisters of the Poor Handmaid of Christ teach the children in the parish nursery school. Sr Aniana, however, reads out her own stories from a book.

One day as Hilla and her brother are taking a walk along the Rhein with their grandfather, he tells them a story of the stone which falls down from heaven and scatters all over the world. Whoever finds this bookstone becomes a light that shines in the world. As the story goes:

Es gab einmal, erklärte der Großvater, einen stein, der alles verwandelt. Er leuchtete im Dunkel und im Hellen. Als er aber vom Himmel auf die Erde gefallen sei, vor vielen Millionen Jahren, gleich nachdem Gott Himmel und Erde erschaffen habe, seien tausend und abertausend Steinchen abgesplittert und hätten sich über unsere Welt verstreut. Sie alle enthielten nun winzige Bruchteile dieses Himmelssteins.

Dies seien die Buchsteine, de Boochsteen. Wer diese Splitter finde, sei selbst ein Licht und leuchte in der Welt. Sei gut und schön und ein Mensch, den alle lieben. Schon das kleinste Teilchen des Steins mache die Menschen selber gut und schön (Hahn 2001: 13).

These inspiring words lead Hilla to find joy and contentment in reading, when girls in the 1950s, who come from poor families are not given equal access to higher education. Boys are allowed to go to school, but girls are expected to attend school till eighth class, after which they are expected to work in the factory, or at home or as an apprentice before getting married. Moreover, the source of Hilla's decision to become learned, so as to have a defined identity, can be traced in the school. On the first day in school, after introducing themselves, the child's father's occupation is also noted. This becomes a determinant of how the child is handled and if the child is considered intelligent enough to go to a higher class, as Hahn (Ibid: 54) narrates:

Unsere Namen mußten wir ihm sagen, wo wir wohnten und was unsere Väter taten. Dä jeht op Arbeed bei Krötz und Ko, sagte ich. Ungelernter Arbeiter murmelte Mohren. Ungelernt? Wieso ungelernt? Der Vater konnte Bäumen ppropfen und Schuhe besohlen, Fahrräder flicken und Schuppen bauen, die Nachbarn holten sich Rat bei ihm, wenn die Rosen Rost hatten oder Mehltau, und die Verwandtschaft bewunderte sein Gedächtnis. Der Vater war ein Arbeiter. Aber ungelernt? Der Lehrer hatte es in ein dickes Heft geschrieben, Klassenbuch nannte er das, neben Namen und Adresse, also mußte es stimmen. Der Vater war ungelernt. Ich würde lernen.

The status of the father is usually used to judge and determine the status of the child. Worse still if it is a girl. Since Hilla's father is considered a labourer, it already places her as an inferior being. She is considered a second-class citizen. Other classmates of hers, whose fathers are either medical doctors or teachers, are already considered those who will continue with further education.

In the school, on the assembly ground, girls and boys are usually separated. Boys march to the classes first, then the girls follow, an action which signifies that boys are more important than girls. Men are subjects

and women are objects. Boys are given more preferences than girls. *“Auf dem Schulhof mußten wir Zweierreihen bilden wie in Kindergarten, Jungen und Mädchen getrennt, und dann die breite Treppe hochmarschieren, Jungen zuerst, der Lehrer vorneweg”* (Hahn 2001: 53).

This act of boys taking the lead and marching inside first rhymes with the Beauvoir’s

notion that men are usually considered more important than women. In the same manner, boys rank before girls. Therefore, boys take the lead while girls follow behind. Another incidence that shows boys’ superiority over girls is portrayed when the teacher asks who will go to a higher school at the end of the academic session. Boys are again asked to stand first, followed by girls. The status of the parents is also taken into consideration, as Hahn (2001: 132) explains:

Lehrer Mohren sah auf die Uhr. Der Vormittag ging zu Ende. Bald würde es klingeln. Draußen auf der Straße lärmten die I-Dötzchen, die Erstkläßer. Und nun, sagte Mohren, stehen alle auf, die nach dem Zeugnis in sechs Wochen auf eine höhere Schule gehen. Die Jungen zuerst.

Kurt Küppers stand als erster auf, dann Rainer Ebersold, Werner Kracht, andere folgten. An der Art und Weise, wie sie aus den Bänken traten, war abzulesen, welchen Platz das Elternhaus ihnen fraglos reservierte. Zuletzt erhob sich in der letzten Bank, polternd und aus tiefem Magen rülpsend, Jo Kackaller. Er war ein älterer Bruder Kattis, die die dritte Klasse hatte wiederholen müssen. Da es so viele Kackallersprößlinge gab, saß in jeder der acht Volksschulklassen mindestens ein Vertreter dieser fruchtbaren Sippe, immer um einiges älter als der Klassendurchschnitt.

After the boys stand up, the girls are then asked to stand up. Such action triggers some questions. Why is it that boys stand up first? Why is the status of their mothers not considered and mentioned? This shows that women are insignificant. They have no identity. The world belongs to men and as the English saying goes say, it's a man's world! Boys always come first. Even when girls to be considered for the next level of education are mentioned, the social status of their fathers plays an important role as is further described:

Und jetzt die Mädchen, sagte Mohren. Sigrid Gerschermann stand auf und Christiane Huppert, eine blutarme Rothaarige mit Augen, die so schläfrig blickten, als wollten sie sich in der nächsten Sekunde für immer schließen. Sie war, wohl aufgrund dieser Schläfrigkeit, ein außerordentlich braves Kind, hatte aber im letzten Jahr nur mit knapper Not die Versetzung geschafft. Christiane, du? Entfuhr es Mohren, als sich ihr dicklicher Körper träge aus der Bank wand. Natürlich. Der Lehrer schlug sich an die Stirn. Christiane war die Tochter eines Kollegen. Lieselotte Lanzen stand auf, die Nichte des Rübenkrautfabrikanten. Lieselottes Hausaufgaben waren vorzüglich, die Klassenarbeiten schlecht. Mechthild Kluck, das vierte Mädchen, war tüchtig. Ihr gönnte ich, dass sie stand. Es klingelte. Einpacken. Ein paar Minuten noch, Kinder, sagte Mohren. Hildegard, steh auf.

Neben mir saß Hannelore Pihl. Rechnen konnte sie besser als ich. Sie war die zweitbeste Schülerin unserer Klasse. Ihr Vater ungelernter Arbeiter wie der meine. An eine höhere Schule dachte bei ihr wie bei mir zu Hause keiner. Ich setzte mich nicht, wartete, dass Mohren Hannelore aufforderte, gleichfalls aufzustehen. Er tat es nicht. Hannelore sah zu mir hoch. Ich konnte ihren Blick, der sich in einem Tumult aus Neid, Sehnsucht und Trauer von mir verabschiedete, kaum ertragen.

Hannelore stand nicht auf. Sie wurde Verkäuferin und heiratete einen Mann, der keine Kinder haben wollte (Hahn 2001: 132).

This heart-touching story shows that the girls who are nominated to continue their education come from well-to-do families. Hilla is called when she least expected it, knowing the social status of her parents. She is nominated because she is the best in the class and the community has a scholarship package for the best in class. A girl like Hannelore may be better than boys, but since her social status is poor, and her family cannot afford her fees, she has no other option other than to get married. It shows the insignificance of the woman as Beauvoir (1989: 141) reiterates that “woman thus seems to be the inessential who never goes back to being the essential, to be the absolute other, without reciprocity”.

As Hilla learns from the teacher that there are various ways of learning, especially the modern method through the alphabet and not the “Buchstein”, she determines to learn the new words to improve herself. Having learnt the alphabet in school, she comes home to practice the new words. On one occasion, Hildegard and her brother pay a visit to Frau Unkelbach, who has a lot of books. After she reads one of Grimm’s fairy tale, which earns her a compliment from the woman, she notices a Latin book, which she nicknames God’s language. She takes the book to read and goes as usual at the back yard to practice. Her mother opens the door, sees her with the book and snatches the book and slaps her on her head as Hahn (2001: 78) narrates:

Kaum öffnete ich leise, leise das Gartentor, riß die Mutter die Haustür auf. In der Hand den Schott. Die Vorderseite des Einbands an der äußersten Ecke mit spitzen Fingern wie irgend etwas Vergiftetes, Dreckiges, Ekliges haltend, schwenkte sie den Buchkörper hin und her, dass die Seiten im Luftzug knatterten und aus dem Leim zu gehen drohten.

Mama, schrie ich, so darfs de doch keen Booch anpacke. Ich stürzte mich auf die Mutter, die das Buch hoch über ihren Kopf hielt, mich im Genick packte und uns beide schüttelte, das Buch und mich, wie von Sinnen. Wat fällt dir een? Düvelsbrode. Wees de, wat de bis? Du bis ene Verbrescher. So jet wie desch jehürt henger Schloß un Riejel. Du jehürst en de Verwahrnastalt. Do kanns de ens lure, wat die mit dir mache. Do kanns de em Düstere setze bei Wasser un Bruut. Un jede Owend je top die nackte Fott. Waat, bes dä Papp no Huus kütt. Mama, heulte ich, dat Booch, du mähs dat Booch jo ganz kapott.

Esch, schrie die Mutter, esch mach dat Booch kapoot? Do häs de ding Booch. Sie schlug mir das Buch ein paarmal um die Ohren und auf den Kopf.

Worthy of note is the phrase *Waat, bes dä Papp no Huus kütt* (Wait till your father comes home). This particular sentence being used by the mother shows the low opinion she has of herself. The mother always waits for the father who, on his return, is told what the child did and he canes her with his belt without asking the child anything. What prevents the mother from admonishing the child if she does something wrong? It shows a sign of weakness and dependence, which Beauvoir bemoans. The woman cannot make a decision. She must wait for the man to come back and take the necessary action. She makes herself contemptible and a weakling in the eyes of the people. She has no will power of her own. In *Einführung in die feministische Literaturtheorie*, Lindhoff (2003: 4) rightly describes woman:

Die Frauen haben keine eigene Deutung der Welt hervorbringen können; sie haben keinen Mythos geschaffen, (...); sie haben keine Religion und keine Poesie, die Ihnen eigen ist; selbst wenn sie träumen, tun sie es durch die Träume der Männer.

This sentence depicts someone who is incapacitated and cannot take any decision except that taken by a man.

In her quest to better herself so as to carve an identity for herself, Hilla starts to learn the Standard-German (*Hochdeutsch*), which is different from the *Kölsch* that is spoken at home. Since practice makes perfect, she decides to apply the Standard-German in whatever she does in order to master the language. Her father rebuffs this and asks her if she thinks she is better than them and attain a different identity? Hahn (2001: 183) states:

In der Küche saßen sie um den Tisch wie zu Gericht. Der Bruder kaute schon verstohlen an seinem Butterbrot. Lommer bäde, sagte die Großmutter und bekreuzigte sich. Kumm, Herr Jesus, sei unser Jast un seschne wat de uns bescheret has. Ich betete mit. In meinem reinen Hochdeutsch war Jesus unser Gast und segne, was du uns bescheret hast. Amen.

Der Vater sah mich an. Wat sull dat? Das ist richtig; sagte ich.

Ach, nä, äffte er. Dat es reschtesch, un wie mer kale, date s nit reschtesch.

Nein, sagte ich. Dat heesch: Nä! Die Stimme des Vaters begann zu zittern, Nä heesch dat! Nä! Nä! Nä!

Der Bruder lachte und machte Mäh, mäh, mäh.

Ruhe, brüllte der Vater, wat jidd et do ze lache! Nä heesch dat, han esch jesäät! Nein, sagte ich.

Josääf, sagte die Mutter: Nu äß doch jet. Du häs doch Honger. He häs de dat Bruut un de Woosch.

Der Vater griff zu. Wat denks de ejentlich, wer de bes! Denks de, dat de jet Besseres bes? Denk jo nit, dat de jet Besseres bes. Janix bes de, janix.

Erschrocken griff ich mit der linken nach der rechten Hand. Ja, ich war noch da. So mich mit mir umklammernd, mich in meinem Körper erdend, hob ich ab. Was denkst du, wer du bist, was denkst du, wo du bist? Denkst du, dass du was Besseres bist!

The name “Hildegard” which is pronounced differently represents two different categories of people: Hildegard for learned people who speak the Standard German Language (*Hochdeutsch*), and Heldejaad for those who speak *Kölsch* or dialect. Hildegard, who in her wisdom, strives for a balance between the two categories of people and changes her name to Hilla, wants to speak an advanced language to show her enthusiasm about education. This urge to better herself incurs the wrath of her father who could not imagine why a mere girl wants to be educated. According to Beauvoir (1989: 298) “The young girl will be wife, mother, grandmother; she will keep house just as her mother, she will give birth to children. “According to Hilla’s father, she will be nothing more than what other girls are, namely a housewife and mother. It is this attitude of male dominance perpetrated by either father or husband that makes Josäff, Hilla’s father, compel her to work in a paper factory as an apprentice before getting married. Because of the unfair treatment meted out to Hilla by Mrs Wachtel, and the frustration that she can no longer attain her goal of getting an education, Hilla takes to drinking and is saved by her teacher, who goes to the priest and pleads that the church undertakes to pay her fees. The priest and the teacher visit her father to convince him of the need for Hilla to continue her education, in which the church will sponsor her.

Cixous’s exhortation to women to write not only of their experiences but also about their bodies and feelings is suitable for the interpretation of this novel. Hilla’s attempt to develop her writing potential, which eventually makes her the best student in the class is reached as she finds her peace in reading quietly and learning the canons. She is so interested

in literature that she reads the literary works of Schiller, Goethe, Mörike, Eichendorff, and Lessing, especially his Ringparabel, *Nathan der Weise*. She learns most of this off by heart and is able to recite it and apply it sometimes in admonishing people. She builds an altar and dedicates it to Schiller. In her fantasy, she makes Schiller a living being and communicates with him as she would to a normal living being:

Wieder kaufte ich ein Schreibheft: Briefe an Schiller. Friedrich, schrieb ich, und sah ihn vor mir, einen mittelgroßen, schlanken Mann mit träumerischen Augen und feingezeichneten Brauen; in seine Nase war ich verliebt und sein Haar, das für mich, auch als ich wußte, dass es rot war, in weichen, dunklen Herzjesulocken auf die Schultern fiel.

Friedrich, schrieb ich, ich bin allein. Wie Du. Ich bin gerne allein, weil ich dann an dich denken kann. Du weilst in der Ferne und blickst nach den Sternen. Ich sehe dieselben Sterne wie Du, und manchmal singe ich: Guter Mond, du gehst so stille. Dann denke ich nur an Dich, Friedrich. Ich habe dir einen Altar gebaut- hier folgte eine ausführliche Beschreibung. Du bist so schön. Bis Morgen. Deine Hildegard Palm. (Hahn 2001: 236)

Hilla becomes accustomed to reading so that when she comes home from school, she escapes to the backyard of the house to practice her literature. It rains on one such occasion, so she decides to practice in their living room. Her father sees her, takes out his belt, flogs her, and tears her book:

Um hinterm Hühnerstall zu sitzen, war es zu verregnet, ich hatte es mir im Wohnzimmer bequem gemacht, las mit erhobener Stimme aus Schillers „Räubern“, als die Tür aufging. Der Vater. Viel zu früh. Zu spät, mich aus dem Staube zu machen. Der Vater sah grau und trocken aus, brüchig,

versteinert. Nur weg hier. Ich rutschte vom Sofa, wollte mich an ihm vorbeidrücken, als er den Gürtel schon aus der Hose gezogen hatte und auf meine Hand mit dem Reclamheftchen pfeifen ließ. Häs de nix Besseres ze dun, als hie op dä fuule Huck ze lige, schrie er. Das Heftchen fiel mir aus der Hand, heulend drückte ich die gezeichnete Rechte mit der Linken an die Wange, duckte mich untern Tisch. Sah die Hand des Vaters das Heft ergreifen, hörte, wie er es einmal, zweimal zerriß, sah die verschmierten, mit Gunmi aus Autoreifen besohlenen Schuhe, die Tür knallte hinter ihnen zu (Hahn 2001: 237).

Although Hilla's book is destroyed by her father, it does not demoralize her or deter her from further reading and writing. The discouraging words of the father asking her if she has nothing better to do than to read, clearly indicate that reading according to her father is a waste of time. Instead of being discouraged by these words, she is rather encouraged by her fighting spirit and her resilience to succeed. The words of Cixous in her *Laugh of the Medusa* (1976: 877) could be properly applied to Hilla: "Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you: not man; not the imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are the crafty, obsequious relayers of imperatives handed down by an economy that works against us and off our backs; and not yourself."

She sees the importance of reflection and meditation. She admits that her peace and freedom could only be achieved through her thoughts, which means through her writing and nobody can penetrate her thoughts. So, her freedom rests on her intellectual ability, which nobody can take away from her, as further expressed:

Der Geist ist frei. In meinem Kopf kann mir niemand dreinreden. In meinem Kopf hatte ich alles. Denken war Wegdenken, Schön-denken, Anders-denken. Denken war Flucht in den Kopf, in die Freiheit. Freiheit war im Kopf. Und nur dort. Alles, was ich mir vorstelle, war so viel herrlicher als das, was

ich in Wirklichkeit kannte. Und es gehörte mir, mir allein. Keiner konnte es mir wegnehmen. Keiner konnte mir befehlen, dreinreden, dumm kommen. Das Reich der Freiheit (Hahn 2001: 238).

Hilla's recognition of the importance of mental freedom, which no one can take away from her is based on her continuous struggle to read, fantasize, and interpret. She understands the importance of education, with its resultant effect of higher self-identity, independence and self-confidence. The quest to read, memorize, and write despite the violence from her father and mother who should have been happy with her progress in life, but rather than encourage her, they label her "Düvelsbrode" and "Teufelsbraten" is based on the fact that Hilla wants to change her identity:

Hildegard will kein "kenk von em prolete" (Proletenkind) mehr sein, sucht die Einsamkeit, um sich in ihre Bücher zu vertiefen und legt sich selbst ein Buch mit „schönen Worten“ an gespickt mit Zitaten von Schiller, Goethe, Kleist oder Fontane. Die Literatur als Weg zur Selbstfindung, zum Aufbruch in eine andere Welt (Hahn 2001: 240).

Hilla knows that perseverance will win the battle for her. Determination is the key to success. Hilla is intent in ridding herself of the poverty that surrounds her family. Since education will lead her to a world of independence, she is ready to bear all taunts from her father to achieve her goal in life. The admonition of Cixous in her *Laugh of the Medusa* (1976: 875) could be applied to Hilla: "I write this as a woman, toward women. When I say, 'woman', I'm speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history."

To be a writer, the person must read a lot to gather knowledge. Hilla enjoys reading and exclaims: "Für die Lesen mehr ist als ein

*Vergnügen, mehr als ein Laster, einfach das Leben*” (Hahn 2001: 485). After her years in school, Hilla emerges the best in class and so is asked to write the farewell speech. She is not allowed to go to the Gymnasium as there is no money to further her education. Instead, she has to work in “*der Pappenfabrik*” as an apprentice under Mrs Wachtel, who works under Dr Luchs. She is abusive to her and taunts her about her obsessiveness with reading:

Da sind Briefe. Sie knallte eine Mappe auf den Tisch. Da sind Aktenordenr. Sie packte mich im Nacken und drehte meinen Kopf nach hinten. Und darauf steht das Alphabet. Das Alphabet kennst du doch? Hahaha. Sollst ja so ein Bücherwurm sein, haha. Leseratte. Ha Papier gibt es hier genug. Und jetzt siehst du dir an, wer die Briefe geschrieben hat, und heftiest sie da ab, wo die anderen Briefe von dem auch schon sind, Ablage nennt man das. Verstanden (Hahn 2001: 504).

It is to the likes of Mrs Wachtel, who abuse and torment their fellow women, that the words of Cixous (1976: 878) are addressed: “Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves, to be the executants of their virile needs. They have made for women an antinarcissism!” Beauvoir (1989: 297), in stating what girls pass through as they do apprenticeships, exclaims: “The sphere to which she belongs is everywhere enclosed, limited, dominated, by the male universe: high as she may raise herself, far as she may venture, there will always be a ceiling over her head, walls that will block her way. The gods of man are in a sky so distant that in truth, for him, there are no gods: the little girl lives among gods in human guise.”

Beauvoir’s *Second Sex* and Cixous’s work on *feminine writings* are very useful. They show how women are regarded as the “other”, treated as second-class citizens, and relegated to the background. *The Second*

*Sex* shows various ways in which patriarchal myths against women are justified, and how women over time have accepted men's definition of them. It gives an insight into how women are treated based on their gender, where Beauvoir makes a distinction between sex and gender. Gender is only a social construction and does not deter a woman from achieving her goals and reaching her potential. She concludes by saying that "One is not born a woman but rather becomes one" (1989: 267).

Cixous (1976:877) has called on women to be their own voice, to write their experiences and their stories which will not only serve as a source of encouragement to other women but will also help to clear what men have written about them for ages. She exhorts them to return from where they have been dispersed by men saying, "Now women return from afar. Here they are returning, arriving over and again, because the unconscious is impregnable. They have wandered around in circles, confined to the narrow room in which they've been given a deadly brainwashing."

The brainwashing consists of the fact that women are manipulated to believe the patriarchal myths imposed on them by society. Women are encouraged to tell their stories by themselves which will not only create a difference but could be a source of help to other women still bound by the yoke of slavery to seek out their freedom and independence.

Having seen various ways in which the feminist theories have been applied to the novels, and why the theories are suitable to the stories recounted in the novels, the next chapter discusses the biography of Buchi Emecheta, the driving force behind her writing, and the interpretation of her novel.

## CHAPTER 4.

### *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN (1974)* **BY BUCHI EMECHETA**

#### **4.1 Brief Biography of Buchi Emecheta (1944–2017)**

Buchi Emecheta, a Nigerian author and sociologist, was born on 21 July 1944 in Lagos Nigeria. Her parents, Jeremy and Alice, hailed from Ibusa, in the Delta State of Nigeria. Her father was a railway engineer, while her mother was a housewife. His father was conscripted to fight in Burma in 1944 for the British empire. He was wounded at war and was not properly taken care of. In the colonial times of the 1940s, it was believed that boys should go to school while girls stayed at home. The young Emecheta was initially kept at home, while her younger brother was sent to school. After several pleas to her father, she was enrolled in school. Determined to make a difference in her life and more so, seeing how her father who worked with the railway company pronounced the words “United Kingdom” in hushed tones, “as if he were speaking of God's Holies of Holies” (Emecheta 1974: 2), and seeing how the first lawyer from Ibusa, who went to the United Kingdom was received after his studies, she swore she would go to the United Kingdom when she grew up. This aspiration made Emecheta read hard. She lost her father at the age of nine; the wound he got during the war led to his death. However, due to her intelligence and resilience, she was awarded a scholarship to the Methodist Girls Secondary School that saw her through sec-

ondary school. Her mother died when Emecheta started secondary school and so she became an orphan. After her secondary education, Emecheta worked as a librarian at the American embassy in Nigeria.

She was married at the age of 16 to Sylvester Onwordi, to whom she was betrothed at the age of 11 and immigrated with her husband to London in 1962. Life was difficult in London. Not only was there racism, which made it difficult to find accommodation, her husband also became her greatest obstacle. She got a job and worked as a librarian, thus becoming the breadwinner in her family. She gave birth to five children in six years. Her husband became physically abusive and cheated on her. To retain her sanity, Emecheta started writing. Her husband, being a typical Nigerian man, did not want her to be a writer. He was jealous of her writing ability and burnt her first manuscript. Having suffered physical bruises inflicted on her by her husband, Emecheta separated from her husband at the age of 22 and struggled alone to support and educate her children. Life became better for her after her separation from her husband in 1966. She lived in slum accommodation and struggled hard to raise her five children. She had the freedom to enrol in a university to realize her aspiration as a writer. She was later admitted into the University of London to read sociology. She worked as a community worker in Camden, North London, between 1976 and 1978. Most of her fiction is based on her own experiences as both a single parent and a black woman living in Britain. Her novel *Second Class Citizen* is autobiographical, depicting her struggles against sexual discrimination in Nigeria and racism, classism, and sexism as an immigrant in Britain. In one of her numerous interviews, Emecheta exclaims: "People find it hard to believe that she has not exaggerated the truth in this autobiographical novel. The grimness of what is described does indeed make it painful to read" (Bazin 1986: 35).

Emecheta's novels deal largely with the difficult role of women in both immigrant and African societies. The problems she encountered

in London during the early 1960s provided the background for the books that are called her immigrant novels. Her first two books, *In the Ditch* (1972) and *Second Class Citizen* (1974) introduces Emecheta's three main themes: the quest for equal treatment, self-confidence, and dignity as a woman. Her other works include *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Destination Biafra* (1982), *Double Yoke* (1982), *The Rape of Shavi* (1983), *Head above Water* (1986) and several works of children's and juvenile fiction. Emecheta has written more than 20 books centred on child slavery, motherhood, female independence, and freedom through education. The majority of her works discuss intensively the treatment, which is meted out to women in society, a treatment Emecheta aptly captures in the title of novel *Second Class Citizen* (1974). Unlike boys, girls' education was not meant to make them successful. Their primary roles were to satisfy their husbands sexually and make them happy, as well as being good wives, mothers, and daughter-in-law. Emecheta describes her stories as "Stories of the world.....where.....women face the universal problems of poverty and oppression, and the longer they stay, no matter where they have come from originally, the more the problems become identical" (Haraway 1990: 107). She also described her works as "her children", which she brings forth to the world and the child grows (Ibid: 107). The oral contents of her message include courage in hardship and the joy of being a mother as seen in her novel, *The Joys of Motherhood*. Emecheta's work cuts across generations. *In the Ditch* and *Second Class Citizen* were written in 1972 and 1974, respectively, and present the problem of immigration in the United Kingdom. In 2017, the same immigration problem has emerged again in Britain. "Emecheta published a series of novels that are simultaneously pedagogical, popular, historical, political, autobiographical, romantic, and contentious" (Haraway 1990: 120).

Emecheta was a very determined person, self-motivated and disciplined. She did not believe in failure. According to her son Sylvester Onwordi (Oral interview 18 May 2017 in North London):

As a growing young girl, Buchi believed that she was born to be a writer. In primary school, she told her teacher that she would be a writer and the teacher smacked her for having such a high ambition, being presumptuous. She was strongly driven, self-motivated and believed in hard work. She believed in herself as a writer and believed that if you want to achieve anything, you can achieve it through hard work. Her sense of getting things done made it difficult for her to accept people who were not hardworking. She considered them as being “unserious”.

Emecheta bagged a PhD in Social Education in 1991. Earlier on, from 1972 to 1982, she served as a visiting lecturer and professor at various universities in Nigeria, England, and the USA. She has been described as “the first successful black woman novelist living in Britain after 1948” (Dawson 2007: 117). Her works had a great impact in London, especially in the 1970s. She was writing about second-class citizens in London, racism, the welfare state, discrimination, and the difficulty of raising her kids alone. Many white women read her books and were inspired. She showed that as a single mother, one can achieve one’s aim and desires. Her messages went beyond the black community. Most of her readers were white and she became well known as a black writer. She came in contact with other feminist writers and was considered to be a feminist by other intellectuals. Emecheta considered herself as a womanist and not a feminist. Dennis Abrams (Publishing Perspectives: January 30) in his report *Comments on the work of the late Nigerian Novelist* stated: “The New BBC report on the author of *The Joys of Motherhood*, *Second Class Citizen* and *The Bride Price* noted that Emecheta was a champion of women’s and girls’ right in her work, but

declined to characterize herself as a feminist. She's quoted as saying: I work toward the liberation of women but I'm not a feminist. I'm just a woman." Her take on feminism was quite different from that of white feminists. She was looking at feminism from a black woman's point of view. She was influential for many black women especially in Nigeria, London, the USA, and other countries. Emecheta established contact with other Nigerian literary giants like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Flora Nwapa.

In 2005, she was honoured with an Order of the British Empire and was also a member of the advisory council to the British Home Secretary on race and equality. Emecheta passed on her values of education and hard work to her children and other African and Asian women. Two of her children became journalists, taking from her, her gift for writing. Emecheta lost two of her daughters which had a negative impact on her life.

Buchi Emecheta suffered strokes in 2003, 2004, and 2010, and later developed high blood pressure. She died in London on 25 January 2017 at the age of 72.

## **4.2 Emecheta's motivation**

Emecheta, who is famous for her art of storytelling, anchors her writing in women. Her novels reflect various ways and means in which the rights of women and girls are infringed in a traditional, patriarchal society. The novels also reveal various levels of women's subjugation in African society. Any woman who wants to break away from such suppression, which is associated with the patriarchal society, finds herself in a dilemma. In such a situation, the woman is torn in between two worlds. The choices are so defined, that either the woman decides to break off the yoke of slavery and intimidation as seen in her novel *Double Yoke* or endures the intimidation and allows herself to be treated as a second-class citizen. Emecheta's themes that centre on women include

the quest for equal treatment, self-confidence, and dignity as a woman; motherhood; violence against women; slavery; female independence; and freedom through education.

Women encounter a lot of pressure in their quest to move out of the traditional world and enter careers and make choices for their own life, as Marilyn Richardson states in *A Daughter of Nigeria* (1985: 6):

She must either have her degree and be a bad, feminist, shameless, career woman who would have to fight men all her life; or do without her degree, and be a good loving wife and Christian woman to (her fiancé) and meanwhile reduce herself and her family to beggars at his table.

Emecheta wanted to make it on her own. She believed in herself and in hard work. She had been dreaming of becoming a successful writer. *Second Class Citizen* begins with the words: “It had all begun like a dream” (Emecheta 1974: 7). Dreams play a significant role in Africa and are much taken into consideration as compared to European perspectives, “where dreams are basically aberrant fragments of experience which may elucidate problems previously encountered in waking life” (Philips 1999: 90). Elaborating how dreams are treasured in African society, Maggi Philips states that “dream activity is beyond Freud and Jung, as the anthropologist Barbara Tedlock warns... we must remember that some cultures are much more interested in and sophisticated about alternative or altered states of consciousness ... Western analysis of altered states would seem primitive to peoples who have been living with and actively developing these types of consciousness for centuries (Philips 1999: 90).

So, for many African writers like Emecheta, dream activity becomes a “valuable storehouse of experience with which to explore narratives and question the nature of knowing across the breadth and depth of the unending human story” (Philips 1999: 92).

Emecheta believed in her dreams and since she desired to study in the United Kingdom, she followed her dream till she came to London. In narrating the circumstances surrounding her birth, as stated in *Second Class Citizen* (Emecheta 1974: 7), she recounts that she was not sure what gave birth to her dream, but she was surely a peculiar child. Being born a girl when everyone preferred to have a boy as a firstborn in a patriarchal culture, her birth was a disappointment and probably for that reason, no one cared to properly record her birth. What is however evident, is that she was born during WWII.

The protagonist Adah, who is used in her autobiographical novel, knows at that tender age of 8 that she is an unwanted child because she is a girl. Her parents would have been happier if she had been a boy. In Igbo culture, it is considered a thing of joy in the family when a boy becomes the firstborn, thereby opening the fruit of the womb. Her parents' expectation is dashed as reported by Cynthia Ward in *What they told Buchi Emecheta: Oral Subjectivity and the Joys of Otherhood* (1990: 90). For her parents, having undertaken a white wedding with much pomp and pageantry, a male child would have been a befitting expectation in their culture. Despite the disappointment, "the child was deemed worthy of saving because her father saw in the child's determination to live the fighting spirit of his mother" (Ibid: 90).

Though her birth did not bring as much joy as the birth of her younger brother, which Adah noticed at the age of eight, and from the discussions, she gathered from her parents. There and then, she determines to make a difference in her life. She wants to have an identity. She wants to succeed and more so "to fight the inferior status imposed on her during her childhood in Lagos" (Ballard 1975: 15). Having learnt of the circumstances surrounding her birth and the meaning of the names given to her, "Her mother who had attended a missionary school, named her Florence after the Lady with the Lamp. Her father named her *Onyebuchi* "Are you my God" and called her *Nnem*, "my mother".

Others called her *Nnenna*, “father’s mother”, because she was considered his “come back” mother (Ward 1990: 89). Emecheta realized that she was meant to be a light, shining for herself and others and was destined to succeed. She wrote succinctly about this in her novel *Head above Water* in the chapter “What They Told Me” (Emecheta 1986: 20).

As was the custom in the 1950s in Nigeria, boys attended school while girls were meant to stay at home and learn from their mothers. Adah wants to go to school as well since her younger brother is already enrolled. Her pleas are not listened to, as her mother has already concluded that even if she is to go, it will be for a shorter period just to learn how to count, “A year or two would do, as long as she can write her name and count. Then she will learn how to sew, Adah had heard her mother say this many times to her friends” (Emecheta 1974: 9). Consequently, she decides to make some drama by running away to school. The act of sneaking away from the house to run to school shows her quest for equal treatment with her brother, who is already enrolled. One wonders at the level of determination and confidence exhibited by a child of such an age. She does not think about who will see her as she runs to school. All that is in her mind is to accomplish her mission. She comes in, looks out for Mr Cole’s class who is a good neighbour of theirs and teaches in the school. Because of her shabby dress, the other pupils burst out giggling and laughing. Mr Cole looks back, sees her, and allows her to have a seat. She boldly tells him “I have come to school – my parents would not send me” (Ibid: 10). Adah’s determination as a young child to get an education was so strong that she was willing to take repeated canings and beatings, throughout her life she was also willing to use any necessary means to obtain what she wants” (Davis 1990: 17).

Following her strength of character and her determination to learn, Adah withstands all obstacles that bar her from going to school. Such strength of character will also see her through later years in London,

where she is discriminated against as a black woman, “doubly oppressed by the social implications of her sex and the colour of her skin” (Ballard 1975:17). It will help her deal with her abusive husband who cannot tolerate the idea of her becoming a writer.

One major source of Emecheta’s motivation is her father’s insistence on her having as good as her brother, since she has shown great interest in going to school. Her determination earns her the gift of attending the best school Ladi-lak, as seen in *Second Class Citizen*. “Pa would not hear of her going to the Methodist primary; she was to go to the posh one, Ladi-lak” (Emecheta 1974: 14), indicating that if she wanted to go to school, she had to be among the best. Being in the best school would boost her self-confidence among her peers. This start leads to her success in life and in getting a job at the American consulate. The acquired experience will help her get a job as a librarian in London. In “Mother and Writer: Means of Empowerment in the Work of Buchi Emecheta”, Christiana Davis (1990: 18) corroborates this, noting:

Beyond her determination, the one remark we must make in relation to Adah’s education is that her father’s insistence on her having the best- that is, going to Ladi-Lak School- stands her in good stead all her life. She is ahead of others in her group because of the solid foundations she gets there and so is able to win a scholarship and continue her education despite her poverty and lack of family support.

These ‘first-class jobs’ in turn help her fight against giving into second-class status and help her keep her goals high.

Another source of motivation for Emecheta is the experiences she gathered through life. Experience is the best teacher according to an English proverb. Emecheta’s personal experiences are the foundations of her feminist outlook. Experience becomes the “crucial product and means of women’s movement” (Haraway 1990: 124). “Buchi Emecheta clarified in an interview that the experiences of Adah in her second

novel *Second Class Citizen* were in fact, her own” (Bazin 1986: 35). “Emecheta became a writer. Her becoming a writer was constituted from those webs of experience implicit in the biographical text” (Haraway 1990:124). Emecheta begins her writing career erstwhile by writing for her children. Her novel *Second Class Citizen* is dedicated to her five children. In the novel, Adah dreams that she will show the story she has written to her children when they grow up:

The story that she was going to show Titi and Vicky and Bubú and baby Dada when they grew up, she was going to say, Look, I wrote that when I was a young woman with my own hand and in the English language, and she was sure they were all going to laugh and their children were going to laugh too and say, Oh Granny, you are so funny (Emecheta 1974:170).

Her children become the source of her inspiration. Instead of seeing them as a distraction, or “as separate and antithetical to her project, an obligation which hinders her from pursuing her own ambitions (Davis 1990:19), she inculcated them into her writing project, bringing in all the experiences she had gathered. Experience as a semiosis becomes an embodiment of meaning (Ibid: 241) Emecheta gathered “the experiences of the modern African woman and chronicled their struggle for equality in a male dominated world” (Umeh 1980: 191)

The experiences which Emecheta had in her childhood in Lagos, Nigeria and her years in London as a young woman fashioned her as a voice for other women. She was determined to speak out and share her experiences to liberate other African women who may find themselves in a similar predicament.

Emecheta is designated as “a writer who speaks for the African woman” (Ward 1990: 83). *Second Class Citizen* is a novel that challenges women to eschew suppression and slavery, fight for their freedom, and develop their ambition or goal in life. Ward (1990: 83) makes a striking summary of her novels. According to her, Emecheta’s “novels

represent the experience of the African woman struggling to assert herself against historically determined insignificance, a self constituted through the suffering of nearly every form of oppression – racial, sexual, colonial – that human society has created, a self that must find its true voice in order to speak not only for itself but for all others similarly oppressed.” Citing Marie Umeh, Ward (1990 :83) agrees that “it is through Buchi Emecheta that the souls of voiceless Nigerian women are revealed.”

Emecheta became a voice for women who are caught up with the problems of traditional African society and development or modernism. “For Emecheta, women constitute the most oppressed, the most underprivileged and the most unfortunate of all the underprivileged groups, and she has made the championing of the cause of womanhood her own peculiar territory” (Palmer 1982: 21). She described what it is like to be female in patriarchal African culture, and pointed out the malaise of patriarchy such as “son preference, bride price, polygamy, menstrual taboos, male inheritance rights, wife beating, early marriages, early and unlimited pregnancies, arranged marriages and male dominance in the home functioned to keep women powerless” (Bazin 1986: 39). In other words, her novels “are replete with the detailed presentation of the experiences of women and girls who have been exploited, degraded, enslaved, brutalized and abused by men, and they are infused with a sense of the unfairness of the literary and social emancipation of women” (Palmer 1982: 21). She carefully brought out the status of woman in traditional African society, especially the idea of a woman as a slave. In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah as a woman shows sign of independence and rebellion. She does not want to be a slave to any man. She does not like the men that her cousins and her Ma recommend her. She vows never to get married to a man whom she will call “sir” or whom she would serve food on bended knee despite knowing that the Igbo custom encourages this (Emecheta 1974: 20).

Marriage in the African tradition has as its primary objective the continuation of the kinship line, i.e., the patrilineal kin and “was not based on romantic love” (Solberg 1983: 247). Marriage is contrived to raise a family. A woman becomes enslaved in her biological ability to rear a child and if she cannot be impregnated to perform this primary function, she lives in misery and is taunted by her in-laws and neighbours. Thus “the barren African woman is seen as an incomplete woman. She becomes as John Mbiti puts it “the dead end of human life, not only for the genealogical level, but also for herself” (Christian 1985: 216). This importance of children in marriage can be seen in Emecheta’s other novel, *The Joys of Motherhood*. Nnu Ego remains childless after some years in marriage and so her husband Amatokwu divorces her: “What do you want me to do? Amatokwu asks. I am a busy man. I have no time to waste my precious seed on a woman who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line” (Emecheta 1979: 37) So he divorces her. Her father Agbadi returns the bride price and decides to give her to another man. She is given to a man whom she does not know and whose physical appearance she does not like, but who makes her a woman by making her conceive and have children (Ibid: 78).

The emphasis lies on being made a mother, the ability to conceive and give birth is seen as the primary function of a woman. It is what makes one a “woman”. Her choice of the man and her feelings are never taken into consideration. What matters is that the man, irrespective of his looks and body-build, makes her conceive. Therefore “being a woman, that is, a mother, means that she must play a subordinate role in the society and must be submissive to her male kin” (Christian 1985: 214).

This act of being a mother consequently becomes a criterion by which a woman is recognized in society. According to Barbara Christian (1985: 212), “as important is the fact that the role of mother, with all that it implies, is universally imposed upon women as their sole identity, their proper identity, above all others.” Thus, Christian also notes that

“the primacy of motherhood for women is the one value that societies, whatever their differences, share. ...Though motherhood is the experience of women, the institution of motherhood is under male control and that the potential of women to be mothers – that is, their physicality, conditions their entire lives” (Christian 1985: 212).

Motherhood which should be a source of joy turns out to be “the way in which a woman’s role as a mother is used to render her an inferior, second class citizen” (Bazin 1986: 37). This act of giving birth is completed when a baby boy is born. Nnu Ego has no option other than to stay with Nnaife. “The pressure to bear male children forces her to bear child after child since the girls she has do not count” (Ibid: 37). Consequently, it is no surprise that Adah in *Second Class Citizen* is given an “is that all look? ...it was nine good months wasted” (Bazin 1986: 35) when she gives birth to a baby girl. Adah makes it up by giving birth to her second child who is a boy. The grief that follows the death of a girl is much less than that of a boy. This is further demonstrated in the *Joys of Motherhood*. When Adaku, one of Nnaife’s two wives, loses a baby boy, she goes into a deep depression. As Oshia, one of Nnu Ego’s sons, tries to console her by saying she still has her daughter, Adaku quickly retorts “You are worth more than ten Dumbis and she cried to God saying, Oh God, why did you not take one of the girls and leave me with my male child” (Emecheta 1979: 128).

In traditional society, the blessings of children and especially sons are seen as the returns the parents can expect in their old age (Solberg 1983: 252). In the colonial era, there was an urge to educate sons, who like the lawyer Nweze in *Second Class Citizen* will take up an administrative post or indulge in politics through which he will bring honour and riches on his parents and the entire village. Girls are not mentioned. The plight of women as a dependent race is echoed by Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Upon giving birth to her last girls she prayed: “God when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full

human being, not anybody's appendage. When will I be free?... Never, not even in death. I am a prisoner of my own flesh and blood. But who made that we should not hope in our daughters? We women subscribe to that law more than anyone. Until we change this, it is still a man's world, which women will always help to build" (Emecheta 1983: 186). Nnu Ego, who believes in Western education, struggles and sends her sons to be educated in America and Canada with the hope that they will succeed in the new urban world and make her proud, thereby raising her status among her womenfolk. They go abroad and do not remember their mother. It is only her daughters who support her in her old age. Her dream of staying with her grandchildren and being surrounded by them after all her sufferings to fend for her family is not realized, since her sons leave for America, imbibe the Western individualistic lifestyle, and forget her. Her daughters get married. That joy which she has hoped for by being a mother eludes her, and becomes her chain of slavery, binding her to Nnaife and reduces her to a level of abject poverty. Her husband blames her for the behaviour of the children, so she goes back to Ibuza in disgrace, suffers a mental breakdown, and dies along the roadside. "The tensions of a culture collision between the institutions of traditional Igbo society and the institutions of western Europe" (Derrickson 2002: 122) catches up with her. The main reason for bearing children and preferring boys to girls does not bring any benefit to her. It is only when she dies that her sons came back and give her a ceremonial burial. Young women pray to her spirit to enable them have male children. She does not answer. "Despite her awakening, Nnu Ego gains status and decision-making power only after death when she is honoured with a shrine for her fertility. The young women in her village pray to her spirit when they are unable to get pregnant or bear sons" (Bazin 1986: 37). Incidentally, Bazin also records that "the spirit of Nnu Ego chooses not to grant the wishes of these women to bear many, especially male chil-

dren, for she has known personally the slave-like state created by this self-defeating practice” (Bazin 1986: 37).

Unlike Nnu Ego, Adaku, her co-wife loses her son and has only daughters. She does not want to be weighed down by the patriarchal injunctions. She is taunted for her inability to bear another male child and since she has no son, she has no standing in the Ibusa community. Her husband no longer provides for the household. She revolts against the patriarchal laws of the community and enters prostitution. Later, she reinvests her profits from prostitution into a cloth-vending business and sends her daughters to the best schools. She becomes independent, lives a fulfilled life, and believes in her daughters. Emecheta (1983: 169) records her thoughts thus: “As for my daughters, they will have to take their own chances in this world. I am not prepared to stay here to be turned into a mad woman; just because I have no sons ... Well, if my daughters cannot forgive me when they grow up, that will be too bad,”

Emecheta’s role as a “voice” for women is further demonstrated in her novel *Destination Biafra*, where she exposes the menace of the Biafran Civil War in Nigeria (1967-1970) for women and children. The Nigerian soldiers unleashed horror and hunger in the Igbo nation in a war that lasted for three years. Emecheta narrates incidences of sexual violence against women, especially rape.

As a soldier, the protagonist Derby travels with other women to Biafra. A pregnant woman is brutally killed, her stomach ripped into two. The unborn baby is brought out and cut into two. Derby is gang-raped by soldiers, although she informs them that she is a soldier as well. When her mother goes to report the incident to the commanding officer, he replies: “It’s war madam.... Hundreds of women have been raped, so what? It’s war” (Emecheta 1982: 135). Rape, which is one of the acts of sexual violence against women, is a conflict in Nigeria that is often neglected. Emecheta challenged the conspiracy of silence in which the interests of men are protected. In choosing a career meant for the

men, Derby (Emecheta 1982: 45) wants to make a difference in her life's career. By joining the army, she refuses to be restricted in her choice and dares to avoid the fate of her mother. Yet despite being a soldier, she is reminded by her fellow soldiers who rape her that "she was nothing but a woman" (Emecheta 1982: 175), implying that being a soldier will not prevent them from treating her as other women are treated.

In order to show how inhumane some men can be, and the extent to which men can go to satisfy themselves at the expense of a woman, irrespective of the relationship be it blood ties or marriage, in her novel *The Slave Girl*, Emecheta presents how Okolie sells his little sister Ojebeta who is eight years old to a rich relative, Pa Palagada, in a bid to better his life condition. He forgets his responsibility of protecting and taking care of his kid sister after the death of their parents. An argument ensues over the price to be paid. The buyer throws the money on the ground. Okolie loses all shame and pride as he bends down to pick the pennies for which he sells his sister into slavery: "In the intensity of his search, he forgot his dignity, forgot what it was he had done. All the human pride he had, that he was a man, pride that he was the best horn blower of his age-group. Pride that he was Ibuza's greatest orator- all was submerged in his urge to find money, and more money" (Emecheta 1977: 57).

Pa Palagada is a boastful man who glories in the wealth amassed by his industrious wife. He is a typical Ibuza man who would not stop to boast of his conquest of women. Even though "he maintains that women were created and fashioned as playthings for men; that they are brainless, mindless and easily pliable. And yet it is to a woman that he would go to pour out his troubles, wanting her to listen, to sympathise and make appropriate noises, to give him a cuddle, tell him how handsome and kind he is, and how everything would be alright and that he should not worry, yet, he never respects any woman" (Emecheta 1977: 98).

The callousness of Pa Palagada is demonstrated when he takes Chiago, one of the slave girls, to bed when his wife, Ma Palagada, is admitted to hospital. In her reflections on the enslavement of women by men, Ojebeta recounts: "All her life a woman always belonged to some male. At birth you were owned by your people, and when you were sold you belonged to a new master, when you grew up, your new master who had paid something for you, would control you" (Emecheta 1977: 112). Ojebeta regains her freedom upon the death of the relative who bought her from her brother, goes back to Ibuza, and is to be married to an Ibusa man, Jacob, who is literate as well as being a Christian. Jacob has to pay back the money her brother collected from the Palagadas to obtain her total freedom. Ojebeta, on entering another form of enslavement, exclaims: "She had been a slave before against her wishes. If this time, she was going to marry and belong to a man according to the custom of her people, she intended to do so with her eyes wide open... it would be better to be a slave to a master of her choice, than to one who didn't care or even know who you are" (Emecheta 1977: 168).

The sexual enslavement of women which Pa Palagada boasts about rears its ugly head in *Second Class Citizen*. Francis, Adah's husband, opines that a woman is meant to be slept with any time and even during the day and whenever she refuses, she should be beaten thoroughly until she gives in. Adah herself knows that she is involved in a slavish marriage and points it to her husband when Vicky is infected with Meningitis. Trudy who works as in social welfare looking after children, neglects the children while she satisfies her customers sexually, including Adah's husband. Adah states in anger: "If anything happens to my son, I am going to kill you and that prostitute. You sleep with her, do you not? You buy her pants with the money I work for, and you both spend the money I pay her, when I go to work. I don't care what you do, but I must have my children whole and perfect. The only thing I get from this

slavish marriage is the children. And Francis, I am warning you, they must be perfect children” (Emecheta 1974: 64).

Slavery for Emecheta was the inherent condition of African women, while education was the crucial liberating force in the lives of heroines and in fact their degree of servitude was inversely proportional to the amount of education they received. In concordance with Emecheta’s emphasis on the slavery of African women by their male folk, Frank (1982: 479) declares: “In Emecheta’s novels, the tyrants and oppressors who reduce women to slave vary from novel to novel: from husbands and racist whites in *Second Class Citizen* to traditional moves and taboos in *The Bride Price*, to men (brothers, masters, husbands) in *The Slave Girl*, and finally children in *The Joys of Motherhood*.” Notwithstanding, “whoever or whatever the enslaving power may be, Emecheta shows that the oppression of women is invariably constant. The most a woman can hope for is to be able to choose” (Emecheta 1974: 480).

Invariably, it is due to the various levels of patriarchal oppressions perpetrated by men in different spheres of life which constantly portray women as people with little control over their lives. Many scholars opine that African cultures heap a lot of evil on their women, which Salome Nnoromele (2002: 178) explains in “Representing the African Woman: Subjectivity and Self in *The Joys of Motherhood*”:

They claim that the African practices of polygamy and bride price degrade women to the status of goods and chattel; that husbands dominate their wives and that fathers dominate their daughters, ensuring a system of perpetual subjugation of women; that girls do not have the same opportunities as boys because they are valued solely for the money that they bring to their fathers through their bride price; that girls have no choice in whom they marry and that sexual relationships are unromantic because fathers sell their daughters to the highest bidder; and as evidence of their relegation to the background of social and

political decisions in the family and the community, that women are forced to live in the outhouses in the backyard.

Needless to say, these assertions are full of over-generalizations. Africa is a continent. It is near impossible to have a homogenous cultural practice spanning throughout the whole terrain. For instance, considering the Igbo culture of the present age, polygamy is no longer encouraged, though some salient forms of suppression and subjugation of women persist due to the patriarchal culture of the society.

Furthermore, Emecheta's writings have also been summarized by some writers like Katrak (1987: 159), who notes that "a fundamental purpose of womanhood, viz. to flower into motherhood, is rooted in the paradoxical relationships of both the traditional structures of patriarchy and the modern structures of urbanization." On this pedestal, "Emecheta is concerned equally with the dual issues of 1. The biological control of woman whereby sexuality and the ability to bear children are the sole criteria which define womanhood, and 2. The economic control of women within the colonially imposed capitalist system, whereby women are placed at a disadvantage graver than they had faced in the pre-colonial economic structure" (Katrak 1987: 159).

Given this conception, Emecheta strongly maintained that her work was centred on African life and family. In an interview she granted in 1979, she reiterated that she did not write only for women but for men as well (Bruner 1983: 5). Emecheta in her writings portrayed the suffering which women go through in patriarchal societies. This includes some cultural practices like forced marriages and the *Osu* caste system which she aptly summarized in her novel *The Bride Price*. The heroine Akunna chooses a man of her choice but because the man, Chike Ofulue, is an *Osu* (a slave), Akunna who is a free-born is not allowed to marry him. The *Osu* caste system among the Igbo is embedded in tradition. The *Osu* are "men and women who have been, or whose forefathers have been, offered as living sacrifices to a juju whose wrath was feared, thus be-

coming slaves of the juju” (Leith-Ross 1937: 207) These people are socially discriminated against and a free-born is not allowed to communicate with them. Leith-Ross (1937: 208) captures their situation noting that: “no one will willingly eat with them, that no one will marry them, that there is no greater insult than to call another man an Osu.” As such though “they farm, trade, travel, like ordinary beings but always on the edge of society, their existence so little recognized that a non-Osu would be considered responsible for an Osu’s death any more than if he had shot a bird or killed a wild animal” (Leith-Ross 1937: 208).

Following the tradition laid against the *Osu*, it is not a surprise that Akunna is not allowed to marry Chike. Consequently, Chike and Akunna elope and get married. Akunna’s bride price which Chike’s family brings is not accepted and so the marriage between the two is not recognized. Akunna dies while giving birth to her child. The culture maintains that the bride price legitimizes a marriage. A marriage without a bride price is illegal and has some negative consequences which Umeh (1980: 196) relates: “If a girl wished to live long and see her children’s children, she must accept the husband chosen for her by her people, and the bride price must be paid. If the bride price was not paid, she would never survive the birth of her first child.”

Some of these cultural practices which infringe the right of an individual, especially arranged marriages which aid in the suppression of women and keep them under the control of men, form the basis of Emecheta’s writing. Emecheta calls upon women to rise up against the treatment meted out to them by the menfolk. Her attitude of encouraging women and inculcating into their psyche the need for personal development rather than seeing themselves as “just housewives” was praised by the British Council. Prono 2013: 18 states:

The British council in evaluating her work at its site writes: The Female protagonists of Emecheta’s fiction challenge the masculinist assumption that they should be defined as domestic prop-

erties whose value resides in their ability to bear children and in their willingness to remain confined at home. Initiative and determination become the distinguishing marks of Emecheta's women. They are resourceful and turn adverse conditions into their triumph.

There is no gainsaying that some of Emecheta's critics, especially in the Nigerian context, are not happy with the way the problems of Adah in *Second Class Citizen* are brought into the public domain. Adah not only separates from her husband which is a taboo in the Igbo context but exposes her husband by putting all his wrongdoing in print. This act of separation makes it possible for her to have her independence and gives her the opportunity to read sociology in university. The fact that Emecheta brought the experiences of Adah into the public domain through writing has been criticized by some Nigerian women who see it as disrespectful to the Igbo culture. Ward (1990: 85) states: "Ogunyemi goes as far as saying that African women who use writing as a strategy for self-defence are betraying their own culture. She claims Emecheta/Adah in *Second Class Citizen* retaliates against mistreatment by her husband in typical western fashion with a Freudian weapon, the pen." With this background, Ogunyemi, placing Emecheta on imaginary trial before a group of Igbo elders, "asserts they would have condemned her as much for the self-centred crudity of the telling as for the story itself" (Ward 1990: 85).

Such criticism emanates from women, especially Ogunyemi, who view Emecheta as being too anglicized, torn between her African culture and her feminist aspirations. Africa is thereby described from the feminist point of view as "a dark continent where primitive cultural practices must be guided into productive paths by enlightened Europeans" (Ward 1990: 85). Traditional African culture becomes the origin of African women's oppression which looks towards "Western feminist consciousness and Western education for emancipation from the slavery of tradi-

tion” (Ibid: 85). Consequently, African women who have been enslaved need to be liberated through education. Ogunyemi, in her critique of Emecheta’s Western feminism, condemns how African men are represented. Elaborating on this, Haraway (1990:120) opines: “Seeing the novelist’s characters as merely rebellious, Ogunyemi treated Emecheta’s fictional and personal relation to marriage harshly, even scornfully, stating that she started to write ‘after a marital fiasco’, that her writing feminises Black men, and that she finally kills off her heroines in childbirth, enslavement in marriage, insanity or abandonment by their children.” Haraway further notes that in Ogunyemi’s view, “Emecheta’s destruction of her heroines is a feminist trait that can be partly attributed to narcissism on the part of the writer” (Haraway 1990: 121).

Such criticism did not deter Emecheta from writing further because she knew the source through which she gathered most of her information. Emecheta had the privilege of receiving oral education from her aunt, Nwakwaluzo Ogbueyin, whom she called “her big mother” as seen in her novel *Head above Water* (Emecheta 1986: 11). It is through this oral education that she learned from the older woman of the problems women undergo in pre-arranged marriages as is practised in her hometown of Ibusa. Orality has to do with oral tradition where the writing culture is lacking or not well developed in a society. African culture is embedded in oral tradition. Oral tradition includes several kinds of storytelling as well as proverbs, riddles, and ritual formulas. The issue of orality is prominent among the Africans, therefore in studying African thought, “we must rely on stories, oral tradition ritual, social institutions” as Mbiti (1991: 105) in *Introduction to African Religion* states. Walter Ong, the oral theorist, defines orality “as the thought and verbal expression in the societies where technologies of literacy especially writing and printing are unfamiliar to most of the population” (Ong 2002: 9). Igboland is an oral cultural society where the cultural values are handed down orally. There are folktales and storytelling which are

normally told by women to their children after evening meals as a means of transmitting the cultures of the people, whereas the men usually gathered in the *obi* (a man's guesthouse) with their sons, where the customs of the land and ways of solving problems are handed down verbally, thereby propagating and carrying on the traditions of the land.

Emecheta's sense of deep reflection serves as a source of motivation for her writing skills. It is in her novel *Second Class Citizen* that she described her impulsion to write as well as the joy she experienced in her creative writing. Moreover, she intended to use a sociological approach as makes clear in the novel (Emecheta 1974: 166–167).

Emecheta worked hard to be a writer, thereby fulfilling her wishes and desires. The refusal of publishers to read her work at the beginning did not bring down her fighting spirit as Charlotte and David Bruner (1985: 10) relate in "Buchi Emecheta and Maryse Condé. Contemporary Writing from African and Caribbean Authors": "I spent almost every week of 1968, 1969, and 1970 trying to persuade publishers just to read my work. I did not care whether I was paid for their publication or not, my only wish was that someone would share in my dreams". Her perseverance paid off and in years later, she not only earned her degree in sociology but won the 1978 Jack Campbell New Statesman Award and was selected as one of the Best British Young Writers in 1983.

Emecheta became one of the first female Nigerian writers to champion the cause for the liberation of women in Nigeria. Her novels depict the role and position of women, especially the oppression of women as embedded in patrilineal Igbo society. Her writings decry the violence against women perpetrated through domestic violence, rape, the quest for male children, dependence, lack of identity, gender inequality, and lack of access to education. They encourage women to have self-confidence, be self-reliant and to liberate themselves through education.

Men have been at the forefront of African literature, but the emergence of female writers produces a different effect on readers, especially

women, who tell their stories by themselves. Why have women decided to speak for themselves? The sudden decision of African women to define themselves and engage in writing is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.2.1 African Women Writers**

The involvement of women in African literature was long overdue before its commencement. The literary output of women was scanty until the end of 1960s, due to known historical and sociological factors. Women were not allowed to attend higher education like their male counterparts. "Writing and education go hand in hand and for all kinds of sociological and other reasons the education of women in Africa lagged far behind that of men" (Jones et al. 1987: 714). Men had more time to devote to writing while women occupied themselves with the task of childbearing, child upbringing, and caring for the men. Consequently, women have remained hidden and allowed men to speak for them. In addition, the "African writer as we have come to know him is inevitably a public figure adopting a public stance, functioning as the eye, the conscience and at times the intelligence of his people, assuming the role of a prophet or sage or seer" (Ibid: 714). Even though African male writers have been struggling and canvassing for the liberation of Africans, they cannot speak for the liberation of African women, because "they are members of the oppressing class" (Metcalf 1989: 15). Conscious of the important role which writers play in the life of African people, the male writers in their role as public figures have not been able to bring out properly the ordeals which women pass through in society. Because "African Woman has been highly visible as subject and symbol in African literature, she has suffered from a marked invisibility, or near invisibility, as a writer" (Brown 1975: 498). Explaining why female writers are so few in comparison to their male counterparts, Ojo-Ade (1983: 158) writes: "Man constitutes the majority and woman, the minority.... Minority should be contemplated in the sense of Dominated,

Disadvantaged, Exploited, Excluded". Being regarded as the excluded, "the women writers of Africa are the other voices, the unheard voices, rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and the predictably male-oriented studies in the field" (Brown 1981: 3).

Female writers who have come out in the literary world to be heard have the challenging responsibility "first to tell about being a woman, secondly to describe reality from a woman's view, a woman's perspective" (Ogundibe-Leslie 1987: 5). Furthermore, the commitment of the African female writer should be manifested in three ways: as a writer, as a woman, and as a third world person. Jones et al. (1987: 716) capture this commitment as a writer stating: "As a writer, she has to be committed to her art, seeking to do justice to it at the highest levels of expertise. She should be committed to her vision, whatever it is, which means she has to be willing to stand or fall for that vision". For Jones et al., standing for her vision entails that she must tell her own truth, and must be certain that what she is telling is the truth and nothing but the truth, albeit her own truth. Jones also notes that the commitment of writing as a woman is surrounded by a lot of problems. "It would mean delineating the experience of women as women, telling what it is to be a woman and destroying male stereotypes of women" (Jones et al. 1987: 717).

We are forced to ask a pertinent question. What does it mean to be a woman? People are deceived by thinking that a woman is a being with breasts and female genitals. That is only an aspect of womanhood, but a woman's biology should not be used to limit her. This is the problem which women have been suffering for decades, i.e., being reduced only to her biological abilities. This has been made her destiny and given rise to general stereotypic attributes of women which, according to Ogundibe-Leslie (1987: 5), include "formlessness, passivity, instability, confinement, piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, confinement and two incorrigible figures, the shrew and the witch".

In African literature, women have been described as the “Sweet Mother, the all accepting creature of fecundity and self sacrifice” (Ogundipe-Leslie 1987: 6). This figure is always used in describing Mother Africa, who is endowed with beauty and inspiration as eulogized by Léopold Sédor Senghor and David Diop. A woman is seen as a passionate and sensual lover due to the description of beauty allotted to her. A woman is looked upon as a mother or an erotic lover. Many male writers conceive women only as “phallic receptacles” (Ibid: 6). A woman being committed to her third world implies that she has to be politically conscious “offering readers perspectives on and perceptions of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism as they affect and shape our lives and historical destinies” (Jones et al. 1987: 718). She brings into the limelight the African traditional culture, whereby readers learn more about their culture and the present-day problems which conflict with the culture as well as problems that emanate from some of the cultural practices. Women have always played a great role in the oral tradition. They have been great storytellers and performers.

In many African cultures, “tradition always had a significant place for the voice of the woman singing or reciting tales from her own perspective as wife, mother and housekeeper” (Jones et al. 1987: 718). It is therefore not surprising that many female writers inherited the gift of storytelling from their mothers which has helped them in their career as writers. Emecheta learnt her art of storytelling from her big mother. It was the deep reflection which accompanied the stories that served as a tool for self-discovery and motivated her writing skill as cited in *Head Above Water* (Emecheta 1986: 87) Though women have contributed a great deal in the oral tradition, women are known to be “the biggest single group of oppressed people in the world” (Smith 1987: 466).

Men have monopolized the literary world since the invention of the novel in the eighteenth century and in Victorian days. African literature was understood to be made for men since women writers were excluded

(Brown 1981: 3). “The pen has not been considered by societies to be an appropriate tool of women” (Christian 1985: 144). The pen was designated for men. They were to be authors Christian (1985: 144) extrapolates the etymology of the word author noting that “the English word author means begetter, father, and is related to the word authority, which means the power to enforce obedience.” She further notes that “underneath the meanings of the word author is the imagery of succession, paternity, hierarchy. In contrast, woman’s creativity is supposed to be located in her body, while the creativity of the mind – writing, reading, thinking – has often been seen by many societies as inimical to her nature” (Christian 1985:144). Also in Africa, “Western male Africanists have contributed heavily to an old boy network of African studies in which the African woman simply does not exist as a serious or significant writer” (Brown 1975: 494). This monopoly of the Literary World by men, whereby men speak on behalf of the women, is very prominent on the African continent. Palmer (1982: 24) summarizes this situation: “The presentation of women in the African novel has been left almost entirely to male writers – Achebe, Soyinka, Sembene Ousmane, Ekwensi, Beti, Ngugi, Amadi and Laye. The few female voices, like Flora Nwapa, who dared to have their say, were not sufficiently accomplished to compel attention.” Palmer also notes that the male novelists conveyed the false impression of a male-dominated society in which the women were perfectly content with their subordinate role and continued cheerfully and complacently to fulfil the duties expected of them while taking the male dominance for granted (Ibid: 24).

Yet the day-to-day development of women has led to the breaking of the dominance and subjugation by men which women have accepted over a long time. Women who have remained silent for a long time conquered the barriers laid by men. They decided to break the silence and speak out, using the “female form”. Rosalind Miles (1987: 501) in her controversial essay *The Female Form*, states: “Women have quietly

got on with the job of mastering the novel form and in doing so have made it very much their own. On any criteria of greatness – enduring quality, human relevance, mythic resonance, capacity to delight – women have undoubtedly captured the heights.... captured the highways and byways they thought attractive and appropriate, and while the numerous signs declaring the novel territory for ‘Men Only: No Trespassers Allowed’ have undoubtedly deterred many women, it has never been possible for the border guards to keep all women at bay.”

The women’s storming of the Literary World where they have been kept at bay while men occupied the centre stage is based on the fact that they (women) want to be heard, not through the voices of men but through their own voices. They (women) want to occupy their rightful position and eschew their relegation whereby the male occupies the centre stage in literary creativity and criticism as writer, character, and critic. As Grace Okereke (1997: 28) rightly notes: “The female, regarded naturally as ‘the second class sex’, occupied the back stage, the margins in all these spaces after the male. Sometimes she is completely absent. Even when the woman is the point of focus in creativity and criticism, she still occupies the backstage with the male steering the ship of Nigerian (and African) literature.” This situation arises because the male has been the producer of literary meaning and the female has been more of a passive consumer of this male-constructed meaning.

The literature produced by man tends to glorify and uphold patriarchal powers where the woman has only subjugated existence without an essential voice. Consequently, “African women writers see their societies as crippled by the devaluing of women’s ideas and creativity and their sisters as burdened of a life akin to that of a mule” (Christian 1985: 147). Men have legitimized patriarchal ideologies in their writing, which promote inequality between the two sexes through enabling tropes of post-colonial male domination as well as colonialism. This, according to Semenya (2001: 4), portrays the “woman as passive and voiceless, im-

ages that serve to rationalize and therefore to perpetuate inequality between the sexes; and the romanticisation and idealisation of motherhood, a means of masking women's subordination in society."

Consequently, men in their writing have turned a blind eye to the individuality of their female counterparts. The neglect of the woman as a writer in Africa has been termed a great omission because "she offers self-images, patterns of self-analysis, and general insights into the woman's situation which are ignored by, or are inaccessible to, the male writer" (Brown 1975: 495). Information provided by the women about themselves helps to demythologize otherwise accepted stereotypes of women. The relation of the woman writer to the constructions about them often entails "that her own closeness to the realities of being a woman in a specific African society may result in a writer's scepticism about flattering generalizations on the status of women in Africa as a whole. Moreover, this proximity to her own condition may provide the woman writer with distinctive perceptions and tone when she and her male counterpart describe similar experiences" (Brown 1975: 495). Women, in general, have their own perception of things (self, roles, and society) which distinguishes itself from that of the men. In a traditional African set-up, there abound many cultural stereotypes invented by men and heaped on women to justify the low status of women, and hence their subjugation.

Women writers are challenging the stereotypes heaped on them by men through patriarchal cultures to re-envision their lives, their potential, and their language. Jones et al. (1987: 719) corroborate this view. This urge to re-envision their lives and re-educate their fellow women has ignited in African women writers the need to re-examine the cultural practices in which they (women) are colonized by men, "for the colonized woman is doubly oppressed, enmeshed in the structures of an indigenous patriarchy and of a foreign masculinist colonialism" (Ibid: 719 ). Christian (1985: 148) notes that "women of color all over the

world, in Angola, Nigeria, Cuba, China, Nicaragua, Grenada, Chile, the U.S are struggling against what they call the two colonialisms, the domination of their people by the west, the domination of themselves by their men.” Thus, women writers in their bid to become free and complete women, interrogate the sexual as well as the racial colonial discourse (Stratton 1988: 163). “Life for the African woman writer is definitely not crystal clear. It is a most peculiar predicament” (Ogunyemi 1985: 69).

To effect the desired change in society, women writers write of their personal experiences in fiction, while portraying their various cultures. Female experiences are quite different from those that have emerged from the works of their male colleagues. “It requires personal growth on the part of the individual to extract herself from an oppressive environment. Personal growth leads into a second perspective that is social or communal” (Bazin 1986: 34). In their writing, women discuss problems which apply to other women such as “dependence, sexual exploitation, and the structuring of their role in procreation into a total definition of their existence“ (Ibid: 34). Emecheta personally “is asking her readers to replace the picture of the cheerful contented African female with that of the woman who is powerfully aware of the injustice of the system and who longs to be fulfilled in herself, to be a full human being” (Palmer 1982: 24).

However, it is strange to say that some of the obnoxious practices used by patriarchy in subjugating women are carried out by women themselves. It is women who engage their fellow women in female mutilation. It is also women who suppress a widow during the burial arrangement of the husband. It is women who barb their fellow women’s head upon the death of her husband, maintaining the adage that “the beauty of a woman lies in her hair” and so on the demise of the husband, all the hair is shaved off because the man for whose sake the hair was beautified is no more. All these acts which women perpetrate against

their fellow women need to be corrected through enlightenment, for the perpetrators are made the stooges of patriarchalism.

Women in their writing want to become agents for social change through literature, bringing in their experiences and showing the real life of an African woman. Women writers, serving as the collective consciousness of their gender, have discovered that they are endowed with resources capable of transforming their society. “The woman writer then proceeded to employ her brain and her pen to tell of woman’s worth, to throw into sharp relief woman’s potential and capabilities geared towards raising the consciousness of her gender for the transformation of her society, Nigeria” (Okereke 1997: 30). This transformation of society begins in their domestic space. Therefore, women writers begin their creative careers, bringing in their female consciousness in their homes, “because it is there that her being (existence), her “I AM” is most questioned and often deconstructed” (Ibid: 28). Okereke explains further that “when the female has succeeded in establishing herself as a subject in the domestic hearth, she often succeeds in carving a place for herself in the larger transformational structures. Yet “when she has failed and allowed her ‘being’ to be deconstructed by patriarchal values, she has often died multiple deaths culminating in the final physical exit, which is most times ironically liberating, although escapist” (Ibid: 28).

Women writers have therefore redefined the position of women in various spheres of society. Woman not only been seen “as an achiever within the micro-economy of the home and the macro-economy of the nation” (Okereke 1997: 29); but also, in the educational and political arenas. This redefinition of the woman helps in providing women with total acceptance of themselves and their awareness of their potential and possibilities in life. Following the redefinition of a woman’s position in Nigeria, Okereke aptly notes that “Nigerian women writers have thus creatively reversed the suffocating male-constructed myths that encase the female in what Peter du Preez refers to as ‘identity traps’, by con-

structuring new liberating myths of the woman and her gender capabilities” (Okereke 1997: 30). Some of these African women who have redefined themselves and have made it visible through their works include Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria), Flora Nwapa (Nigeria), Grace Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), Bessie Head (South Africa), Ellen Kuzwayo (South Africa), Mariama Bâ (Senegal), Grace Ogot (Kenya), and Rebecca Njau (Kenya). “Despite vast differences in traditions and beliefs among African societies, any female writer must have defied prevailing tradition if she speaks out as an individual and as a woman” (Bruner 1983: 13).

Although these writers come from different cultural backgrounds, they are brought together by one common cultural phenomenon – patriarchy. According to Stratton (1988: 143), patriarchy as a social institution “functions according to the two principles that ‘male shall dominate female’. Its purpose being to regulate the sexual life of the dominated to the advantage of the dominator. That every woman would respond to her lifelong subjugation and powerlessness with anxiety over the limitation, and that this would find its literary correlative in such forms as images of enclosure and escape, is an intuitively satisfying hypothesis.”

African female writers have integrated some of these patriarchal elements into their work in the form of myths, rites, and social practices, thereby “analyzing patriarchy, attacking it and detecting its tentacles in the most unlikely places” (Ogunyemi 1985: 69). The women writers have successfully brought in a “strong historical sense in their work as could be seen in the works of their African male colleagues” (Ibid: 70). The historical elements are integrated within the themes of female experience. This integration occurs on two levels: on the sociological level, whereby the writers explain various ways in which women are enslaved, and a symbolic level, in which “a symbolizing analogy is frequently created between the condition of women and that of the state” (Ibid: 71). Though women have entered into the literary stage, their work most of the time has suffered various levels of criticism. In *Women Writers in*

*Black Africa* (1981: 497), Lloyd Brown cites an example of such critiques: “The critics have treated the (women) writers as if the novels, plays, short stories and poems are simply political tracts, or anthropological studies. In so doing they ignore the extent to which such works should be approached as committed works of art in which theme, or social vision, is integrated with an effective sense of design and language.” Undeterred by the criticism which greets most of their works, African women writers have continued to transform their experiences into art by “creative telling and effective symbols, images, and metaphors for their vision” (Stratton 1988: 146). Some of these experiences are portrayed by the female protagonist in some fictional books which Stratton (Ibid: 147) captioned “The shallow grave”. Stratton provides a paradigmatic image of the novelist’s reflection of the female experience. The female characters are cast in the stereotypes of a male tradition and their human potential buried in shallow definitions of their sex. “Silenced, like the slave woman, by blows – either to their bodies or psyches—they are forced to submit to the necessity of conforming to the externally imposed requirements of their masculine societies” (Stratton 1988: 148). These women express rage at their servitude to a structure of values matched to the needs of others. Yet while some women willingly become agents of this patriarchy, others respond with ambivalence. They become schizophrenic, their personalities fragmented by their desire both to accept and to reject their condition. Stratton concludes that “with the exception of the few who through ingenuity and great courage triumph in their struggle out of patriarchy’s ‘shallow grave’, all are sacrificial victims. Denied both personal identity and self-determination, they are metaphorically buried alive in the patriarchal polity of their societies.” (Ibid: 150). It is the patriarchal polity that has been made the basis of women’s enslavement. Women’s fiction is designed to undermine patriarchal ideologies which perpetuate reductive images of women. Therefore, “women must spurn patriarchy in all its

guises and create a safe, sane, supportive world of women: a world of mothers and daughters, sisters and friends” (Frank 1987: 14).

The entrance of African women writers into the Literary World serves as a tool for the reconstruction of wider society. By giving a voice to a female character, the usual male traditions of inscription and representation is disbalanced, which McCarty (1981: 368) readily opines. “Mari McCarty has argued that in voluntarily entering this sphere of female experience, a woman writer can write her way out of the cramped confines of patriarchal space”. In works written by men, women have been given fixed roles which in the eyes of men are undebated and unproblematic (Newell 1997: 26). The woman’s text on the contrary “generates its own experiences and symbols which are not merely the obverse of the male tradition or simply an imitation or revision of the writing of her male predecessors but a dimensional discourse embedded in both female and male traditions” (Newell 1997: 26).

Some of these roles allotted to women hinge on what is called “Community’s definition of women’s roles” (Newell 1997: 16). These roles allotted to women which form part of the tradition and values of the community bring about the subjugation of women and disrobe them of their basic rights. It is, therefore, the writing of African women writers that gives not only a voice but brings about a change in the African world, “constantly shifting discourse in which writers continually enter into dialogue with each other’s writing within a continuum” (Newell 1997: 17).

The experiences of Nigerian women who took part in the Nigeria-Biafra civil war of 1967-1970 spearheaded an exchange of roles which normally were assigned to men during the colonial time, namely as breadwinners. The new tasks undertaken by women increased their assertiveness in society and culture. Having entered the territory designated as the “masculine world”, women also entered the literary world as Grace Okafor in *Rewriting Popular Myths of Female Subordination*”

edited by Newell (1997: 80) states “With equal determination, women have invaded the literary domain hitherto dominated by men. As writers, they have brought new angles and insights into fiction, rejecting portrayals of women as self-effacing, docile and passive observers in the world of men.”

These attributes of being self-effacing and passive which are largely found in literature written by men like Chinua Achebe and Cyprian Ekwensi have been challenged by some female writers like Nwapa and Emecheta whose protagonists are not only active participators but also have contributed positively in their world. According to Okafor (1997: 82) “the heroines of Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta present ‘the woman-as-insider’s’ experience of the world and are therefore able to portray women’s struggles and triumphs as they intersect with the reality of that world, not only through sexual roles but also through other self-actualizing ventures.” These authors annunciate womanhood in a manner unknown in fiction written by Igbo men.

Women writers have also tried to expose and destroy some cultural stereotypes heaped on women, which encourage their subjugation and suppression. Some of these myths portray women as inferior and weak beings whereas men are seen as superior beings. Women are further described as sexual objects, fashioned for the lustful gratification of men. Okafor (1997: 83) highlights this, noting that “in the works of Wole Soyinka, for example, women are objectified as sex symbols in a world where female experience is confined to their relations with men as foolish virgins, mistresses and matrons. They are not given enough room to explore other possibilities for self-fulfillment outside these sexual roles.” In Onuora Nzekwu’s novel *Highlife for Lizards*, this popular male view about women’s weakness and subordination is cast in these words: “It is natural for a man to be direct in his ways with women and she to be devious; him to be plain, she to be subtle; him to roam the

earth as he pleases, she always to be home; him to be strong; she weak” (Nzekwu 1965: 20).

These ideas created by men to enhance women’s subordination are also nurtured by society, and often become accepted as the norm. Women in turn imbibe these as normal. It becomes imperative that gender ideals are rewritten. As such Okafor insists that “when male-centred views of society are projected on to literature, and imbibed by the readership, the ideas become endemic and can be dented, debunked or erased only through systemic and persistent attack by those who recognise them for what they are- that is, misconceptions of reality” (Okafor 1997: 83).

There is a great need to rewrite these misconceived perceptions and notions in literature because people believe whatever they read. When the same notion is consistently presented to the reading public, it is accepted as the norm in the society. It is easily internalized and perceived as a way of life. In their efforts to present women as complementary beings to men, who have all the potential needed to succeed in life and debunk the unequal status quo between men and women, Nigerian women writers have re-inflamed the popular adage of women’s unwavering support for men which states “behind every successful man is a woman” (Okafor 1997: 88). Other areas which women have tried to rewrite include motherhood, sexual roles, women’s nature, and women’s subordination. These are areas which touch the worth and dignity of womanhood. Women have been conditioned to believe that they play the role of second fiddle. “Women have been so long conditioned in the environment of masculine dominance that they have come to expect the male to be dominant and the female to be subservient” (Newell 1997: 127).

Another major area in which female writers have focused to reconstruct and rewrite misconceived opinion is polygynous marriage. Marriage, which is supposed to bring about happiness and companionship,

has turned out to be an institution in which women are stifled, dominated, and exploited. Polygyny brings about envy, distrust and tension in the family. Newell (1997:128-129) expresses this view stating that “polygyny is the epitome of female denigration, exploitation and domination in West Africa. If ‘home’ represents the place where one is most at peace and at ease, the polygynous home is not home but hell for the co-wives and their children as tensions reign supreme, fuelled by envy, distrust, intrigues and all sorts of destructive passions.” Noteworthy is that Islam and traditional African religions sanction polygyny; only Christianity rejects it. The Qur’an clearly states “marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four. But if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them) then, only one” (Newell 1997: 130).

It is well known that two, three, or four wives can never be treated equally. Even though the educated among Muslims provide two different accommodations for the wives, the problem of unequal treatment cannot be avoided. It is important to educate the general public on the social evil of polygyny. Unfortunately, in some cases, it is the women, mothers, who being insensitive to the feelings of their fellow women, who pressurize their underaged daughters to become second or third wives for material gain.

Having enumerated various ways in which African women writers have not only given a voice to women but have also repositioned women in the society and disentangled them from the male-constructed myths through which the subjugation of women is justified, the next section focuses on the analysis and the interpretation of the novel *Second Class Citizen*.

### **4.3 *Second Class Citizen*: Narrative Structures and Perspectives**

The novel *Second Class Citizen*, which projects a narrative voice and comprises 11 chapters and 234 pages, is a heterodiegetic narrative, as

Genette refers to it, since “the narrator and the protagonist are different individuals” (Fludernik 2009: 31). The novel is set in Nigeria and England. The story, which exhibits features of an “autobiographical novel”, happens between 1952 and 1974; has Adah as the main character, who is the protagonist and has other sub-characters. Lejeune, in explaining the difference between an autobiography and an autobiographical novel in his book *On Autobiography* (1989: 13) states that the autobiographical novel refers to all fictional texts in which the reader has reason to suspect, from the resemblance that they think they see, that there is a connection between the identity of the author and the protagonist. But the author has chosen to deny this identity, or at least not to confirm it and includes personal narratives (identity of narrator and protagonist) as well as impersonal narratives (protagonists designated in the third person).

Given the definition of the autobiographical novel, there is a lack of identity between the name of the author Buchi Emecheta with the name of the protagonist Adah. There is lack of autobiographical pact in their identities since the name of the author on the cover page of the novel bears no resemblance to that of the narrator and protagonist but there is a presence of the fictional pact which has two aspects “obvious practice of nonidentity, the author and the protagonist do not have the same name and affirmation of fictitiousness” (Lejeune 1989: 15).

Autobiographies are easily indicated when these four features according to Lejeune are present: “The form of the language is either narrative or prose; the subject deals with an individual life or tells a story of a personality; the name of the author must be identical with that of the narrator in discussing the position of the narrator; and the narrator and the principal character ought to be identical and the story will have a retrospective point of view of the narrative” (Lejeune 1989: 4). The novel *Second Class Citizen* does not meet with the basic criteria of being called an autobiography because first the name of the author is not identical with the name of the narrator. Secondly the narrator is different

from the main character. *Second Class Citizen* is therefore an autobiographical novel.

The novel begins with a flashback, which is also called *analepsis* in which prior events are recounted. The aim of this flashback, “often as part of something the hero/heroine remembers; is to explain unexpected events which have just been related” (Fludernik 2009: 34). According to the novel, the protagonist Adah recounts how her birth was insignificant, to the extent that her date of birth was not recorded, because she was born a girl when every other person was expecting her mother to give birth to a bouncing baby boy. “Thinking back on it all now that she was grown up, she was sorry for her parents. But it was their own fault; they should not have had her in the first place, and that would have saved a lot of people a lot of headache” (Emecheta 1974: 7).

In explaining the forms of narration in which ‘I’ and ‘He’ are both “I”, Mieke Bal (2009: 21) in her work *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, further explains that “It does not make a difference to the status of the narration whether a narrator refers to itself or not. As soon as there is language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject. As soon as there are images that represent figures doing things, there is a form of narration going on.” Considered from the grammatical point of view, the narrating subject is always a ‘first person’. As such Bal concludes that “the term ‘third person’ narrator is absurd: a narrator is not a ‘he’ or ‘she’. At best the narrator can narrate about someone else, a ‘he’ or ‘she’- who might, incidentally, happen to be the narrator as well” (Bal 2009: 21).

That the story in the novel is the personal experience of the author is buttressed by the fact that the story relates to pertinent questions she asked herself (Emecheta 1974: 26). Besides, we know that the author lived in London and has acknowledged that the experiences of Adah were her personal experiences. The novel belongs to that category of

fiction where the reader tries to establish resemblances which Lejeune (1989: 13) indicates: “The resemblance assumed by the reader can be anything from a fuzzy family likeness between the protagonist and the author, to the quasi-transparency that makes us say that he is the spitting image.”

The narrator of the story is a covert narrator, i.e., the presence of the narrator is not felt as one reads the novel. Fludernik (2009: 22) throws more light on this concept, noting that “a covert narrator is linguistically inconspicuous; s/he does not present him/herself as the articulator of the story or does so almost imperceptibly.”

In discussing the discourse of the novel which comprises the tense, speed, order, and point of view, it is evident that the story is chronologically structured; that is to say, it has a chronological order. It begins with the protagonist’s childhood, her escape into elitism, her marriage, her migration to London, her experiences with her husband in London, her experiences as a black woman, her attempt to use contraceptives to avoid subsequent births, violence from her husband, and the collapse of the marriage. These can be summarized thus: childhood and marriage, life in London as well as separation and the beginning of Adah’s life as a single mother. The discourse time is quite different from the story time. The childhood and marriage part, which can be called chapter 1, is found on pages 7–34 and covers 18 years. Life in London, which can be named chapter 2, is found on pages 35–173 and covers a period of 2 and half years, while the separation from the husband and life as a single parent, seen as chapter 3, is found on pages 174–190 and covers also a period of six months. Therefore, the discourse time speeds up as opposed to the story time.

In presenting the story, the author wants the reader to be part of the experience so that the reader sees the whole episode of the story through the protagonist’s eyes and can freely draw their conclusions. Adah acts as a reflector figure, reflecting the story to the reader. Therefore, the

author uses what is called *showing* in her presentational mode. The terms telling and showing go back to Percy Lubbock. In explaining the concept of showing, Fludernik (2009: 36) states that “showing, apparently unmediated presentation of events and people, can only occur in conversational exchanges which a novel quotes verbatim or in the context of drama or film. However, the novel also offers the additional option of seeing things from the point of view of a particular character.” In such cases, this character serves as a focalizer or lens and the story is transmitted to the reader filtered through the focalizer’s thoughts and perceptions. Graphically it would seem that the character has a camera in their mind, so to speak. Stanzel calls these characters “reflector figures” (Ibid: 36), since they reflect the story to the reader rather than tell it to them, as a narrator persona would. Emecheta exhibits the art of showing in narrating how important education is for Adah and all the ordeal she passes through because she wants to create an identity for herself. The reader can easily see the picture in their mind. One afternoon, Adah’s mother, Ma, was sitting on the veranda of their house. Having cooked the afternoon meal with Adah, Ma begins to undo her hair. Adah is tired of staying in the house. Her brother Boy has already gone to school, so she has no playmate. She wants to go to school as well. She goes into the house, gets an old scarf which she uses to pull her long dress up. She has neither pencil nor slate. She remembers that her father has a slate which he uses to sharpen the knife. Adah takes the slate. Suddenly her mother’s friend comes to visit. As both women are engrossed in their stories, Adah slips through the door and runs to the Methodist Girls Secondary School. She runs as fast as her legs can carry her. In their neighbourhood lives Mr Cole, a teacher at the Methodist school. Adah looks out for Mr Cole and enters his class. Though the children burst out laughing because of Adah’s big dress and the way she entered the class, Mr Cole takes control. He quickly smiles at Adah and assigns a seat to her. Adah in her little voice says: I came to school; my

parents would not send me (Emecheta 1974: 9). The story is seen from the perspective of the protagonist Adah, who serves as a reflector figure with a subjective position on various matters. She perceives the world through her own mind. The perspective is thereby embodied.

In a narrative perspective, the author uses internal focalization whereby “the narrator knows as much as the focal character” (Jahn 2017: 15). This character filters the information provided to the reader and can also be called a “character focalizer” (Ibid: 15). “One of the main effects of internal focalization is to attract attention to the mind of the reflector-character and away from the narrator and the process of narratorial mediation, its goal is therefore to draw attention to the story and not its telling” (Ibid: 17). In narrating the story, Emecheta uses the past tense which experts use for literary and history pieces. In many narrative traditions, especially in Western literature, it is believed that “narratives refer to specific experiences that occurred in some past world (real or imagined) and are usually reported in tenses of the past” (Fleischmann 2011: 5). Preterit is usually described as an “unmarked tense of narration” (Ibid: 6). Suzanne Fleischmann, in her book *Tense and Narrativity*, throws light on the use of the past tense in narrative form: “The prototypical past-tense narrative is concerned with events, rather than static description; the events are narrated not in random order but in a sequence, which is iconic with the temporal order in which they actually occurred. Moreover, the completion of one event is implied by the inception of the event that follows, a fact which may give rise to an interpretation of aspectual perfectivity for the past tense, where no other aspectual value is specifically indicated...” (Fleischmann 2011: 85). The prototypical narrative is factual and time-bound, and there is also a sense in which the ideal narrator is objective. In narrating her story, Emecheta uses simple language, metaphors, similes, free indirect discourse, and indirect and direct speech which denotes her style of writing and makes her work unique.

Each writer manipulates the language to convey their message. According to Ajeigbe (2007: 10) “language is the dress of thought, and style is the particular cut and fashion of the dress”. To understand the style of an author, there is a great need to study it carefully. The study of style is known as stylistics. Stylistics according to Olutayo (2015: 1) “is the study and interpretation of texts from both literary and linguistic perspectives. It developed from Rhetoric and serves as a bridge between literary criticism and linguistics.”

Ajeigbe (2007: 12) maintains that “a stylistician knows that sentences are motivated, that one cannot only describe a sentence but explains why it was chosen over other possibilities. Stylistics is used to elicit worthwhile information about works of literature and so has aided in the interpretation of texts.”

In choosing her diction, or her language, Emecheta uses simple expressions to convey her message as she talks about the work she wrote: “The words, simple, not sophisticated at all, kept pouring from her mind. She had written it, as if it were someone talking, talking fast, who would never stop” (Emecheta 1974: 165).

#### **4.3.1 Stylistic Devices in *Second Class Citizen***

The novel *Second Class Citizen* is enriched with many stylistic devices, for example hyperbole, coinage, idioms, proverbs/sayings, reiteration, use of indigenous language, allusions, and direct speech in addition to figures of speech which include simile, metaphor, irony, and euphemism. Grace Olutayo and Chidera Ilechukwu (2015: 1) in their article *Stylistic Devices in Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen* in which they study the frequency of selected lexical and rhetorical devices in the novel, note that there are 13 rhetorical devices with 233 occurrences in the novel, broken down as follows: “The 85 occurrences of simile equal 36.4% of the overall occurrences of rhetorical devices. Metaphor equals 9.01%, irony and analogy equal 2.1% each, euphemism equals 5.57%,

hyperbole equals 2.57%, coinages equal 6%, idioms equal 11.15%, collocation and proverbs equal 4.3% each, personification equals 3%, allusions equal 8.6% and onomatopoeia equals 4.72%.”

Simile and idioms have the highest frequency of occurrence. The direct nature of simile makes the comparison straightforward and easy to identify. Emecheta’s preference for simile reflects her choice of simple, comprehensible language (Olutayo and Ilechukwu 2015: 3). Examples of some of the stylistic devices are discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### **4.3.1.1 Reiteration**

As a literary device, reiteration is the simple repetition of words within a sentence to emphasize the words. Some examples and their occurrences are “It had all begun like a dream, until it became a reality, a presence” (Emecheta 1974: 7); “It lived with her, just like a presence” (Ibid: 16); “The smile of the presence became wide as the headmaster of Adah’s school made a list of available secondary schools which the children could apply for” (Ibid: 20); “Then her old dream came popping up” (Ibid: 162). The word “dream” here means her aspiration, which is repeated in various parts of the story. Adah has been guided by the presence. It all begins like a dream. This dream guides her from childhood until she can surmount her difficulties and get to the place of her dream, which is the United Kingdom. Despite all the difficulties she encounters in London, the presence remains with her till the end. Other examples of reiteration which occur in the text are “just a girl”, “she was only a girl”, “she is just a woman”. This reveals the themes of the novel: the degradation of the girl child and woman; the position of women in the society. Other words include “second-class, “inferior”, and “black” opposed to “first-class” and “white” (Olutayo and Ilechukwu 2015: 4). These words bring about another theme in the novel: racism.

#### **4.3.1.2 Coinage**

Coinage involves the production of new words. Some words that are coined from existing words and their frequency include “lappas” (Emecheta 1974: 8) – from ‘wrapper’; “pilizon” (Ibid: 13) – from ‘prison’; “touch not” (Ibid: 26) – she becomes pregnant immediately once she sleeps with a man; “been to” (Ibid: 35) – somebody who has travelled overseas. Other coined words which have their roots in one of the Nigerian native languages include “Yoruba-Ngbati accent” (Ibid: 7) – when someone uses a Yoruba accent to speak English; “craw-craw” (Ibid: 11) (Pidgin English) it means rashes; “koboko” (Ibid: 21) – cane. Coining new words from existing forms is typical of Nigerian English, because the “language is in continuous contact with other Nigerian languages” (Olutayo and Ilechukwu 2015: 4).

#### **4.3.1.3 Allusion**

Allusion is a figure of speech through which references are made to a known story to make a comparison in the reader’s mind. It can be a brief or an indirect reference to a person, thing, or idea. In *Second Class Citizen*, various forms of allusion are used which can be grouped into literary, biblical and socio-political allusions.

#### *Literary allusions*

In the discussion about the redundancy of the goddess of the River Oboshi, Adah says:

Oil was discovered very near her, and she allowed the oilmen to dig into her, without cursing them with leprosy. The Oilmen were mainly white, which was a surprise. Or perhaps she had long been declared redundant by the greater gods. That would not have surprised Adah, for everybody could be declared redundant these days, even goddesses. If not redundant, then she must have been in a RiP Van Winkle sleep, for she allowed the Hausa soldiers to come and massacre her sons and some Ibuza

men had married white women without getting leprosy. (Emecheta 1974: 16).

It is believed that Oboshi, the goddess of the river, strikes offenders with leprosy. When White men came to Nigeria to dig oil, people believed that the goddess would punish them with leprosy but surprisingly nothing happened to them, hence the allusion that the goddess had become redundant. The goddess did nothing during the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, when Hausa soldiers killed Biafrans. *Rip Van Winkle* is a story written by Washington Irving about a man who falls asleep and wakes up after 20 years. The author compares the redundancy of the goddess Oboshi with the sleep of Rip Van Winkle (Olutayo and Ilechukwu 2015: 5).

More examples of literary allusions are as follows: “He stopped to see the effect of his warning. He was happy to see that it had made an impression. Adah sat crumpled on the edge. of the new settee, just like the dying Ayesha in Rider Haggard’s *She*” (Emecheta 1974: 116) *She* subtitled a history of adventure which was written in 1887. “You are given a big bag of letters and parcels as heavy as the load of Christian in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*” (Ibid: 127). Francis compares the work he is doing to a load that the protagonist Christian carried in the novel *The Pilgrim’s Progress* written in 1678 by John Bunyan. “She must come back, he commanded, because he had not finished having his saying. To Adah he sounded like Nero in *Quo Vadis* who accused his courtiers of dying without his permission.” The novel *Quo Vadis* was written in 1896 by Henryk Sienkiewicz in Poland. The emperor Nero, though known as a tyrant was described as incompetent and petty. The author compares Francis’s behaviour to that of the emperor Nero, whose command Adah was bound to listen to and obey.

### *Biblical allusion*

“She watched and listened to her husband preaching to her about the diligence of the virtuous woman, whose price was above rubies” (Emecheta 1974: 98). The passage refers to the qualities of a virtuous woman, praised in Proverbs 31.

#### *Socio-political allusion*

“...for she also allowed the Hausa soldiers to come and massacre her sons” (Ibid: 16). The author refers to the Nigeria-Biafra civil war from 1967 to 1970 in which Nigerian soldiers fought with the Biafrans of South-East Nigeria.

#### **4.3.1.4 Idiomatic expressions**

Idioms are used as figurative language whose meaning is not to be taken literally. They are usually used to make a brief expression. To bring out the uniqueness of the story, the author punctuates the plot with the use of idiomatic expressions. Some examples cited: “Let the sleeping dog lie” ( Emecheta 1974: 32). When Francis accuses Adah of not crying for him as he is about to leave for London, Adah who knows how she wailed after Francis left, does not know how to explain to him that she cried for him. Knowing that Francis would never believe her, she only says: “let the sleeping dog lie”. “This was just one of those cases where honesty would not have been the best policy” (Ibid: 42) used when Adah has to get a job and so must make a fool of the old doctor to prevent him from looking her belly-button because if it is discovered that she is pregnant, she will not get the job. “The fact that she was still laying the golden egg stopped Francis from walking out on her” (Ibid: 42). Laying the golden egg means earning money to maintain the family. “She would have told them that marriage was not a bed of roses but a tunnel of thorns, fire and hot nails” (Ibid: 44). Other girls of her age working with Adah in the library talk always about boyfriends and how rosy their lives will be when they get married. Adah who has had a bitter experience with marriage sums it up with the popular idiomatic expres-

sion “Life is not a bed of roses”. “Adah is hoping for the impossible, it would be easier for a loaded camel to go through the eye of a sewing needle than for a child with two parents to get a nursery place” (Ibid: 47). This is used to show how difficult it will be for Adah’s children to get a place at the nursery school. “From that day on she took everything Trudy said with a pinch of salt” (Emecheta 1974: 53). Trudy, one of the minders in Adah’s district who looks after Adah’s children neglects the children and romances with her lover when she should be at work. Adah’s children are in the backyard pulling rubbish out of the bin. When Adah sees her children at the dustbin, pulling things out, Trudy tries to make some explanations to Adah which are all lies. “She threw caution to the wind, walked menacingly towards her husband, snatched the envelope to the amazement of the latter, opened it and ran her eyes through the contents” (Ibid: 69). Throwing caution to the wind means doing something without minding its consequence.

#### ***4.3.1.5 Use of proverbs and sayings***

The author also used proverbs in embellishing the story. Proverbs in Igbo cosmopolity is said to be the oil that is used for the embellishment of the language. Examples are: “But he was forgetting the Yoruba saying that goes, a hungry dog does not play with one with a full stomach” (Emecheta 1974: 70). Francis is discussing his family with other Nigerian men. He does not know that they envy him, because his wife is earning money and supporting him in his studies and they are living together with their children, something that was quite rare among the blacks by then. So, they conspire against him.

“When in Rome, do as Rome does” (Ibid: 118). After Adah gives birth to her son, she is in the hospital ward. She sees how other young women are showing off their beautiful night dresses. She has none and has the intention of asking her husband to buy her one, so as to show off like the others. She was learning the English culture.

“Did she not make her own bed? Well, let her sleep on it” (Emecheta 1974: 159). Okpara meets Adah where she is thinking about her marriage ordeal with Francis. Okpara notices she is Igbo, asks what is wrong and takes her back to the house. In his effort to talk sense into Francis, he asks him to be a man and look for a job so as to take care of his family. Francis insults him and asks Okpara to mind his business. Adah realizes that she has made the mistake of her life by marrying Francis and concludes that with the famous English proverb, as you make your bed, so you lie on it, meaning she has to bear the consequences of her marriage.

“Cowards die many times before their death” (Emecheta 1974: 128). Francis makes up stories how big, fierce dogs go after those who distribute newspapers during winter. He makes it up so that Adah will quickly recover from her sickbed and start off with her job. Adah eventually meets someone who is also distributing the newspapers happily. She realizes it was a made-up-story.

#### ***4.3.1.6 Use of indigenous language***

Emecheta makes use of indigenous languages in her work. Though she is Igbo, she brings in some Yoruba words which she learnt growing up in Lagos.

“Iyawo” (Emecheta 1974: 93) : Yoruba word for a young woman.

“Opoho” (Ibid: 99) : Igbo word for woman.

“Okei” (Ibid: 99) : Igbo word for man.

#### ***4.3.1.7 Direct speech***

In direct speech, the exact words used by a writer or a speaker are reported. For example: “You could have tried Francis. Look at your friend, Mr Eke – when he knew that his wife was coming with their daughter, he made sure he moved away from this lot, she said aloud”

(Emecheta 1974: 38). Adah meant that Francis could have looked for better accommodation knowing full well that she was coming with two children.

“Who is going to look after your children for you, Francis asked”? “I can’t go on doing it; you’ll have to look for someone. I can’t go on looking after your children for you” (Emecheta 1974: 45). Francis, who has been brain-washed by his neighbours, does not want to look after their children, because the children of immigrants must have foster-parents as was the case at that time in England. Francis who has no voice himself wants Adah to look for child-minders since it was believed that only “first-class citizens” live with their children.

“I can’t wait to see them pack their brats and leave our house, the landlady would say loud and clear along the hallway” (Ibid: 72). The landlady wants Adah to leave because she has a job of a first-class citizen.

“I felt so fulfilled when I finished it, just as if I had just made another baby” (Emecheta 1974: 166). Adah makes her feelings known to Bill, her colleague at work. She expresses how she felt upon completing her manuscript.

“You keep forgetting that you are a woman and that you are black. The white man can barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breast-feed her baby” (Emecheta 1974: 167). This summarizes or brings out Francis’s concept of women, that is to say, brainless people.

#### **4.3.1.8 Simile**

A simile is a figure of speech that makes a clear and direct comparison between two different things using the words “like” or “as”. The novel *Second Class Citizen* is punctuated with simile which makes the story very simple and interesting. Examples of simile embedded in the story include “But the kind of men that she was being pushed to by her clever cousin and Ma’s tactful hints were bald and huge, almost as big as her

dead Pa” (Emecheta 1974: 19). Men asking Adah’s hand in marriage are old enough to be her father and so are compared with her dead father.

“The smile on Francis’s face was like a warm sunshine after a thunderous rain” (Emecheta 1974: 25). It compares the smile on Francis’s face to that of warm sunshine which usually comes after rainfall; after Adah’s announcement of how good it will be, if both of them could travel to the United Kingdom for their studies.

“Adah from the day of her registry marriage, had seen the romantic side of her life being shattered, like broken glass, about her” (Emecheta 1974: 28). Adah’s marriage is compared with broken glass, showing the difficulties she would encounter in that sort of marriage, where her voice is never sought for in any decision, but she has to work and supply the economic resources.

“But how could she protest to a man who was past reasoning? The whole process was an attack, as savage as that of any animal” (Emecheta 1974: 40). This passage shows how brutal Francis is in his sexual demands.

“Though a girl may be counted as one child, to her people a boy was like four children put together” (Emecheta 1974: 62) this shows the preference of boys to girls in Igboland. It shows also that girls were considered as inferior beings in Igbo traditional society.

“No man liked his freedom curtailed, particularly by a woman, his woman. He would not argue, he would not beat her into submission because of the baby, but he was not going to be tied to Adah, either. Why, in bed she was as cold as a dead body” (Emecheta 1974: 64). Adah’s attitude in her sexual life with Francis is compared to that of a dead body. It shows a lack of love, cooperation, disinterestedness, merely a routine to be done.

#### ***4.3.1.9 Metaphor***

A metaphor is a figure of speech that contains an implied comparison, in which a word used to describe one thing can be used to describe

something different. It gives the reader a better concept of the character or event described (Olutayo and Ilechukwu 2015: 7). Some of its usage in the novel include the following: “The title ‘United Kingdom’ when pronounced by Adah’s father sounded so heavy, like the type of noise one associated with bombs. It was so deep, so mysterious, that Adah’s father always voiced it in hushed tones, wearing such a respectful expression as if he were speaking of God’s Holiest of Holies” (Emecheta 1974: 8). Here the United Kingdom is compared to God’s Holiest of Holies.

“Then she said to Francis, Bill called that story my brainchild” (Emecheta 1974: 170). Bills calls the story Adah writes, *The Bride Price*, her brainchild.

#### **4.3.1.10 Irony**

Irony refers to literary words used in which their meaning becomes the opposite of the intended word. “Adah scribbled away, enjoying the smell of crawl-crawl and dried sweat” (Emecheta 1974: 11). Crawl-Crawl, otherwise known as rashes and dried sweats, are not things to be enjoyed. Adah has to put up with them. The most important thing for her is that she is in school.

#### **4.3.1.11 Euphemism**

As an idiomatic expression, a euphemism is a polite, indirect expression which replace words and phrases considered unpleasant. The euphemism loses its literary meaning and refers to something else in its bid to hide the unpleasantness of the words.

The author uses euphemisms in talking about the sexual activities which occur in the text, having come from a cultural background where the discussion of sex is a taboo. Sex is not openly referred to in the text, but words are used to hide the use of the word.

“All Adah had to do was to go to the American Library, work till two-thirty, come home and be waited on hand and foot, and in the evening be made love to” (Emecheta 1974: 22).

“As soon as her husband touches her, she gets a swollen tummy” (Emecheta 1974: 22). The word ‘touch’ is used instead of sex.

“Is it too much for a man to want his wife?” (Emecheta 1974: 85). The word ‘want’ is used to replace the sexual desire of Francis wanting to have sex with Adah.

From the stylistic devices en discussed, it is evident that the author embellishes her writing with literary styles which are seen in her choice of words and descriptions to bring out the desired mood, images, and meaning in her text.

#### **4.3.2 Characters in Second Class Citizen**

The characters which feature in the novel can be divided into major characters and minor characters. The two major characters are Adah and Francis. Adah’s father known as Mr Ofili (Pa) and her mother known as Mrs Ofili (Ma), Trudy, and Bill are minor characters. *Second Class Citizen* is seen as a novel of personal development (Bildungsroman).

Adah is an intelligent, bright, ambitious young girl who has to surmount a lot of difficulties to have access to education in Lagos. As a child, she ran away from home to go to school and put herself in a class of a teacher who lives in their neighbourhood. Her parents do not want to send her. “I came to school – my parents would not send me!” (Emecheta 1974: 11). This act of running away to school earns her a beating and the opportunity to enrol in a primary school like her brother Boy. A few months after her enrolment, her father who has been her source of support and encouragement dies.

Adah is an ambitious woman who comes from a culture where the education of girls is not promoted and encouraged. She wants to realize her dream of being educated to have self-actualization. The death of her

father who earlier put her in school forces her to return to the village with her mother, who is inherited by the father's brother. She is sent to live with her uncle, her mother's brother, where she attends a public school. She is saddled with morning functions which she had to fulfil before going to school. These functions never deter her from remaining focused to achieve her aim. For instance, it is narrated that her day starts at four-thirty in the morning, starting with the task of filling a mighty water drum before going to school. "This usually means making ten to twelve trips to the public 'pump', as those public monstrosities were called in those days" (Emecheta 1974: 17).

Following her stint of hard work, she wins a scholarship to the Methodist Girls Secondary School in Lagos. As a result of her diligence and hard work, she performs well at the school leaving certificate which procures her a job at the American consulate in Lagos. Due to the bad experiences she encounters at her relative's home, Adah wants a home for herself which will give her an opportunity to further her education. Here Adah displays her naivety and inexperience. It is this idea of getting a home that makes her marry Francis. To read for the entrance examination or the "A" level required a serene atmosphere that could only be provided by an adequate home. Living by herself as a single girl in Lagos is unthinkable within the cultural milieu. She thus has to marry Francis to have a home (Emecheta 1974: 23).

Her marriage to Francis is exploitative. She is a victim of abusive. Since she works at the American consulate as a librarian, her monthly salary is used to take care of Francis's parents and siblings. When Francis learns that she is working for the Americans and has doubts about being married to someone who earns more than him, his father chastises him and asks him to marry her since the whole money she earns will be brought to their family. In his words: "You are a fool of a man, you are. Where will she take the money to? Her people, who did not even come to congratulate her on the arrival of baby Titi? Her relatives, who did not

care whether she lived or died? The money is for you, can't you see? Let her go and work for a million Americans and bring their money here, into this house. It is your luck. You made a good choice in marriage, son" (Emecheta 1974: 24).

Adah wants to fulfil her dream of going to England for her education and so suggests it to Francis; both can travel and continue their education. Francis who never decides anything without the help of his parents, asks his parents who in turn suggest that Francis goes while Adah supports him and sends him money every month for his upkeep. After Francis leaves for London, Adah feels she could work on her in-laws to be allowed to join her husband. She promises them more money if she is allowed to go to England and gives her jewels to Francis' mother. All these promises make them allow her to go to England. Adah is to "be as cunning as a serpent but as harmless as a dove" (Emecheta 1974: 28) in dealing with her in-laws.

In England, Adah remains a strong young woman who passes through a crucible or ordeal at the hands of her husband. She becomes a victim of sexual abuse, domestic violence, and rejection. Her husband cannot get good accommodation for her and their two kids. He prefers to get a slum which he shares with fellow Africans and which according to him befits them as "second class citizens". He tries to make Adah have a low opinion of herself and consider herself in England as a second-class citizen as quoted: "He spat out in anger: you must know, my dear young lady, that in Lagos you may be a million publicity officers for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants: you may be living like an élite, but the day you land in England, you are a second class citizen. So, you can't discriminate against your own people, because we are all second-class" (Emecheta 1974: 37). Adah develops some degree of self-confidence and cannot be pushed into a complex by Francis. Adah knows her abilities and believes strongly in herself and what the future holds for her.

Moreover, having had two children already by the age of 18, Francis should have known the importance of child-spacing and the health hazards Adah would incur but he is not interested. He only wants to satisfy his sexual demands which he feels is his right and in such an animalistic manner as stated: "But how could she protest to a man who was past reasoning? The whole process was an attack, as savage as that of any animal" (Emecheta 1974: 40) Francis's notion of marriage is synonymous with sex. "As far as he was concerned, marriage was sex and lots of it nothing more" (Ibid: 41). Since this is his understanding of marriage, Adah whom he thinks as his sex object has to give in to his desires irrespective of whether it will result in another child. For Francis therefore, "a woman was a second-class human, to be slept with at any time, even during the day, and if she refused, to have sense beaten into her until she gave in; to be ordered out of bed after he had done with her; to make sure she washed his clothes and got his meals ready at the right time" (Emecheta 1974: 164).

Adah is an organized person with strong self-will and self-determination. In her quiet moments, having given birth to four children, she feels the urge and desire to be a writer. "She worked out a timetable and found that she could manage to have three hours of quiet each afternoon. Then her old dream came popping up. Why not attempt writing? She had always wanted to write" (Emecheta 1974: 162). She follows it up by buying herself a copy of *Teach Yourself to Write* and starts writing. She writes the manuscript of the book that is to be called *The Bride Price*. She gives the manuscript to her colleagues who praise her for the work done. Francis's effort to demoralize her through his words are in vain. He says: "You keep forgetting that you are a woman and that you are black. The whiteman can barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breast-feed baby" (Ibid: 167).

Bill, one of her colleagues, calls her work “her brainchild” (Emecheta 1974: 170). Adah feels fulfilled after writing the work and says: “I felt so fulfilled when I finished it, just as if I had just another baby” (Ibid: 166). Adah gives the manuscript to her husband to read to get his opinion. He refuses to read it but later takes the manuscript and burns it. The burning of the manuscript and the violence which Adah experiences make her seek a divorce. She knows that she cannot attain her goal in life if she continues to live with Francis. The longing for self-identity and self-actualization necessitates Adah’s decision to get divorced from Francis so that she can concentrate on herself and her children without being molested and violated. Adah proves to be a person who longs to be educated, follows her dream diligently, and is determined to achieve her goal. She achieves her goal by reading sociology at university and being a writer. She also regains her freedom by divorcing her husband Francis. Education becomes a key to her independence and self-actualization. As a novel of personal development, “*Second Class Citizen* is quite successful in the depiction of Adah’s growth from the initial stage of naivete and ignorance to her final stage of self-realization and independence” (Porter 1988: 127).

Francis Obi is married to Adah Ofuli is an accountant student whom Adah meets during her studies at the Methodist Girls Secondary School. Francis is an irresponsible young man who cannot make a decision as a man but allows his parents to make decisions that concern his family. Being sceptical and afraid of his friends laughing at him over Adah’s bigger salary, since Adah is chosen to work as a librarian with the American consulate, he goes to ask the opinion of his father: “Do you think our marriage will last if I allow Adah to go and work for the Americans? Her pay will be three times my own. My colleagues at work will laugh at me. What do you think I should do?” (Emecheta 1974: 24).

Francis cannot pay the £500 bride-price Adah’s Ma and the members of her family are demanding because he is from a poor home. Francis is

a spoiled child who feels others have to work and meet his needs. Having acquired a well- paid job, Adah feels it is time for them to move to the United Kingdom to have her education and give the best to her children. Francis has to go and discuss with his parents who want Francis to go while Adah sponsors him. Francis tells Adah (Ibid: 28).

Adah is by Francis and his family. Without paying the bride-price, they know that traditionally Adah is not married to Francis but since she has nobody, she has to be exploited. Adah, aware of their scheme, regrets marrying Francis at all, but it is too late since she has given birth to a child. She retorts: “So, she was to stay in Nigeria, finance her husband, give his parents expensive gifts occasionally, help in paying the school fees for some of the girls, look after her young children and what then, rot? So, this was where her great dream had led her” (Emecheta 1974: 28). Adah consoles herself with the thought that she would “be as cunning as a serpent but as harmless as a dove” (Ibid: 28). Adah prepares for Francis’s travel to the United Kingdom and gives him £20 as dictated by his parents. Adah believes that after a while she will work on her in-laws so that she is allowed to go to the United Kingdom, too.

Francis is a lazy man who could not get a suitable apartment for his family. In the United Kingdom, Francis transforms into a male supremacist who tell Adah how to carry out the role of a wife. “The Francis that came to meet them was a new Francis” (Emecheta 1974: 36). As Adah tells him how he could have tried harder to get better accommodation, he raises his hand to beat her but relents as Emecheta (1974: 39) explains: “Francis’s temper snapped. He lifted his hand as if to slap her but thought better of it. There would be plenty of time for that, if Adah was going to start telling him what to do. This scared Adah a little. He would not have dreamt of hitting her at home because his mother and father would not have allowed it.”

Being someone who has never made a decision by himself, Francis allows himself to be directed by his Nigerian neighbours on how to run

his family. Upon her arrival, he wants Adah to see herself as a second-class citizen as he himself and his Nigerian neighbours have made themselves to be (Emecheta 1974: 39).

Francis views Adah as his sex object. For him, marriage is all about sex. He does not care if she is in the mood or not. He does not take responsibility for his actions. Having had two children, he does not care if his wife becomes pregnant in his bid to have a sexual relationship with her. His is like an attack animal devoid of tenderness and love as Adah exclaims: “But how could she protest to a man who was past reasoning? The whole process was an attack, as savage as that of any animal” (Emecheta 1974: 40).

Francis can be described as the representation of the colonial entity. Though he decries being discriminated upon in England, he reproduces the pattern of colonial domination in his marriage to Adah. As an African, Francis believes in the gender factor, which is deeply rooted in African tradition. Gender determines the status of women, roles in domestic/private spheres, and the levels of their participation in the political/public sphere. He has imbibed the patriarchal concept that a man is worth more than a woman and thereby dictates to a woman what is to be done as strongly stated by Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex* (1989: 68): “Woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.”

This patriarchal concept of the non-importance of a woman which entails subjugating her and ordering her about, is reflected in Francis’s vision of a woman: “To him, a woman was a second-class human, to be slept with at any time, even during the day, and if she refused, to have sense beaten into her until she gave in; to be ordered out of bed after he had done with her; to make sure she washed his clothes and got his meals ready at the right time” (Emecheta 1974: 164).

Moreover, Francis lacks a sense of responsibility. He does not care for the welfare of his wife and children. He exchanges his role as head of the family to become what in Igbo language is called *Obiageli*, literally translated as ‘one who has come to enjoy the sweat or hard work of others.’ As a student in London, he does not want to work to support Adah but is only interested in impregnating her to give her more mouths to feed. Adah becomes the breadwinner and feels bad whenever she falls sick and cannot go to work. In Igbo culture, a man works hard to take care of his family, at least to feed his family. Francis is a total failure to both his wife and his children. He cannot read hard to pass his exams but blames his failure on Adah for asking him to look after his children. He wastes his time watching television with his neighbour, Mr Noble, instead of reading his books.

He has no self-control in sexual matters. He establishes a sexual relationship with Trudy, the childminder. Trudy’s amorous relationship with him almost causes the death of Vicky since Trudy abandons the children to attend to his sexual desires. The children play with dustbins and wash their hands with dirty water, through which Vicky contracts Meningitis.

Francis is a violent man. He hits Adah at the least provocation or when his needs are not met. He beats her even when she is pregnant. Because of these fights Mr Nobles asks them to leave his apartment. Being a failure, Francis wants Adah to become a failure like himself. This is why he does not want to read her manuscript. He tries many times to discourage Adah from writing and reading. Adah is not discouraged. She implores him to read her manuscript as her colleagues have all read it and given her feedback. He waits for Adah to go for her normal Saturday shopping. In his anger and hatred, he burns the manuscript. Adah confronts him and asks why he burned the manuscript, which Bill one of her colleagues called her “brainchild” (Emecheta 1974: 176). He hits Adah so hard that she ends up with a broken finger

and swollen lips. Adah decides to have her freedom by packing and leaving the house with her kids. Francis secretly follows the children after school and comes to the new house Adah moved to. He forces himself into the house and starts breaking Adah's things. Adah needs protection from the state. In the courtroom, Francis denies ever being married to Adah and denies the paternity of the children so as not to pay alimony. He asks Adah to produce the marriage certificate and the birth certificates of the children. He has burnt all of them. "To him, Adah and the kids ceased to exist. Francis told her this in the court in low tones in their own language" (Emecheta 1974: 174).

In summary, Francis represents some African men who believe that their wives are their slaves and so they can do with them whatever they desire. Domestic violence has led to the death of many women. Francis is a representative of male chauvinism in Igbo cultural society.

Mr Ofili, Adah's pa, plays a minor role. His mother died when he was five but promised to come back as his child. This is one of Africa's myth, which is called reincarnation. "Pa got married and his wife gave birth to a girl which he believed was his 'come back mother'. So Adah was loaded with strings of names: "Nne nna", "Adah nna", "Adah eze" (Emecheta 1974: 13). Believing that Adah is his mother, he loves Adah so much and becomes a source of inspiration to her. Since boys were given the privilege to go to school in the 1950s in Nigeria, Pa sends Boy to school while Adah stays with her mother. He considers sending Adah to school but his wife, Adah's Ma always suggests that it is not necessary. Even if she is to go, it is just to learn how to count and write her name. Women were known just to do simple business that needs an ability to count money. Scientific learning was reserved only for boys.

Adah's father is the one that inspires Adah's longing for education. When the lawyer Nwaeze comes back after his studies from the United Kingdom, Adah's father talks about the United Kingdom as if it is heaven and Adah nurses the dream of going to that heaven. Emecheta nar-

rates: “The title ‘United Kingdom’ when pronounced by Adah’s father sounded so heavy, like the type of noise one associated with bombs. It was so deep, so mysterious, that Adah’s father always voiced it in hushed tones, wearing such a respectful expression as if he were speaking of God’s Holiest of Holies. Going to the United Kingdom must surely be like paying God a visit. The United Kingdom, then, must be like heaven” (Emecheta 1974: 8).

Adah nurses the dream of going there as well to please both herself and her father. When Adah runs away to a school since her parents could not send her, it is expected following Igbo tradition that Adah’s Pa would beat her but her Pa gives her few strokes just because of his wife and afterwards consoles her (Emecheta 1974: 13). When Pa decides to send Adah to school, Adah’s mother thinks he will send her to a Methodist Primary but “Pa would not hear of her going to the Methodist Primary; she was to go to the posh, Ladi-Lak” (Emecheta 1974: 9).

Pa is a traditional man who believes in African tradition. He believes in Oboshi, the goddess of Ibuza, who inflicts punishment on those who err against her. He is happy that Nwaeze did not bring back a European lady with him lest “Oboshi would have sent leprosy on her” (Emecheta 1974: 15). Pa, who does not live long but dies as a result of the injuries sustained during the war, is a source of inspiration to Adah. Her quest for education in the United Kingdom is the seed he nurtured in her.

Mrs Ofili, Adah’s Ma, is a woman who believes that a woman is supposed to be a housewife while the man becomes the breadwinner as constituted by British imperial rule in Nigeria. She occupies herself with cooking, sewing, plaiting her hair, and chatting away with friends. She does not believe in educating girl and is not in support of Adah’s long stay in school. For her, Adah can go just to learn how to write her name, how to count, and then get ready for marriage. She believes that boys are more important than girls; girls are meant to be dependent. Emecheta narrates that women of her cadre are characteristically nonchalant about

their daughters. She is punished for her carelessness by being made to drink *garri* by the policeman who eventually takes Adah home (Emecheta 1974: 12).

After the death of Pa, his brother inherits Mrs Ofili, Adah's Ma. Her feelings are not taken into consideration. "Among the Ibos in particular, a girl was little more than a piece of property" (Emecheta 1974: 34). Ma is treated by the husband's people as property which is transferred from person to person. This shows how women were subjugated in the Igbo traditional culture of 1950s, especially widows. Emecheta remarks: "Ma was not happy with her new husband and it was considered time that Adah started making a financial contribution to her family. This terrified Adah. For a time, it seemed as if she must give in to save Ma from the humiliating position she found herself. She hated Ma for marrying again, thinking it was a betrayal of Pa" (Emecheta 1974: 18). Adah on this account "dreamt of marrying early; a rich man who would allow Ma and Boy to come and stay with her" (Ibid :18).

Having reach the age of 11, Adah is being pushed by her Ma and her cousins to get married to one of the old men. Though her mother tries to convince her that older men take better care of their wives than the younger, educated ones, Adah prefers otherwise noting that "she would never, never in her life get married to any man, rich or poor, to whom she would have to serve his food on bended knee: she would not consent to live with a husband whom she would have to treat as a master and refer to as 'Sir' even behind his back. She knew that all Ibo women did this, but she wasn't going to!" (Emecheta 1974: 19). Adah's Ma is not happy that Adah marries poor Francis who cannot pay the bride price of £500. She does not attend Adah's wedding. Adah's mother dies as Adah gives birth to her first child, Titi.

Trudy is one of the daily minders in North Finchley. Having arrived in England with her two children, Titi and Vicky, Adah gets a job at the Library, which the neighbours consider a first-class job. Living in a

black neighbourhood, it is the norm that children of African descent are given away to be fostered. It does not matter whether the person is competent; the fact that she is white is enough. Thus, “in England, Nigerian children have two sets of mothers – the natal mother, and the social mother. No one cared whether a woman was suitable or not, no one wanted to know whether the house was clean or not; all they wanted to be sure of was that the foster-mother was white. The concept of “whiteness” could cover a multitude of sins” (Emecheta 1974: 45).

It is believed that only first-class citizens live with their children. Francis is pushed by his Nigerian neighbours into coercing Adah to advertise for foster parents. Adah refuses vehemently for she wants to train her children by herself. When all their efforts to force her to send her children away proved abortive, Francis tells Adah that he will not look after her children for her while she goes off to work. It is the summer holidays, so he is at home. “Who is going to look after your children for you? Francis asked one day when she was tucking the babies into their settee bed. I can’t go on doing it; you’ll have to look for someone. I can’t go on looking after your children for you” (Emecheta 1974: 45). Adah becomes worried and confides in Janet since the waiting list of getting a place at the nursery school is too long. Babalola hears of Trudy and she promises to look after Adah’s children in her own home. Trudy is a careless woman who leaves the minding of the children and attends to her sexual needs with her customers. Adah pays her an unexpected visit and finds Trudy in an uncompromising position as reported:

She walked in and entered the sitting-room. She saw Trudy, a plump woman with too much make up. Her lips were scarlet and so were her nails. The colour of her hair was too black to be natural. Maybe it was originally brown like those of her little girls; but the jet black dye gave her whole personality a sort of vulgarity. She was laughing loudly at a joke which she was sharing with a man who was holding her at a funny angle. Adah

closed her eyes. The laughter stopped abruptly when they noticed her (Emecheta 1974: 51).

When she asks of her children, she is shown where they are. The sight of what she sees makes her burst into tears. “Vicky was busy pulling rubbish out of the bin and Titi was washing her hands and face with the water leaking from the toilet. When they saw her, they ran to her, and Adah noticed that Vicky had no nappy on” (Emecheta 1974: 52). Adah goes and reports Trudy to the Children’s officer. Trudy tells lie upon lie but is reprimanded. Adah gets the greatest shock of her life: “As for Adah, she listened to Trudy destroying forever one of the myths she had been brought up to believe: that the white man never lied” (Ibid: 52). From that day, Adah takes what Trudy says with a pinch of salt.

Adah usually pays Trudy £6 a week. Francis develops an illicit relationship with Trudy. Adah receives an urgent call one day in her office. Vicky is sick. He has contracted meningitis from dirty water. Adah goes to confront Trudy. To her disbelief, Trudy has already phoned the hospital and told Adah that Vicky may have contracted it from Nigeria before coming to England (Emecheta 1974: 65-66). Adah threatens to kill Trudy if anything should happen to her children. She is advised to go and report to the director of Child-minders, Miss Stirling. After listening to Adah, space was created for Adah’s children in the school. Her daughter is asked to begin the following Monday. Trudy’s name is removed from the list of approved child-minders. Trudy leaves the district because of Adah’s threat and moves to Camden Town.

Bill is a Canadian, who repulses everything English. He is the first real friend Adah has outside her family. Bill is married to a Librarian. He likes black writers and encourages Adah to read as many novels as possible. As Adah has no knowledge of black writers except Chinua Achebe and Flora Nwapa, “Bill tut-tutted at her and told her what a shame it was that an intelligent black girl like her should know so little about her own black people” (Emecheta 1974: 152).

He becomes a source of encouragement to Adah and gives her as many books as possible to read. It becomes routine that during the staff break, he talks and expands on authors and their new books. Consequently, he then requests the book and the Camden Borough buys it. He reads it first then passes it on to Adah who in turn pass it to Peggy, and Peggy passes it to any other interested staff. "It was through Bill that Adah knew of James Baldwin. She came to believe, through reading Baldwin, that black was beautiful. She asked Bill about it and he said, did she not know that black was beautiful" (Emecheta 1974: 161).

Bill is non-discriminative. He is large-hearted. He is an open-minded person who upon noticing talent in a person, encourages them to blossom. After Adah writes her manuscript *The Bride-Price*, she gives it first to Bill, who reads it and praises her for her first attempt. He promises to give it to somebody to publish. Bill encourages her to type it saying it is good. Adah intimates to Bill how she felt when she finished writing the manuscript: "I felt so fulfilled when I finished it, just as if I had just made another baby, she told Bill and he replied: But that is how writers feel. Their work is their brainchild. This is your brainchild..." (Ibid: 176).

The word, *brainchild* keeps coming into Adah's mind and helps her to think and write knowing that her works are like her children. Bill, though Canadian, discovers the talent in Adah and helps her to develop it. He is non-discriminatory and helps her to grow in her quest to be a writer.

In conclusion, the novel *Second Class Citizen* is a Bildungsroman, a formation novel that deals with the growth of an individual. The Bildungsroman belongs to the genre in which the young hero is intent on discovering themselves and being true to that identity. The genre aims towards self-development and identity. In a Bildungsroman, the goal is growth and maturity which the hero achieves gradually but with great difficulty.

Adah achieves her aim of going to the United Kingdom to be educated as Lawyer Nweze did. There are a lot of obstacles in her way caused primarily by her gender and secondly by her husband. She struggles to overcome the former by being a crusader for equality through hard work and the latter by divorcing her husband. These obstacles help Adah in her self-discovery and her growth as an independent woman.

One may be tempted to ask why Emecheta did not choose to write the novel as an autobiography rather than an autobiographical novel. In distinguishing the main interests of autobiography and autobiographical novel (Pascal 1959: 134) states: “true autobiographies are those whose chief concern is to illuminate a personality whereas what the autobiographical novelist seeks something general, representative, within his own experiences, the deeper logic within his character, which life itself may in certain respects distort, or within some dominant aspect of his character.”

In true autobiographies where a personality is illuminated, the whole truth will not be written because the writer will try to protect their image. “Only fiction does not lie: it half-opens a hidden door on a man’s life, through which slips, out of control, his unknown soul” (Lejeune 1989: 27). Autobiographical writings also describe the life of a person, their education and growth in a given society as Wagner-Egelhaaf (2005: 54) in *Autobiographie* states “*Die Autobiographie schildere das Leben des noch nicht sozialisierten Menschen, die Geschichte seines Werdens, seiner Bildung und seines Hineinwachsens in die Gesellschaft.*”

Emecheta, in writing her novel, saw the story not primarily as her own but as the story of women in general who suffer under the oppressive customs and traditions imposed on them by patriarchy. “Autobiographical novels establish the nature of the ultimate truth to which their texts aspire” (Lejeune 1989: 28). Emecheta, therefore, brought into focus the status of the girl child and the position of women in Igbo soci-

ety in the 1960s. She knew that many women were trapped in such situations like herself and was aware that many women who were entangled in slavish marriages and those considered the second sex because of their gender could take a leaf from her book and free themselves from their bondage. Her work also serves as a source of encouragement for those who were already putting up a struggle knowing that since someone had succeeded in giving herself an identity, they too could attain theirs if they worked hard. Education was the only key to their liberation. The education of a girl child may not come on a silver platter. The girl child is called upon to fight for her right to an education. The woman has to take her destiny into her own hands. It is through education that a woman can get her independence. *Second Class Citizen* shows how Adah struggles to be educated and how her resilience pays off because at the end she succeeds in extricating herself from her abusive husband as well as reading sociology at a university in London.

## CHAPTER 5.

### *DAS VERBORGENE WORT (2001)* BY ULLA HAHN

#### 5.1 Brief Biography of Ulla Hahn (1945- )

Ulla Hahn was born on 30 April 1945 in Brachthausen, known today as Kirchhundem. She grew up and lived with her parents in Monheim, North Rhine, Westphalia, Germany, and as such in a rural environment where education was not highly regarded. She finished her secondary education in 1964 and was admitted to read German literature, Sociology, and History at the University of Cologne. As a young girl, she was brought up in a Catholic family, where strong Catholic teachings and practices were adhered to. This is clearly seen in her autobiographical novel *Das verborgene Wort*. In 1978, she finished her PhD in Literature with the topic “*Die Entwicklungstendenz in der westdeutschen und sozialistischen Literatur der sechziger Jahre*”. She worked as a journalist and a literary editor for Radio Bremen. The work brought her closer again to books, as she states in *Dichter in der Welt: Mein Schreiben und Lesen* (2006: 13):

Nach vergeblichen Bemühungen, an der Universität Fuß zu fassen, hatte ich bei Radio Bremen eine Stelle als Literaturredakteurin bekommen. Es war eine Erlösung. Ich mußte nicht mehr jeden Satz mit drei Fußnoten stützen, mußte nicht mehr lesen, was wichtig war und schon gar nicht mehr Literatur über Literatur. Ich durfte mit Büchern wieder

umgehen wie in meiner Kinder- und Jugendzeit: wie mit Freunden. Und so sah ich auch meine Arbeit in der Redaktion an: Freundschaften zu stiften zwischen Buch und Hörer. Mit einem Wort: Ich durfte Bücher wiederlieben ohne Wenn und Aber. Ich fühlte mich frei.

Hahn is a famous leading German female poet and writer. She taught Literature in various universities like Bremen, Hamburg, and Oldenburg. She has published many collections of poetry which include *Herz über Kopf* (1981), *Spielende* (1983), *Freudenfeuer* (1985), *Unerhörte Nahe* (1988), *Liebesgedichte* (1993), *Epikurs Garten* (1995). *Schloss umschlungen* (1996), *Galileo und zwei Frauen* (1997), *Bildlich gesprochen* (1999), *Süßapfel rot* (2003), *So offen die Welt* (2004), *Wiederworte* (2011), and *Gesammelte Gedichte* (2013). Some of her other works include *Ein Mann im Haus* (1991), *das verborgene Wort* (2001), *Unschärfe Bilder* (2003), *Liebesarten* (2006), *Dichter in der Welt-Mein Schreiben und Lesen* (2006), *Aufbruch* (2009), *Spiel der Zeit* (2014), and *Wir werden erwartet* (2017).

Hahn has received many literary awards which include: Leonce und Lena Preis (1981), Stipendium der Deutschen Akademie Rom Villa Massimo (1981), Friedrich-Hölderlin -preis der Stadt Homburg (1985), Märkisches Stipendium für Literatur (1985), Roswitha Preis (1986), Stadtschreiberin von Bergen-Enkheim (1987), Bundesverdienstkreuz am Bande (1990), Cicero-Rednerpreis (1994), Deutscher Bücherpreis (2002), Elisabeth-Langgässer-Literaturpreis (2006), Hertha-Koenig-Literaturpreis (2006), Ida-Dehmel-Literaturpreis (2010), Verdienstorden des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (2010), Ehrendoktorwürde der Neuphilologischen Fakultät der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg (2011), Ehrenmitgliedschaft der Else-Lasker-Schüler-Gesellschaft (2013) among others. She is a member of free academy of artists in Hamburg (*Freie Akademie der Künste Hamburg*). In 2012, the Ulla Hahn Prize was introduced in her hometown Monheim. It is given every

two years to promote Reading and Learning for young people. She is an important guest of honour at various literary conferences. Hahn lives in Hamburg, on the banks of the River Elbe and is happily married to Klaus von Dohnanyi, former mayor of Hamburg.

## 5.2 Ulla Hahn's Motivation

Hahn who is known as one of the famous female German poets has authored more than 15 collections of poetry and many works of prose. She has a broad conception of what poetry can accomplish. In her poetry, Hahn identifies the dilemma in which women writers find themselves. In writing about women and the problems they encounter while trying to find their identities, she mentions some feminists who are well known for promoting the cause of women such as Adrienne Rich, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Virginia Woolf. Hahn does not base her work solely on women but writes about the need for a peaceful and just world as well as the history of West Germany between 1950 and 1970.

One of her greatest motivations for writing is that it gives her joy as she expresses: "*Ich schrieb. Es machte mir Freude*" (Hahn 2006: 13) Writing for Hahn is like living in the other world but speaking from this world "*Dichtung ist Anderssagen: Sprechen aus der Anderswelt*" Hahn sees writing as part and parcel of her life through which she has become two beings in one body as she acclaims:

Schreiben wurde zur zweiten Natur. Oder zur ersten? Das Bedürfnis zu schreiben, verselbständigte sich. Zwei Seelen in einer Brust? Eher zwei Wesen in einem Körper. Eines, das einkauft, kocht, die Waschmaschine anstellt. Und das andere, das sich zu Papier bringt, zur Sprache macht, in den Gedichten aufgeht. Beide miteinander verbunden wie Schlemihl mit seinem Schatten. Fordert mein Schatten mich auf, muss ich ihm folgen. Versuche ich, ihn zu fliehen, dem Drang zum Schreiben

auszuweichen, in irgendwelche Aktivitäten zu flüchten, wie Bad putzen, um die Alster laufen, verreisen, läßt er mir keine Ruhe, bis ich mich wieder aus der Alltagswelt zurückziehe, in die andere Welt, die Welt der Schatten. Das Schreiben aufzugeben hieße, wie Schlemihl, der seinen Schatten dem Teufel verkauft, die Seele zu verkaufen (Hahn 2006: 14).

Reading and writing are seen as important factors that constitute the life of Ulla Hahn. One cannot exist without the other; she cannot live without reading and writing. This desire to learn how to read and write is testified to in the way she struggled to get educated when higher education was not seen as appropriate for a girl-child in the German society of the 1950s, especially girls whose parents were common people. Hahn describes herself in *Aufbruch* her second novel as “*Kenk vun nem Prolete*” (2009: 503) This she testifies in her autobiographical novel, *Das verborgene Wort*, which she introduces with the caption “*Mit Schreiben und Lesen fängt eigentlich das Leben an*” (2001: 6). Reading and writing, meaning education, changes life. Hahn’s life really changed through literature. Literature became another inner world through which she entered the real world. Charlotte Melin (1997: 223) in quoting Ulla Hahn states: “Literature was an alternative world that I needed again and again in order to move one step further in the real world.”

To show how sexual violence can bring down the self-confidence of a growing woman, Hahn exposes the evil of rape and its consequences on her protagonist Hilla, in her second autobiographical novel, *Aufbruch*, who was raped on her way back home after St. Cecilia’s feast as she has already started her secondary school. Hilla decides to keep the secret to herself and to suffer in silence which affected her negatively.

Ich, Hildegard Palm, hatte mit dieser Hildegard Selberschuld nichts zu schaffen. Wovon man nicht laut spricht, das ist nicht wahr. Lingua sequitur esse, hatte ich gelernt. Die Sprache folgt dem Sein.Nein! Niemals würde ich davon sprechen, niemals

das Wort, die Wörter für das auf der Lichtung in den Mund nehmen oder weißes Papier damit bedecken, beflecken, diese Wörter gehörten nicht in die Welt, so wenig wie die Nacht von Samstag auf Sonntag in die Zeit gehörte. *Esse sequitur linguam.* (Hahn 2009: 322).

Rape is experienced by women as a total assault on their personhood and is most often accompanied by additional physical violence, such as interference with speaking, breathing, mobility, and actual physical injury. It functions to frighten all women and limit their movement.

Another reason for writing is to contribute positively to the world. This positive contribution is seen in many poem Hahn wrote. *“Schreiben ist meine Möglichkeit, das Leben zu bestehen. Beizutragen, dass wir diese Welt nicht schlechter zurücklassen, als wir sie vorgefunden haben”* (Hahn 2006: 20). To contribute effectively to the world so that anyone can find succour and benefit from her writings, Hahn states categorically that her writings are meant for those who are looking for an answer for one thing or the other and such writing emerges sometimes from personal experience:

In meinem Gedichtband *Unerhörte Nähe* habe ich auf die Frage, Für wen schreiben Sie geantwortet:

Für den, der fragt. Meine Gedichte sind meine (vorläufigen) Antworten auf meine Fragen. In der geformten Sprache wird meine private Erfahrung universell; meine Antwort so persönlich und gleichzeitig so allgemein, dass sich jede(r) darin wiederfinden kann, der ähnlich fragt wie ich (Hahn 2006: 20).

Personal experience plays a great role in the factors that motivate Hahn in writing. Born at a time when higher education was meant for boys and having experienced the position women were placed during the Adenauer era, the loss of identity and the quest of women to be recognized in a patriarchal society, Hahn (2006 :40) uses her poem *Stechäpfel*

to encourage women as a group to search for their identity, to locate their place in the world, rather than in a feminine utopia.

Wenn Schreiben auch heißt, sich zu entdecken, sich selbst sichtbar zu machen, dann kann eine Sammlung von Gedichten von Frauen auch gelesen werden als ein zunehmendes Infragestellen von Frauenbildern und Verhaltensweisen, die Männern genehm sind; als Befreiung von jahrtausendealten männlichen Wunsch-, Wahn- und Angstprojektionen, als ein Abstreifen von Kostümen und Masken, als ein immer mutigeres Öffnen des Blicks auf sich selbst, auf Merkmale, Eigenschaften und Verhaltensweisen des eigenen Geschlechts. Wenn Frauen schreiben, ist das auch eine Suche nach Identität, einem Platz in der Welt, nicht nach einem neuen, diesmal weiblichen Ich Ideal in Utopia.

The clarion call to women to build up their own identity and their talents aims at extricating women from the age-long tradition of male suppression. She indicates three developments in literature that are indicative of the changing role of women: “an emancipated eroticism, a dissonant clash between old patterns of behavior and contemporary norms, and a cognizance by women of their own darker side” (Melin 1997: 224). Hahn encourages women in *Stechäpfel* that “they (women) have no barriers among themselves” (Ibid: 224) meaning that women can attain any height they aspire to in life and nothing should deter them. She goes on to advise that “one should not worry that those who have shaped art in the past (predominantly men) might impose their structures on women writers” (Ibid: 224) implying the intimidation that women authors suffer from their male colleagues should not deter them from writing. She thereby identifies the dilemmas facing women writers. Her writings reinforce the connection between literature and politics, which showcase the post-war German society in which there was gender bias against women authors and female equality and identity.

The quest to have an identity quite different from her parents who are regarded as commoners made Hahn learn to read and write. Reading and writing were not associated with women in the 19050s Adenauer era. Young girls were expected to get married, rear children, and put on some weight. “Jetzt, nach dem Krieg, taten gutgenährte Frauen den Wohlstand einer Familie kund. Ziel eines deutschen Fräuleins war die Vermählung mit Anfang Zwanzig, um sich nach der Heirat in kürzester Zeit auf Größe vierundvierzig hinaufzufutter” (Hahn 2001: 141). Therefore, a woman belonged to the house and was not meant for a career job. “*En Frau jehürt en et Huus. Nit en de Fabricke*” (Ibid: 206).

Hahn understood this early enough and using her protagonist Hilla Palm in her autobiographical novel *Das verborgene Wort*, states categorically that reading and writing (which imply education) are the only avenue to create a new identity for oneself. When Hilla is asked what her father’s occupation is, she proudly says that he works in the factory and does well in handwork. The teacher describes her father as an “*un-gelernter Arbeiter*” (an unlearned worker). Hilla there and then decides to have a better identity having learnt from the teacher that her father did not actually attend a school, as Hahn (2001: 53–54) narrates in *Das verborgene Wort*:

Alles an Lehrer Mohren war rund, Bauch, Kopf, Gesicht, rund und weich, bis auf die Nase, die wie ein Blitz aus heiterem Himmel spitz und lang aus all dem Runden und Weichen hervorzuckte, so wie sein Jähzorn, der jederzeit unverhofft aus seinem gütigen Temperament herausbrechen konnte.

Unsere Namen mußten wir ihm sagen, wo wir wohnten und was unsere Väter taten. Dä jeht op Arbeed bei Krötz und Ko, sagte ich. Ungelernter Arbeiter, murmelte Mohren. Ungelernt? Wieso ungelernt? Der Vater konnte Bäume pfpfen und Schuhe besohlen, Fahrräder flicken und Schuppen bauen, die Nachbarn holten sich Rat bei ihm, wenn die Rosen Rost hatten oder

Mehltau, und die Verwandtschaft bewunderte sein Gedächtnis. Der Vater war ein Arbeiter. Aber ungelernt. Der Lehrer hatte es in ein dickes Heft geschrieben, Klassenbuch nannte er das, neben Namen und Adresse, also mußte es stimmen. Der Vater war ungelernt. Ich würde lernen. Durch das Fenster schien kräftige Aprilsonne, auf ihren Strahlen tanzte der Kreidestaub. Lernen. Alles.

Reading and writing which Hahn plunged herself into as a child, were not tolerated by her parents, yet she vowed to read everything and anything that would educate her so that she could have an identity other than the one being attributed to her parents. She continued to read despite all the obstruction she has, knowing that education would bring her freedom. Freedom lies in knowledge and no one can penetrate knowledge already acquired, as she explains:

Der Geist ist frei! In meinem Kopf kann mir niemand dreinreden. In meinem Kopf hatte ich alles. Denken war Wegdenken, Schön-denken, Anders-denken. Denken war Flucht in den Kopf, in die Freiheit. Freiheit war im Kopf. Und nur dort. Alles, was ich mir vorstelle, war so viel herrlicher als das, was ich in Wirklichkeit kannte. Und es gehöre mir, mir allein. Keiner konnte es mir wegnehmen. Keiner konnte mir befahlen, dreinreden, dumm kommen. Das Reich der Freiheit. Daß dies auch ein Reich der Einsamkeit war, störte mich nicht. (Hahn 2001: 238).

The loneliness and reflection which accompany learning reflect Hahn's life-pattern. Her name is synonymous with "*Neuer Innerlichkeit*" (new inwardness) "which was widely seen as a trend toward private literary content" (Melin 1997: 222). New inwardness reflects a mixture of melancholic resignation and bitter disaffection with the social activism that engulfed authors in 1968.

Granting an interview with her publishers Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt München on why she wrote the tetralogy *Das verborgene Wort*, *Aufbruch*, *Spiel der Zeit*, and *Wir werden erwartet*, all autobiographical novels, Hahn (2017: 1) in what she names: “*Ich habe mich an mein Leben herangeschrieben*” admits that the four novels not only tell about her personal life experiences but also reflect the life of the German society in 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The editor begins the interview as follows:

Ulla Hahn erzählt mithilfe ihres Alter Ego Hilla Palm ihre Lebensgeschichte und präsentiert uns zugleich auf rund 2500 Seiten ein faszinierendes vielfarbiges Sittengemälde der ersten drei Jahrzehnte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 2017).

In another interview granted to “*Bonus, Das Magazin der Volksbank Bonn Rhein-Sieg*” when she came to Bonn to read her last novel *Wir werden erwartet*, the editor, Erlebach (2017: 18) comments:

In den letzten vier Romanen lässt Ulla Hahn ihr Alter Ego Hilla Palm sprechen. Dieser Umweg gebe ihr mehr Freiheit, um Dinge zu formulieren, die sie vielleicht autobiografisch nicht zu schreiben gewagt hätte, sagt sie. Indem sie sich, so von sich entfremde, könne sie der wahren Person näherkommen und wie eine reifere Schwester auf ihre 1950er- bis 1970er Jahre zurückschauen.

In this comment, Hahn says she chose the autobiographical novel instead of writing an autobiography so that she had the freedom to distance herself to write the whole truth about her experiences which ordinarily are difficult to put down in ink as an autobiography. Hahn gives further insight into her motivation for writing her autobiographical novels:

Ich war damals etwas über fünfzig und stellte mir Fragen: Wo komme ich her? Wie war mein Weg bis hierher?

Frage: Dann hätten Sie auch eine Autobiographie schreiben können?

Antwort: Eine Autobiographie erschien mir absurd. Zudem ermöglichte die enge Koppelung der Ulla Hahn an meine Hilla Palm sowohl, von mir abzurücken, ja mich zu vergessen, als auch, mir selbst näherzukommen, mich deutlicher und klarer wiederzufinden. Ich habe also, ähnlich wie in der Lyrik, aus Erfahrungen Erfindungen gemacht, Texte, in die sich Leser/innen mit ihren Erfahrungen hineinbegeben können. Dazu kommt: Neben meinen Erfahrungen gehen auch Erfindungen in die Bücher ein, die keinen oder nur einen entfernten Bezug zu meiner Biographie haben. Es war immer eine Herausforderung, diese im Text nahtlos zu verschmelzen. Das führte gelegentlich zu skurrilen Ergebnissen, etwa wenn sich ein Zeitgenosse in einer erfundenen Person wiederzuerkennen glaubte. Authentisch ist nur der enge Familienkreis (Erlebach 2017: 18).

Hahn states here that reflection about her life and how she was able to reach her present status are the motivating factors responsible for writing these four novels. The constant examination of one's life brings one back to one's root. An unexamined life according to Socrates is not worth living (Cooper 2012: 5). Moreover, Hahn states categorically that her work is fiction, being a mixture of experiences and invention, which reflect her story of the student's revolution.

The revolution that broke out in the German society of the 1968 played a great role in the liberation of women from the strings of patriarchy. The year 1968 saw universities in Germany and several other countries turned into battlegrounds for social change. The student revolution of 1968 in which the students demonstrated against authoritarianism, poor living conditions, and the bad economy. They called for an end to, the Vietnam war, improved conditions in the third world, reform

of the curriculum, and changes to society to reflect more democracy. In her student days, Hahn participated actively in these demonstrations and succinctly noted all these events in her third novel *Spiel der Zeit*: “Gegen den Krieg in Vietnam, gegen das Entlauben des Urwaldes, gegen die Notstandsgesetze, alles gut und schön: Ich war dabei” (Hahn 2014: 338).

These events which form part and parcel of her life in which she says “*Ich habe mich an mein Leben herangeschrieben*” (I dedicated myself to writing my life) (Hahn 2017: 1). These words rightly support what she says in her third novel *Spiel der Zeit*, that she is her history and her past: “*Ich bin meine Geschichte. Ich bin meine Vergangenheit*” (Hahn 2014: 40). One cannot live without a history. Hahn writes of her life, her experiences, and her history so that people reading her history will learn something from it. She writes about what happened in her student days so that those who were not born then would learn of the events of 1968 and be informed of the role students played in bringing lasting changes to German society. Worthy of mention is the reduction of the student train tariff which was reduced due to the demonstration of students and of which today’s students still enjoy, as stated in *Spiel der Zeit* (2014: 47):

Von der Mensa zu den Schienen waren es nur ein paar Schritte. Der Regen wütete, als wollte Petrus uns bedeuten: Kinder, überlegt es euch noch mal. Doch schon zog Katja unter ihrem Plakat ein zweites hervor: Wir fordern gerechte Tarife und drückte es mir in die Hand.

Zunächst blieben wir auf den Gleisen stehen, während ASTA-Vorsitzende durchs Megaphon die asoziale Preisgestaltung, wie er sich ausdrücke, der KVB geißelte. Mir rann der Regen in den Kragen, und ich verdrückte mich in einen Hauseingang, stellte die Gerechtigkeit fordernde Puppe unter die Klingenkнопfe, machte endlich den Schirm auf und gesellte mich wieder zu den

Kommilitonen, von denen nun einige auch unter Schirmen Zuflucht gesucht hatten. Immer noch standen wir, immer noch prasselte die Stimme des ASTA-Vorsitzende in den Regen, mischte sich mit dem Tropfencrescendo auf meinem Schirm.

The women's movement of 1970s in which women protested against inequality with men and sought equal rights and treatment is also present in her work. Women wanted freedom over their bodies and freedom from sexual politics. In her writing, Hahn encourages women and acts as a source of motivation urging them not only to write about their bodies which Cixous calls "*Das Körperschreiben*" (Hahn 2006: 43) but to rise against the negative descriptions given to them by men and accept themselves as they are. She called on them to show their real characters, including the unacceptable ones, implying that they should be themselves and not see themselves as obstructers in their quest for equal treatment as she further states (Ibid: 47)

Frauen bekennen sich heute zu ihrer Destruktivität, zu negativen Gefühlen, akzeptieren auch ihre dunklen Seiten; akzeptieren, dass sie nicht der edlere, der moralisch höherstehende Teil der Menschheit sind. Frauen dürfen endlich ihre wahren Gesichter zeigen, alle, auch die unannehmbaren. Sie müssen sich nicht länger in den Himmel heben lassen, um den Männern auf der Erde nicht im Weg zu stehen.

In a quest for a free and just society where people's opinion is respected, Hahn in her fourth autobiographical novel *Wir werden erwartet* discloses how her protagonist joins the German Communist Party to fight for the rights of workers. Hilla discovers that her own words and opinions are not allowed. The ideology of the Party robs her that freedom of speech which she longs for in life; and since her aim of joining the Party is defeated, she decides to leave it (Hahn 2017: 612).

Another important reason for writing is to show the importance of literature in society. Literature serves as a gateway to learning about the past. History and literature are entwined. Without literature, we cannot know about the past, about the people who lived before us, about what they did, about the impact they had and how it affects present-day life. We need to know this to better plan for the future. Literature helps to address human nature and conditions which also affect people. It is through literature that we can understand the world better. It is not surprising that Hahn notices the connection between literature and life as she states in *Spiel der Zeit* (2014: 431):

Ich hatte an der Verbindung zwischen Literatur und Leben, Politik, Gesellschaft und Literatur nie gezweifelt. Mag sein, die Autoren saßen im Elfenbeinsturm, wenn sie schreiben; ich, die Leserin, saß da zu keiner Zeit. Literatur sollte mir etwas sagen haben, egal, ob sie aus dem Elfenbein- oder dem Förderturm kam. Ich hielt an meiner Frage fest: Wo finde ich mich wieder? Was entwickelt mich weiter? Diese Autoren banden die Literatur an den vergänglichen politischen Augenblick. Und nahmen mich nicht als ganze Person, sondern als politisch-gesellschaftliches Objekt wahr.

Literature is also equated with life. Hahn, in her work *Das verborgene Wort* (2001: 391), re-emphasizes that in literature, she finds refuge: "Für die Lesen mehr ist als ein Vergnügen, mehr als ein Laster, einfach das Leben." Literature becomes a way of connecting with the outside world, just as (Melin 1997 :10) quotes Hahn: "Literatur war eine Gegenwelt, die ich brauchte, um immer wieder in der wirklichen Welt einen Schritt weitergehen zu können."

Even though she was given the name *Leserratte oder Bücherwurm* (reading rat or book worm)' (Hahn 2001: 504) by those who despise her love for reading and writing, it did not deter her from reading and writing.

Rather it encouraged her to write whatever she felt, as she further explains:

Von Anbeginn war es mir gleichgültig, womit ich schrieb, allein die Bewegung zählte, das Aufspapierbringen der Buchstaben, Wörter und Sätze. Den Körper verlangen in der Schrift; sein Innerstes nach außen kehren. Gedanken sichtbar machen. Mich sichtbar machen. Mich schreiben, mich befestigen. Ding-fest machen. Meine Hand auf dem Papier sagte mir: Du mußt ja nicht weinen. Fürchte dich nicht! Nicht die Hand des Vaters, nicht die Augen der Mutter tun dir weh. Du bist richtig, sagte die Hand. Solange du schreibst, bist du nicht allein. Auf dem Papier bist du nie allein.

Loneliness is one of the central themes in Hahn's writings. This can be seen in some of her poetry, for example *Heart Over Head*, *Faithfulness*, and *Song*. According to Reich-Ranickis in *Enthusiasm for Poetry is the other side of Horror: On the Poetry of Ulla Hahn* (1989: 84): "What gives rise to this tension in Ulla Hahn's poetry is an antinomy, one that plays a great role in poetry by women especially and, in this case, serves as the underlying principle of the collection: the simple antithesis of acquiescence and resistance, of submission and rebellion." The succour which Hahn finds in writing, can be compared to the words of Bettina Wangenheim in her book *Heimkehr ins Wort: Materialien zu Hilde Domin* (2004: 169): "*Schreiben war Rettung. Ich hatte Sprachen gewendet wie andere Kleider. Ich wußte, was ein Wort ist. Ich befreite mich durch Sprache. Hätte ich mich nicht befreit, ich lebte nicht mehr.*"

### **5.2.1 German Women Writers**

It was in the eighteenth century that the first women artists and writers emerged. Worthy of mention are women who introduced women's culture, such as Therese Heyne, Sophie Albrecht, Marianne Ehrmann, Car-

oline Rudolphi, Marianne Kraus, Karoline Schlegel, Dorothea Mendelssohn, Karoline von Günderode, and Sophie von La Roche. Poets include Sophie Mereau and Luise Hensel. "None of them may be considered outstanding talents of their craft, yet they represent the all-important transition from the educated of the literary salons to the creative artist in her own right" (Jurgensen 1983: 9). The literary and social emancipation of women also began during this period of German Romanticism.

For many centuries, men had their voice in politics and poetry. They determined what should be done in the world and what women should do, which works should be ascribed to women. They spoke for women even in the affairs of women themselves. Henri Nannen (1979: 7) asserts in *Die himmlischen Verführer. Sekten in Deutschland*:

Männer haben Geschichte gemacht. In der Politik und in der Poesie. Auf beiden Feldern haben sie bestimmt, wie die Welt auszusehen und welche Rolle die Frau in dieser männlichen Welt zu spielen hat. Die Literatur spiegelte da nur das männlich bestimmte Leben, dem die Frau untergeordnet, in dem ihr der Platz in Familie und Haushalt zugewiesen war.

At the onset of women's move to be recognized and treated as human beings, Rahel Varnhagen whose literary salon in Berlin was used as a meeting point for women, asked this question "*Kann ein Frauenzimmer dafür, wenn es auch ein Mensch ist?*" (Jurgensen 1983: 9). Women through the centuries and in various philosophical works have been described as "second-class citizens". Women have been described negatively to be seen unfit to attain higher positions in society. Nannen (1979: 8) explains further:

Menschlichkeit zu bewahren, ohne in der männlichen Machtposition zu sein, die auf Eroberung, also Grenzüberschreitung und damit Gewalt angelegt war und ist, das ist die Qualität, die Frauen, in der Definition zahlreicher

alter Philosophen ‘Menschen zweiter Klasse’, in die Geschichte eingebracht haben. Frauen bewahrten diese Menschlichkeit trotz aller Niederlagen, die ihnen Männer zufügten. Männer, die für sich die Aktivität, die Verstandesschärfe, das Produzieren und das Zeugen in Anspruch nahmen und den Frauen die Passivität, die Gemühtiefe, das Reproduzieren und das Empfangen als Hauptmerkmale zuwiesen. Die Fixierung der Frauen auf diese Eigenschaften zwang die Frauen jahrhundertlang in die Geduld. Mit der Geduld, alles hinzunehmen, sind sie heute am Ende, mit ihrer Menschlichkeit noch immer am Anfang.

With the attributes already ascribed to them for centuries, female artists of this era had no tradition whence to obtain their artistic and social identity, yet these became the bedrock of German feminism. Bettina von Arnim, known for her radical politics, contributed to the cultural and political emancipation of women. As Germany was a male-oriented and male-dominated society, it was really difficult for these women to thrive. In a letter she wrote to her brother, von Arnim compared the restrictions placed on women to that of a purchased bird who is unable to fly: “*O, welche schwere Verdammnis, die angeschaffenen Flügel nicht bewegen zu können*” (Jurgensen 1983: 10). Karoline von Günderode (1780–1806), known as the founder of female literature, could no longer bear the fate of women who tried to assert their own creativity in a patriarchal culture. She committed suicide; as Jurgensen (1983: 10) further states:

Ich konnte den Gedanken nicht mehr ertragen, mich teilweise zu vernichten, um mich teilweise desto besser erhalten zu können. Das Leben ist uns doch aus dem Hand genommen, es wird für uns gelebt..., ein teil von uns lebt...in Sehnsucht verzehrt.

The revolution of 1848 became a liberation of a moral and intellectual nature. An educated and morally freer woman either became a better wife and mother or developed her talents so that she could be enjoyed better by men. Therefore “writings by women which attempted to change some of the bias or clichés about the intellectual and psychological limitations of women met with neglect or ridicule” (Herrmann and Spitz 1978: 2). Men opined that if literature, which was the occupation of the most outstanding minds in the country, was allowed to fall into the hands of women with their “lesser talent”, it would be watered down.

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff was the first woman who achieved the status of a major female writer in German literature. She wrote lyric poetry which earned her a lot of criticism that spoke only to the fact she was a woman. This was most evident in the conflicting and contradictory nature of the criticism meted out to her. According to Hermann and Spitz (1978: 2), “her poems were praised simultaneously for being ‘strong and masculine’ and faulted for being too much so for a woman, or, on the other hand, they were commended for their ‘sensitivity and delicacy in perception’, but criticized for want of outlook, fuzziness and mysticism, for being too feminine.” Such criticisms did not deter her from writing. Her social and economic independence gave her the foothold to concentrate on her literary ambitions. She used her social privilege as an opportunity to challenge male supremacy in the field of literature.

The rise of literature by women became profound in 1859. Robert Prutz, otherwise known as the “Young German”, wrote: “Women have become a force in our literature. Like the Jews you meet them at every step” (Hermann and Spitz (1978: 2). Germany literary history recorded more female writers from the early nineteenth century. This was based on the outcome of Romantic idealism and the social status of individual women, which helped them to actualize their goal, namely freedom.

Many women started writing novels. Their work was divided into two categories, namely the amusement novels, the *Gartenlaube*, which were published in family weeklies, and the social novels which dealt with women's emancipation. This was called *The Woman's Cause*.

Nineteenth-century German female writing concentrated on social issues "as an expression of compassion and as an appeal to humane literacy" (Jurgensen 1983: 11). It was in the 1890s that the emancipation of women became the main topic of the new literary movement known as Naturalism. The emancipation of women became part of the "*soziale Frage*". The role and position of women became a socio-political problem. Some writers like Clara Viebig (1860–1952) wrote extensively on social problems, such as working women, politics, and the need for a change in the understanding of sexually determined roles in society. Others like Gabriele Reuter (1859–1941) and Helene Böhlau (1859–1940) wrote against the bourgeois capitalist system. Bertha von Suttner (1843–1914) wrote a pacifist novel, *Die Waffen nieder*, which earned her a Noble Peace Prize in 1905. Women participated in the cultural, political, and social conflicts in the Wilhelminian Era.

There were a lot of changes in women's affairs: the validity of civil marriages throughout Germany in 1875, the educational reform for women in 1888, and the demand from Herman Grimm that women should be allowed to attend lectures in 1892. Consequently, the Grand Duchy of Baden was the first German state to allow women in its universities. After the declaration of the Republic in 1918, German women were given the right to vote. As women advanced in their writing prowess, their protagonists changed from hero to heroine; they preferred female protagonists in their writing.

The female writers of this century especially Clara Viebig, Gabriele Reuter, Helene Böhlau, and Bertha von Suttner concentrated their writings on woman's destiny, elaborating what was then called "feminine secrets" and encouraged free love. They analysed the state of the prole-

tariats and opined that if women really wanted to have and enjoy their freedom, more responsibility was required. Böhlau, in her work *Half Beast*, compares a woman to a beast who should have developed strategies to protect herself but preferred to remain unprotected even when danger was imminent (Hermann and Spitz 1978: 3). Referring to this helpless submission contrary to the natural law of self-preservation, Hermann and Spitz (1978: 3) state: "If a beast were hunted as women have been, it would develop a weapon—a horn perchance or a venomous tooth. Not so woman. She has grown tamer and tamer and has become in the veriest sense a beast of burden." Further, according to Hermann and Spitz, any veritable accomplishment by women in the same respect could only have been achieved by stealth and subterfuge (Ibid: 3).

The writings of others, especially Viebig, were chiefly of a combination of regionalism and social criticism. Viebig wrote in native dialect and described the hard peasant life in the villages. Many of the social writers considered literature as a means of social politics. Though the women writers at this time did not produce an opposition to already known patriarchal structure and concept of German literature, a new stage in the socio-political development of womanhood was attained.

Many women writers of the nineteenth century belonged to the educated and middle classes. Women were beginning to discover their identity. Within the socialist party, there developed a strong parallel movement whose motive was the improvement of women workers in the factory and in their homes. Clara Zetkin (1857–1933) and Rose Luxembour (1871–1919) belonged to this group and dedicated their writing to the restructuring of the society. Zetkin, within the structure of socialism, encouraged women to keep their jobs, for such was the only means of improving their position in society. Other writers like Böhlau belonged to this century. Jo Catling (2003: 230) thus commented on her work *Halbtier* as follows:

In ihrem Roman *Halbtier* argumentiert sie, dass überholte soziale Wertvorstellungen Frauen zu einer fast schon selbstdestruktiven Existenz degradieren.

Themes that were discussed in the nineteenth century included sexual molestation in the workplace, debates over the legalization of abortion, prostitution, incest, and homosexuality.

Female writers can be divided into three representing the first three-quarters of the century. The first period ranged from the turn of the century to the end of WWI and into the 1920s. The second was the time of the Third Reich, 1933 to 1945. Women writers were mishandled. The quest for emancipation was highly suppressed by Hitler's regime as Catling (2003: 232) reports in *A History of Women's Writing in German, Austria and Switzerland*:

Nach der Machtergreifung der nationalsozialistischen Partei ging es mit der Frauenemanzipation wie mit so vielen anderen kritischen und intellektuellen Bestrebungen in Deutschland den Berg hinunter. Frauen gehörten hinter den Kochtopf und sollten dem Führer präsentable arische Kinder gebären. Als Ausweg gab es nur die äußere oder innere Emigration, wenngleich auch etliche sich mit dem neuen Gedankengut anfreundeten. Nur im Exil war es Schriftstellern wie Irmgard Keun, Lili Körber oder Anna Seghers, um nur einige zu nennen, möglich, über das Leben in Nazi-Deutschland zu schreiben.

Writers in this period were heavily punished under Hitler's regime. Hermann and Spitz (1978: 4) explained that "writers who opposed that regime were imprisoned, killed or forced to flee and lived in exile for many years. Others, while staying in either Germany or Austria, had to remain silent and were forbidden to publish." By the same token, women were worse off as "any feminist tendencies were suppressed completely. Women were removed from important positions they had obtained during the Weimar Republic in the 20s, supposedly because un-

employed men needed the work” (Hermann and Spitz 1978: 4). Within the regime, women were merely reduced to bearing children for Hitler’s armies. As such naturally the term *Frauenliteratur* was used frequently and became popular in its worst connotation.

The third period began with the end of WWII. After WWII, women’s writings were elevated to another level since many works gained recognition. In 1947, outstanding men and women who had one unifying force namely the shattering experience of WWII formed Gruppe 47, which became a dominant literary group for two decades. The reception of women writers changed gradually after WWII. The works of some authors such as Luise Rinser, Hilde Domin, Christa Wolf, and Christa Reinig began to have some impact on the post-war literary scene. “Other authors such as Christa Wolf and Karin Struck sought to define their own identity by integrating Bachmann’s style and preoccupations; even though Ingeborg Bachmann was an Austrian. She had indeed become something of a model, a ‘mother-figure’ to younger writers, a ‘sister’ to her contemporaries” (Jurgensen 1983: 15). Even though Bachmann did not associate herself with any feminist movement, her personal independence and her consciousness as a woman made her a prominent figure in the struggle for the emancipation of women.

The women’s movement that had encountered a lot of difficulties during the time of National Socialism was revived. Western feminism played a major role in the reception of female writers in Germany and other German countries such as Austria and Switzerland. Beauvoir’s classic *Das zweite Geschlecht* (*The Second Sex*) published 1949 laid out the background for further discussions on the status of women. The most interesting German women writers became conspicuous in the 1960s. Christa Reinig and Karin Struck were associated with the feminist movement while Christa Wolf and Gabriele Wohmann showed greater independence. “Whereas Reinig and Struck strive to express central thoughts and ideas of feminism, Bachmann, Wolf and Wohmann con-

centrate on imaginative interpretations of womanhood” (Jurgensen 1983: 16).

In debating the use of the word *Frauenliteratur*, some writers argued that since “patriarchal literature” had been in existence, works referred to as female literature had their own right of existence. The emergence of women’s publishing co-operatives enhanced the concept of *Frauenliteratur*. Virginia Woolf talked freely about ‘women novelists’ and wrote about ‘women and fiction’. Some writers such as Gabriele Dietze, Christa Reinig, and Gisela Gabler have argued that the grammar of language is patriarchal, thereby expressing some prejudice to the expression of womanhood. “The use of ‘Ich’ can never be the same when a male or a female author employ it” (Jurgensen 1983: 17). Given this, female writers were encouraged to develop their own language. Since grammar and language were patriarchal by nature, women writers inherited a language which was considered not only unsuitable but also hostile to their goals and self-expression. The work of Gisela von Wysocki *Die Fröste der Freiheit. Aufbruchphantasien*, stated categorically that female literature was indeed a new development that had discovered its tradition. She advised the male literary historians “to bear witness to such development, take stock, and assist in the general reception of this new literature” (Ibid: 18).

The emergence of women writers in Germany in the 1960s was as a result of the sudden emancipation of women connected with WWII. Women entered the workforce and attained some level of economic independence. They were no longer at the mercy of their male providers. This gradual financial independence helped women to attain some level of self-confidence which became the bedrock for the formation of the feminist movement.

Within this process of self-discovery and confidence, women writers began to create a new image for themselves. Women writers, especially Christa Wolf, presented a new image of womanhood which signified

self-respect, dignity, and pride (Jurgensen 1983: 19). Other women writers in restoring the image of a woman became part of the female literature. Male writers who misinterpreted or falsified the true notion of womanhood were attacked for their false presentation. The most important function of female literature became the restoration of the dignity of womanhood. It “serves as a corrective to the more or less deliberate misrepresentations of women in patriarchal literature” (Ibid: 19). Women writers such as Karin Struck, Christa Reinig, and Brigitte Schwaiger were fully involved in this “enlightening task” and wrote extensively on the new sexual identity of women in the West while Christa Wolf in the East encouraged women to assert their individuality apart from the regulations of sexually apportioned role-playing.

Women writers used their writing to expose the suppression of women in society. They rejected the separation between a private and a public sphere. According to them, “the personal is the political (Jurgensen 1983: 20) One important aim of women writers was to present to the male readers the true situation of a woman’s everyday life. To this dimension, female literature manifested “as ‘Ich-Literatur’, a literature, in other words, which tried to define the author both as woman and as writer” (Ibid: 21). As women strove to tell their stories, it came without surprise that “the most popular stylistic forms are diaries, letters and casual notes, pre-literary forms expressing the passions and reflections of an individual .... it is a process of self-discovery at all levels” (Ibid: 21). The first phase of female literature in Germany came to an end in the late 1970s. It was indeed a time when the international feminist movement had a strong influence over *Frauenliteratur*. Most female writers of the 1970s chose suicide and madness as their theme because some writers took to suicide as a way of solving their problems, for example Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath. The thought of killing oneself as a means of solving one’s problems pointed to the fact that “women do not take literature as a realm of aesthetic reflection isolated from every-

day reality” (Jurgensen 1983: 21), thereby giving the work written by women “the quality of authenticity and documentary evidence” (Ibid: 21), even though the work was fiction.

The female writers of the 1970s remained indebted to the feminist authors such as Elfriede Jelinek, Irmtraud Morgner, Verena Stefan, and Christa Wolf. These were women who “forged pathways into the publishing world, created new generic models for expressing authenticity and gendered subjectivity, and broke with patriarchal stylistic conventions” (Baer and Hill 2015: 6). Women’s literature (*Frauenliteratur*) of the 1970s and 1980s aimed at giving a voice to women’s subjective experiences. The writings of the 1990s and early 2000s known as *Fräuleinwunder* (girl wonder) “can be understood as the antithesis of *Frauenliteratur*, in that it was a label snatched up by publishers to group and market authors based on gender rather than commonality of subject, matter, theme or style” (Ibid: 6). This term *Fräuleinwunder* was a criticism from Volker Hage, who referred to “the up-and-coming generation of women writers such as Karen Duve and Judith Hermann as *Das literarische Fräuleinwunder*” (Heffernan and Pye 2013: 5). Volker Hage also commented in *Der Spiegel* that “many of the young, female authors writing at that time had a matter-of-fact approach to representing love and sex” (Franck and Hill 2008: 229). Some academics and critics wrote against the use of the word *Fräuleinwunder* and deemed its use inappropriate unsuitable to describe women’s writing.

Some young women writers revolted against the notion of terming their writing as a miracle. Julia Franck thus asked how it was still possible that after 2000 years, people did not realize that women had the same abilities as men. “*Auch nach zweittausend Jahren christlicher Zeitrechnung ist es noch alles andere als selbstverständlich, dass Frauen über ähnliche Fähigkeiten verfügen wie ihre männlichen Artgenossen*” (Heffernan and Pye 2013: 5). She developed a term “*weibliche Nüchternheit*” (“female sobriety”) “to describe the re-

strained, matter of fact style adopted by many female authors as a means of evading accusations of employing sentimental or girlish prose” (Baer and Hill 2015: 7). In writing essays about the popularity of German women authors, Franck and Hill (2008: 231) wrote on *The Wonder Woman (Das Wunder Frau)*, where they criticized the *Fräuleinwunder* and its underlying patriarchy:

Er is verwundert, wenn ledige, junge Frauen mit Erfolg literarische Bücher schreiben. Ich kann dieses Staunen nur schwer ernstnehmen. Es mag aus einer gewissen Umnachtung kommen, aus der Dämmerstunde des Patraichalismus.

Franck and Hill (2008: 236) further enumerate the negative implications that go with the labelling of women authors as *Fräuleinwunder*. They attest that it “linguistically negates the professional accomplishment of women-at the very least diminishes it. Not only does this term attest to confusion, it also creates it. First, it suggests that this is merely a phenomenon that, second, was up to now considered impossible and, third, hints at an extraordinary singularity” (Ibid: 236). The label was also phenomenal in nature and comparable to photojournalism whereby “often the photo takes more space than the accompanying text. The stamp ‘Fräuleinwunder’ excluded women from serious literature in a radical and visual way. It solely served the purpose of marketing” (Ibid: 236).

Women writers branded ‘*Fräuleinwunder*’ made outstanding contributions in various forms of novels such as novel of unification (*Wenderoman*), the millennial novel, the historical novel, and the familial novel. German female writers have also won national and international prizes for literature. Baer and Hill (2015: 6) chronicle some of them as follows:

The Nobel Prize for Literature (Elfriede Jelinekin 2004, Herta Müller in 2009), the Deutscher Buchpreis (Katharina Hacker in 2006, Julia Franck in 2007, Kathrin Schmidt in 2009, Melinda Nadj Abonji in 2010, and

Ursula Krechel in 2012), the Fontane Preis (Emine Sevgi Özdamar in 2009), the Georg Büchner Preis (Brigitte Kronauer in 2005, Felicitas Hoppe in 2012, and Sibylle Lewitscharoff in 2013), and the most lucrative German literary prize, the Wilhelm-Raabe Preis (Katja Lange-Müller in 2008, Sibylle Lewitscharoff in 2011, and Marion Poschmann in 2013).

These prizes are a mark of respect for the women; they make them popular and enhance book sales. Publishing companies have realized that women writers are of great interest to the buying public.

Women's writing played a great role in the neoliberal era, an era characterized "by the absence of alternatives to capitalism and the waning of political structures fostering solidarity, collectivity or resistance" (Baer and Hill 2015: 8). Other contemporary female writers were engaged in *Generationenroman* or family narrative. The twentieth century was characterized as a period of economic and social transformation. Heffernan and Pye (2013: 8) opined that many writers of this era used the family as a means to evaluate the human cost of these developments. Generational novels written by women focused mainly on the history of women's experiences of war "mothers, sisters and daughters who fight on the home front and whose battles tend to revolve around the domestic arena and the family" (Ibid: 8). These novels lay great emphasis on the active role women played during the war and which they still play in the historical narrative. Women writers also focused their writing on the roles assigned to women. The role of women underwent tremendous change in the course of the twentieth century, a change that continues into the twenty-first century. The generational perspective makes it possible to make comparisons between different periods to ascertain the changes in the form of women's emancipation and women's participation in public life and to identify other areas to be improved. Even though the protagonists usually strive to find a voice in a patriarchal

society, it is evident that there was great pressure on women to conform to social expectations.

Other novels written by women in the twenty-first century have a sense of maternal legacy or matrilineality. This is expressed in possessions handed down from mother to daughter or what was passed down from one female generation to the other. Some of the *Generationenromane* written by German women writers which focused on matrilineal narrative include Monika Maron's *Pawel Briefe* (1999), Tanka Dückers's *Himmelskörper* (2003), and Dagmar Leupold's *Nach dem Krieg* (2007).

Other writers focused on *Heimat* (Homeland), which garnered a lot of interest after the unification of East and West Germany. Many novels deal with the ideas of belonging and exclusion in view of their understanding of *Heimat*. *Heimat* was even associated with femininity as Heffernan and Pye (2013: 13) state: "While men were on the move, women were fixed to one place. In a changing world, home, family, and women were symbols of stability. The *Heimat* idea used these symbols in the same way and projected their meaning onto the nation as a whole. By embracing women and home, *Heimat* became the favoured site of fond memories, sweet dreams and ideal relationships."

Apart from writing on homeland, twenty-first-century women writers have focused on other themes such as the body, materiality, gender, and religion. Many have written about multiculturalism in view of Germany's migration and refugee politics. At the heart of feminist activism, the female body has been subjected to numerous processes of disassembly and reassembly. The subjugation of human bodies in post-industrial capitalism was seen as a form of feminization. Haraway (2004: 22) succinctly captured this when she wrote: "In the post-industrial world of work, to be feminized means to be made extremely vulnerable, able to be disassembled, reassembled, exploited as a reserve labour force, seen

less as workers than as servers, subjected to time arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of the limited work day.”

Haraway’s use of feminization reflects more the power relation than female sexual characteristics. It shows as well how women are still being perceived in society as well as the feminist concept of the body. In the discussion on body and gender, it is evident that many German women writers of the twenty-first century have written on the body and its cultural meanings in the discourse of gender, the relationship between the (female) body, gendered identity, and selfhood. Heffernan and Pye (2013: 22) opine that “Littler identifies the theme of ‘writing the body’ as central to this period and within this, the trope of bodily damage and illness features particularly as a means of exploring the constraints of female existence.”

Some writers of this theme include Kathrin Röggla whose work *wir schlafen nicht* “explores the apparent negation of bodily boundaries in the total assimilation of the workforce to post-industrial capitalism” (Heffernan and Pye 2013: 22). Others include Juli Zeh’s *Spieltrieb*, and Katrin Schmidt’s *Du stirbst nicht*, which “explores the idea of illness as a space of transformation” (Ibid: 22), and Lea Gottheil’s *Sommervogel*.

In conclusion, it suffices to say that women have always shown their presence and have always participated actively wherever they are and in whichever field they specialize. “‘Literature is the archive of a culture’, Toril Moi states. To turn women into second –class citizens in the realm of literature is to say that women’s experiences of existence and of the world are less important than men’s” (Baer and Hill 2015: 13).

The experience of German women writers in the twenty-first century can be summed up by the fact that in the “neoliberal present, they ask how women experience precarity in the workplace, religious faith, romantic and familial relationships, political power structures, and their own bodies. By examining the literary representation of these experiences, we resist the postfeminist trend for women to eliminate their

gendered subjectivity and express hope that they will continue to confront gender by articulating their highly specific and idiosyncratic perspectives” (Baer and Hill 2015: 14). Together, the women writers and the works considered here gave voice to a plurality of experiences – of gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion and citizenship – that demands to be heard.

### **5.3 *Das verborgene Wort*: Narrative Structures and Perspectives**

The novel, *Das verborgene Wort*, which comprises 620 pages is an autodiegetic narrative, as Genette refers to it, since “the author is the main protagonist and is giving an account of an adventure he was personally involved in” (Fludernik 2009: 31). The author narrates her childhood experiences and her growth between ages 3 and 16 in a fictitious village known as Dondorf. Dondorf which in reality is Monheim (am Rhein) in North Rhine, Westphalia, Germany. The story shows that the text is an autobiographical novel which took place between 1951 and 1966. The author takes a fictitious name Hildegard (Hilla) as the main character to tell her life story, though there exist resemblances between the author and the protagonist. Lejeune (1989: 12) refers to such texts as autobiographical novels. “In the case of the fictitious name (ie, different from that of the author) given to a character who tells his life story, the reader has reason to think that the story lived by the character is precisely that of the author by cross-checking with other texts, or by delving into external news items, or even by reading the narrative whose fictional appearance rings false, the text produced in this way is not autobiography but falls into the category of autobiographical novel.” Therefore, the novel *Das verborgene Wort* written by Ulla Hahn is autobiographical.

To show the lifestyle and the language of the people in 1950s Monheim, each page of the novel is written heavily in *Kölsch* (dialect)

known as *Platt deutsch*. It was the language spoken by the people at that time. Standard German (*Hochdeutsch*) was spoken by the pastor, nuns, teachers, respected people, and the local government chairman known as the *Bürgermeister*. “Er sprach Hochdeutsch wie sonst nur Pfarrer, Bürgermeister, Nonnen, Respektspersonen” (Hahn 2001: 117).

The novel begins and ends with an idiomatic expression spoken in a dialect: *Lommer jonn*, (*Lass uns gehen*). It is a term usually spoken by the grandfather in which he leads the protagonist into another world: the world of learning. The novel reflects the practical, simple life of villagers in the 1950s, their thoughts, their way of life, and more especially the position of women in the Germany society of the 1950s and 1960s. It shows among others the role of women in the family and the work allotted to women at that time. It uses rules laid down to indicate that only single women could work in the factory and that a married woman could not undertake a job without the permission of her husband. It also explores the values attached to marriage. Single women were usually looked down upon, but marriage made a woman complete as Hahn (2001: 289) states:

Für die Frauen hier war die Fabrik der Parkplatz zwischen Elternhaus und Ehe, den es so schnell wie möglich zu verlassen galt. Ledig sein hieß halb sein. Heirat machte das Fräulein zur Frau.

The novel begins with a flashback, also called *analepsis*, in which prior events are recounted. The aim of this flashback “often as part of something the hero/heroine remembers; is to explain unexpected events which have just been related” (Fludernik 2009: 34). Hilla recalls how her grandfather exposed her to the world of learning. The grandfather takes her and her brother to his grazeland situated along the River Rhein. There are different kinds of stones which they usually pick. Some of the collected stones are thrown into the River Rhein. One day, Hilla collects her stones. Her grandfather notices and says: “*Do has de dir wat janz Besonderes usjesöökt. Dat he es ene Boochsteen. Ein Buchstein*” (You

have chosen what is special, that is a bookstone) (Hahn 2001: 13). He tells her a story concerning a stone that has the power to change everything. Anyone who finds this precious stone becomes a light that shines in the world. Hilla wants to have this particular stone, the one that has this power of transforming everything including the person. The story of the grandfather is related by Hahn (2001: 13) as follows:

Es gab einmal, erklärte der Großvater, einen Stein, der alles verwandelt. Er leuchtete im Dunkeln und im Hellen. Als er aber vom Himmel auf die Erde gefallen sei, vor vielen Millionen Jahren, gleich nachdem Gott Himmel und Erde erschaffen habe, seien tausend und abertausend Steinchen abgesplittert und hätten sich über unsere Welt verstreut. Sie alle enthielten nun winzige Bruchteile dieses Himmelssteins. Dies seien die Buchsteine, de Boochsteen. Wer diese Splitter finde, sei selbst ein Licht und leuchte in der Welt. Sei gut und schön und ein Mensch, den alle lieben. Schon das kleinste Teilchen des Steins mache die Menschen selber gut und schön.

The grandfather gives her the stone which she keeps. The stone is described as follows:

Es war der schönste Buchstein. Blendend weiß mit roten Linien, Schlingen und Schleifen, Kringeln und Krähenfüßen auf der einen, goldenen auf der anderen Seite. Da drauf, sagte der Großvater, stehen wunderbare Jeschichte. Immer neue. Solang de lävs. Solange du lebst (Hahn 2001: 55).

The grandfather tells Hilla that the stone contains wonderful stories. Being a child, she does not know that the grandfather is speaking in metaphors. The stone represents education which, according to the grandfather, makes one a light in the world. Being at the end of her nursery school, she observes that Sr Aniana reads out her stories from a

book, but her grandfather tells her stories from his head, holding the precious stone.

In analysing the structure of the narrative, the narrator is a covert narrator as “s/he does not present himself/herself as the articulator of the story” (Fludernik 2009: 21).

Examining the relationship between discourse time and story time, the duration of the story time is 13 years; it is a story based on life experiences between the ages of 3 and 16. The discourse time is speeded up and the narration is not as long as the action. The story is structured chronologically. Hilla begins the story of her journey into reading and writing with a flashback in which she recalls the words of her grandfather telling them of the “*Buchstein*” and the power that goes with the stone: the power of transformation. This is followed by her day-to-day life in the village as she grows and develops in knowledge into an independent young girl. The novel is not divided into chapters but is chronologically arranged: Kindergarten, Life at home, *Realschule*, Vacation job at Maternus, Friendship with Sigismus and Peter Bender, Working as an apprentice at Papier and Papp GmbH.

Regarding the mode of presentation, in which the narrator can use telling or showing, Hahn puts across her story using ‘showing’ as if the action takes place before our eyes. Moreover, on 18 March 2018, Hahn did a reading in Literaturhaus Bonn to round off the last version of her autobiographical novels, *Wir werden erwartet*. She got accolades from people who admitted that her novels, especially *Das Verborgene Wort*, were exactly the experiences they had had growing up. They reminded them of their own childhood experiences and the cultural life of the people in Rheinland in the 1950s and 1960s.

In presenting the story, Hahn wants the reader to be part of the experience so that the reader sees the whole episode of the story through the eyes of the protagonist. The protagonist Hilla acts as a reflector figure

and reflects the story to the reader. The story is thereby perceived through the perspectives of the main character.

Hahn exhibits this act of showing in presenting the kind of punishment teachers give in the school in the 1960s namely by flogging:

Der Lehrer nahm den Zeigestock aus der Ecke neben der Landkarte; der dünnere lag bei der Kreide unter der Tafel. Dann knöpfte er dem Jungen die Hosenträger ab und zerrte die Hose an beiden Beinen bis zu den Knien herunter, wobei sich Rainers Unterlein unwillkürlich von der Bank hob, wie um die Prozedur zu erleichtern. Wir alle konnten den kleinen Hintern in der verwaschenen, graublauen Baumwollunterhose sehen, der sich vor Angst und Scham zusammenkrampfte. Sigrid Gerschermann, die mit dem Füller ihren Namen hatte schreiben dürfen, schluckte laut. Sonst ließ der Lehrer den Stock einmal, zweimal durch die Luft pfeifen, bevor er zuschlug, schmunzelnd: Unverhofft kommt oft. Heute aber traf gleich der erste Hieb sein Ziel. Siebentes Gebot, skandierte er, du sollst nicht stehlen. Siebentes Gebot, du sollst nicht stehlen (Hahn 2001: 128).

In narrating the story of how the teacher uses a cane on the pupils as a corrective measure, Hahn uses internal focalization, aware that “if the focalizer coincides with the character, that character will have an advantage over other characters. The reader watches with the character’s eyes and will, be inclined to accept the vision presented by that character” (Bal 2009: 149)

Hilla is the main character in the novel *Das verborgene Wort* and also the heroine. The story is interpreted based on the vision presented by the main character. Focalization according to Bal (2009:149) “is the relationship between the ‘vision’, the agent that sees, and that which is seen, when focalization lies with one character which participates in the fabula, it is referred to as internal focalization”.

In narrating the story, Hahn used the past tense which Suzanne Fleischmann notes is usually used for narrating stories. Fleischmann (2011: 24) in *Tense and Narrativity* affirms that, “the prototypical tense of narration as a mode of reporting information is the PAST, specifically the PFV unmarked PAST, or PRET (for languages with a PFV/IPFV contrast), whose status as the unmarked tense of narration derives from its link to the notion of an event.” She also notes in the same place that “the PFV aspect of the PRET is ideally suited to reporting experience that has been cognitively packaged into synthetic units amenable to representation as points along a timeline. The affinity of the PRET for eventive situations explains its characteristic use to encode the sequence of happenings that constitutes the backbone of a narration” (Fleischmann 2011: 24).

### **5.3.1 Stylistic Devices in *Das verborgene Wort***

Hahn uses dialect (Kölsch), metaphors, idioms and proverbs as a style of writing which makes her work authentic and unique. These stylistic devices are examined as follows:

#### **5.3.1.1 Dialect**

The novel *Das verborgene Wort* is written both in dialect and in standard German. *Kölsch* or *Platt* is the native language used in some towns in Rheinland. It is known as the mother tongue or native language which in German is called “*die Muttersprache*”. Georg Cornelissen (2008: 19) in his book *Meine Oma spricht noch Platt: Wo bleibt der Dialekt in Rheinland* defines native languages:

Die Muttersprache ist die Sprache, die ein Mensch als Kind (von den Eltern) erlernt hat. Diese Erstsprache, die sich das Kind angeeignet hat, bleibt, wenn es einmal groß geworden ist, seine Wohlfühlsprache, seine Lieblingssprache, seine Heimatsprache.

*Kölsch* was still spoken in Hahn's childhood days. The standard German (*Hochdeutsch*) as it is called today was learnt as a foreign language. School children were encouraged to speak correctly as Cornelissen (2008: 92) states:

Sprich ordentlich oder Sprich anständig lauteten im Rheinland die Aufforderungen in einer Zeit, als Kinder den Dialekt noch beherrschten und als sie sich, individuell unterschiedlich und mit differierendem ‚Lernerfolg‘ im Deutschunterricht der Aufgabe stellten, ein dialektunabhängiges Hochdeutsch zu sprechen und zu schreiben.

The importance of the ability to speak dialect cannot be underestimated. Dialect is a sign of regional identity. The ability to converse freely with grandparents and others in their native language indicates a sense of ‘belonging’ and ‘homecoming’ which everyone desires. “*Die wahre Heimat ist eigentlich der Dialekt*” (Cornelissen 2008: 127). Hahn, in describing the freedom the grandfather gives to Hilla and her brother whenever they go to his farmland states:

Mit dem Großvater liefen wir weiter, hinunter, dorthin, wo das Verbotene begann, und niemand schrie: paß op de Schoh op! Paß op de Stömp op! Paß op! Paß op! (Hahn 2001: 7).

Moreover, Dialect gives one the ability to speak several languages. “*Wenn ein Mensch sowohl Hochdeutsch als auch Dialekt spricht, kann man ihn durchaus als zweisprachig (bilingual) bezeichnet*” (Cornelissen 2008: 123).

Hahn uses her native language and Standard German to write her novel to identify with her people and show the cultural life of the people in the 1950s and 1960s. Hilla asks her uncle what he did in Russia that makes his cry. He responds:

Kall nit, sagte der Onkel. Do han esch mesch verschluck. Daröm sin mer rusjeange. Esch brooht fresche Luff. Su, un dat es för desch. Der Onkel drücke mir einen Groschen in die Hand. Koof dir jet ze lutsche, dann

muß de nit mi froge. De Bochs es am Samdaach fädisch. (Hahn 2001: 151).

He answers in his native language which only Hilla and his kinsmen can understand. Native language indicates an openness to and an identity with one's people and culture.

### 5.3.1.2 *Metaphor*

Metaphor as a figure of speech is used to describe an object in a manner that is not literally true, but which can be used to make comparisons. Metaphor according to Raymond Gibbs (2008: 3) in *Metaphor and Thought: The State of the Art* "is not simply an ornamental aspect of language, but a fundamental scheme by which people conceptualize the world and their own activities". Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 5) further define metaphor as "understanding one kind of thing in terms of another".

To drive home her message, Hahn uses conceptual metaphors which "are formed by experience and culture" (Bailey 2003: 1) to convey her words, and to evoke more reflection. Examples of the metaphors used are as follows:

Do has de dir wat janz Besonderes usjesöökt. Das he es ene Boochsteen. Ein Buchstein. Wer diese Splitter finde, sei selbst ein Licht und leuchte in der Welt (Hahn 2001: 13).

The stone represents a book and education, learning which makes the person a light that shines in the world. These are the gracious words of the grandfather to Hilla, indicating the importance of education. These words are imprinted in the mind of the little Hilla so that she wants to shine in the world as the grandfather has indicated. She asks her grandfather to give her the stone: "*Jib mir dä Stein, Opa sagte ich*" (Hahn 2001: 14). The grandfather gives her the stone as a gift on the night before her first day in primary school which is thus described:

“Es war der schönste Buchstein. Blendend weiß mit roten Linien, Schlingen und Schleifen, Kringeln und Krähenfüßen auf der einen, goldenen auf der anderen Seite. Da drauf, sagte der Großvater, stehen wunderbare Jeschisten. Immer neue. Solang de lävs. Solange du lebst“ (Hahn 2001: 55).

As the grandfather tells them stories holding the stone, Hilla thinks the stories are all written in the stone. On her first day in primary school, she brings the stone and tells her own stories holding and looking at the stone. This prompts the teacher Mohren to ask if all she says is inscribed in the stone and she said yes. “*So, sagte Mohren. Das hast du also gelesen. Das steht alles auf diesem Stein da? Ja, sagte ich, dat is ene Boochstein*” (Hahn 2001: 56) The teacher goes ahead and admonishes her.

Lehrer Mohren räusperte sich. Nun, sagte er, es gibt viele Arten zu lesen. Steine werden anders gelesen als das, was auf dem Papier steht. In der Schule, mein Kind, wird nur gelesen, was auf dem Papier steht. Mit dem Großvater kannst du weiter von deinen Buchsteinen lesen. Mohren gab mir den Stein des Großvaters zurück und strich mir über den Kopf (Ibid: 56).

As the *Buchstein* figuratively means education, which is the acquisition of learning and the formation of character, the grandfather in his wisdom gives the Hilla another stone which he calls “*ene Wootstein: ein Wutstein*” (Hahn 2001: 22) This is also a metaphor. The stone is used to overcome anger. One throws the stone in the Rhein and in the process, the anger cools off.

### **5.3.1.3 Biblical Quotations**

Biblical quotations are quotes that are taken from the Bible. The Bible according to Michael Segal (2012: 2) refers” to a specific canon of books, such as 24 or (22) books, which crystallized into a unified collection of books whose contours and contents changed and expanded over

time”. The word “Bible” is derived from the Greek word βιβλίον, which is coined from the term “Papyrus” (Ibid: 2).

For Christians, the Bible is the word of God. It contains various passages that can help in whichever situation they find themselves. The Bible is therefore respected and carried with reverence. Christians believe that God speaks to them through the Bible. It is therefore not surprising that Hahn, brought up in a strict Catholic family, punctuated her novel with biblical quotations which she learnt from her grandmother and the nuns who taught her in nursery school. For example, “*Lasset uns also ablegen die Werke der Finsternis und anziehe die Waffen des Lichts*” (Hahn 2001: 92). These are the words of St Paul urging the Corinthians to lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.

The ten commandments were also learnt. “*Die Zehn Gebote kamen von Gott. Wir lernten sie im Beichunterricht* (Hahn 2001: 105). Others include *Jesus verwandelte Wasser in Wein, mit fünf Broten und zwei Fischen machte er fünftausend Menschen satt* (Ibid: 91).

Hahn also used biblical quotations as some of the beautiful words written in her collection of words as narrated below:

Ich bin das Brot der Welt, sagte Jesus. Ich bin der weinstock, ihr seid die Reben. Ich bin der Weg, die Wahrheit und das Leben. Euer Leib ist ein Tempel des Heiligen Geistes. Wo immer ich das Buch aufschlug, seine Wörter und Sätze waren schön und geheimnisvoll, voller Zauber und Kraft. Denn drei sind, die Zeugnis geben im Himmel: der Vater, das Wort, der heilige Geist. Und drei sind, die Zeugnis geben auf Erden: der Geist, das Wasser und das Blut. Und diese drei sind eins.

Mein Fleisch ist wahrhaft eine Speise, und mein Blut ist wahrhaft ein Trank. Wer mein Fleisch ißt und mein Blut trinkt, der bleibt in mir und ich in ihm. Wer mich ißt, wird durch mich leben (Hahn 2001: 92).

These biblical quotations point to Hahn's Christian upbringing and show that religion played a great role in the communal life of the people in the 1950s and 1960s, especially on those living in villages like Monheim. Christian denominations of Catholic or Lutheran faith guided the people both in their politics and in other spheres of life. There are a lot of disparities between the two faiths as people from one denomination avoid those from the other. This is manifested in the novel as some pupils in the Catholic school mock their fellow pupils from the Lutheran school as (Hahn 2001: 53) describes:

Wer im Dorf nicht dazugehörte, war ein Müpp. Es gab eingeborene, dreckige Müppen, evangelische Müppen und die Flüchtlingsmüppen aus der kalten Heimat. Die wenigen evangelischen Volksschüler lernten mit den katholischen unter einem Dach, wenn auch in einem viel kleineren Teil des Gebäudes. Auf dem Schulhof war ihnen ebensoviel Platz eingeräumt wie den katholischen, so dass es bei uns im Gedränge immer drunter und drüber ging und der Aufsichtslehrer in jeder Pause einiges zu tun hatte, während der evangelische Lehrer den evangelischen Teil mühelos überblicken konnte, was die paar Müppen zu einem weitaus gediegeneren Verhalten anhielt als ihre Mitschüler auf der anderen Seite.

Immer fanden sich dabei ein paar katholische Schreihälse: Evangelische Müppe drieße op de Schüppe, brüllten sie und schütteten sich aus vor Lachen.

#### **5.3.1.4 Idioms**

Idioms play a great role in the language formation of every culture. Zoltan Kövecses in his book *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (2010: 231) states:

Idioms consists of two or more words and are regarded as a special set of the larger category of words. They are assumed to be a matter of language alone, that is, they are taken to be items of the lexicon that are independent of any conceptual system. According to the traditional view, all there is to idioms is that, similar to words, they have certain syntactic properties and have a meaning that is special, relative to the meanings of the forms that comprise it.

Idioms are also motivated by existing conceptual metaphors which form the foundation of everyday reasoning and thought. Idioms are figurative languages which have different meanings from their literal paraphrases.

In the book, *Das verborgene Wort*, Hahn uses idiomatic expression to convey her words not only to embellish her work but to bring in some of the native words used in the region. Some examples of the idioms used are as follows:

*“Do häs de et. Do häs det et!”* (S.188) has the same meaning as *“die Nase voll“* when a situation can no longer be tolerated.

*“Auf der Nase herumtanzen”* (229) Disobedience

*“Der Neubau fix und fertig eingerichtet”* (239) Indicates the stress that was associated with the new building and its furnishings.

*“Kleider machen Leute. Bücher auch”* (306) People are accorded respect by the way they dress and so it is with one’s level of education.

*“Wer ins Leben tritt, braucht Schuhe”* (523) Whoever wants to undertake anything in life, must sit down, reflect and weigh the consequences of their actions before they begin.

### 5.2.1.5 Proverbs

Proverbs are metaphorical words used in different contexts across many cultures. Raymond Gibbs and Dinara Beitel (1995: 134) note that Proverbs “are familiar, fixed, sentential expressions that express well-known truths, social norms, or moral concerns”. Proverbs deal with all facets of life which includes love, work, friendship, death, cause-effect reasoning and human behaviours.

In *Das verborgene Wort*, Annemarie, who works in the church’s bookshop, explains to Hilla the meaning of a proverb:

Weißt du, was ein Sprichwort ist? Ich schüttelte den Kopf. Das ist ein Satz, der immer stimmt. Ein Satz, der immer stimmt? Das war ja wie im Märchen. Hilf dir selbst, so hilf dir Gott, sagte Annemarie, das ist so ein Satz. Verstehst du den? (Hahn 2001: 90).

Following the stylistic devices treated here, it is clear that Hahn enriched her work with literary styles which brought out the position of girls and women. They show the real pattern of life for girls trained in the villages in the 1950s, which makes people think that Hahn was writing about their particular upbringing in their families.

### 5.3.2 Characters in *Das verborgene Wort*

*Das verborgene Wort* features a combination of main and minor characters. The main characters in the novel are the immediate family of the protagonist Hilla, her brother Bertram, their father Josäff, their mother, their grandfather, and their grandmother. The minor characters include the pastor and the teachers Mohren and Rosenbaum. Like *Second Class Citizen*, *Das verborgene Wort* is recognized as a novel of personal development (Bildungsroman).

Hildegard whose name is later changed to Hilla is the main protagonist in the novel. She is seen as an intelligent, promising young girl who is both eager to learn and absorbed in learning. Having learnt from her grandfather that education will make her shine and stand out in the

world, she becomes engrossed in learning, which earns her a nickname “*Leseratte*” (a reading rat). She wants to give herself another identity having learnt from her teacher that her father is not learned (*Ungelernter Arbeiter*) even though he can do a lot of things with his hands. She decides that she will learn. “*Der Vater war ungelernt. Ich würde lernen. Lernen Alles*” (Hahn 2001: 54).

The decision to learn to read and write, to learn all which involves a lot of practice is not acceptable in her family. Her parents cannot imagine why a girl is so enthusiastic about books instead of thinking how to do house chores and how to get married earlier and beget children.

Hilla becomes an object of mockery and is flogged for reading and practising the language and literature. The Standard German language (*Hochdeutsch*) is a subject to be learned which needs a lot of practice, as dialect is spoken at that time in her village.

Hochdeutsche Wörter kannte ich vom Sehen, kölsche vom Hören. Beim Lesen kam es auf die Sprache an, nicht auf die Aussprache. Meine Muttersprache war Kölsch, Hochdeutsch mußte ich lernen, fast so wie Englisch“ (Hahn 2001: 179).

When he hears her praying in German and not in dialect, Hilla’s father brings out his cane and exclaims: “*Was denkst du, wer du bist, was denkst du, wo du bist? Denkst du, daß du was Besseres bist*” (Hahn 2001: 184). As a child brought up in the Catholic faith, Hilla develops a sense of prayer and trust in God. Her trust in a blessed object makes her commit a crime. She goes to the chapel where the nuns keep the statue. She steals the statue and takes holy water to her grandfather so that he can be cured of his sickness. Unfortunately, he is not cured, and she admits her guilt:

Ich aber war untröstlich. Hatte das Wasser nicht gewirkt, weil ich es gestohlen hatte? War es von Sünde im Keim vergiftet wie

wir Menschen? Hatte ich dem Großvater am Ende Erbsünderwasser zu trinken gegeben? Konnte heiliges Wasser durch eine böse Tat in teuflischen Brühe verwandelt werden? Hatte ich den Großvater am Ende dem Tod in die Klauen getrieben? (Hahn 2001: 125).

As a child, Hilla develops a critical mind. Having learnt from her grandmother and mother that a black doll is a pagan child, she decides to place Fritz (who is black in colour) beside the child Jesus in a crib so that Jesus can make him white. The church members are shocked to see a black doll inside the crib. Her parents consider it a desecration. Hilla is saved from a beating in the church when the priest intervenes. He carefully asks her the reasons for her action, and she responds thus:

Dat Fritzje is doch schwaz, sagte ich, und esch han doch so viel jebetet, et sollte doch weiß warden, weil et doch kein Heidenkind mehr is. Un esch hab jedacht, dat Jesuskind kann dat. Ävver isch hab noch wat verjesse...Ich nestelte meinen Rosenkranz aus der Tasche und wand ihn der Puppe ein paarmal um den Hals. So, dat und dat Christkind, dat muß hölpe (Hahn 2001: 49).

The development of such an analytical mindset at the age of six shows Hilla's intelligence. She has a deep quest for learning, which includes either practising new words or practising how to use her cutlery earns her punishment from her father, who beats her with a cane or his belt. When Hilla learns how to use her cutlery from Doris's mother and practises at home, this infuriates her father and he throws the fork away "*Der Vater warf die Gabel auf den Boden, setzte den Fuß darauf*" (Hahn 2001: 187).

Determination is the key to success. Hilla is determined to learn and becomes absorbed in literature. She becomes obsessed with Schiller and erects an altar to him. She discusses with him as one would with a

friend, what one can easily call fantasy. Her obsession with Schiller is aptly summarized:

Friedrich, schrieb ich, ich bin allein. Wie Du. Ich bin gerne allein, weil ich dann an Dich denken kann. Du weilst in der Ferne und blickst nach den Sternen. Ich sehe dieselben Sterne wie Du, und manchmal singe ich: Guter Mond, du gehst so stille. Dann denke ich nur an Dich, Friedrich. Ich habe Dir einen Altar gebaut. Du bist so schön. Bis morgen. Deine Hildegard Palm (Hahn 2001: 236).

Her obsession leads her to reading aloud some texts from Schiller's work *Räuber*. This reading upsets her father. He flogs Hilla with a belt and tears the book into pieces. This action encourages her to think that her freedom lies only in her thoughts as Hahn (2001: 238) asserts:

In meinem Kopf hatte ich alles. Denken war Weg-denken, Schön-denken, Anders-denken. Denken war Flucht in den Kopf, in die Freiheit. Freiheit war im Kopf. Und nur dort.

The freedom which Hilla enjoys in her thoughts is a prediction of the freedom which she will enjoy through education. She finds her freedom only in her quiet moments of reading. There she finds her succour and peace of mind without disturbance and distraction. This makes her exclaim "*Der Geist ist frei! In meinem Kopf kann mir niemand dreinreden*" (Hahn 2001: 238).

Hilla is an independent and hard-working girl. Knowing that her parents are poor and cannot afford to give her money for school excursions, she opts to look for a vacation job, though she is underaged. She seeks permission from the rector of the school to give her a recommendation that will enable her to work in a factory. At 14, she is old enough to look for a way of supporting her education when her schoolmates are enjoying summer holidays in other countries. While working in the factory where pills are packed, she is confronted by a disgruntled man whose son cannot pass the entrance examination. He asks her what she

is doing there; taunting her that she knows nothing except how to read “*Häs de nix Besseres ze dunn, als Pelle ze packe? Esch denk, du häs nix angeres em Kopp als läse?*” (Hahn 2001: 295).

The fact that Hilla is enthusiastic about learning and aspires to a better self-identity to equip herself for a better life in the future becomes a problem for some people. These obstacles do not deter her sense of purpose. She remains focused on her desire to learn and to become the best. She uses her knowledge to enlighten people in their moments of doubt. When her friend Hanni wants to get married to a man who attends an Evangelical church, there is war since Hanni comes from a Catholic family, Hilla uses the parable of the ring (*Nathan der Weise*), written by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) to illustrate that no one religion is better than another. Marriage should not be based on religion but on love, as Hanni reiterates:

Dä Lessing hät rescht, sagte Hanni. Keener es besser als der andere. Op de nu katholisch bes oder evangelisch. Mer muß ne joode Menschen sin” (Hahn 2001: 211).

The show of her knowledge earns her more enemies than friends. She wants to share her knowledge about the parable of the ring with her friend Sigismund, as a film based on the parable of the ring will be shown in a theatre. His face grows pale and Hilla is forced to stop. Hahn (2001: 355) explains in detail:

Mit Männer war es wie in der Schule: Wissen zu zeigen konnte abträglich sein, als mit Geld zu prahlen. Der Zwiespalt war unlösbar. Ohne das kam ich nicht weiter und hatte doch das Gefühl, mich für jede Leistung entschuldigen zu müssen, bei den Klassenkameraden, den Eltern, Verwandten, den Leuten im Dorf. Das, wovon ich hoffte, es würde mir ihre Anerkennung, womöglich gar ihre Liebe eintragen, die Leistung, entfernte

mich von ihnen, was mich ihnen näherbringen sollte, brachte mich immer weiter von ihnen weg.

The fact that her intelligence and knowledge bring her into conflict with people which pains her as a human being does not mean that she decides to be stupid and stop learning to please the people. Rather it serves as a motivation for her to strive higher because nothing good comes easy. After her basic school education, Hilla is supposed to go to secondary school having graduated as the best pupil. Unfortunately, there is no money for her to continue her education. Her father has already decided that she will work as an apprentice in a paper factory. In the factory, she is assigned to work under Mrs Wachtel as a typist. Mrs Wachtel is already known in the village as a bad woman. She wants to frustrate Hilla and taunts her about being a book worm as Hahn (2001: 504) readily reports:

Da sind Briefe. Sie knallte eine Mappe auf den Tisch. Da sind Aktenordner. Sie packte mich im Nacken und drehte meinen Kopf nach hinten. Und darauf steht das Alphabet. Das Alphabet kennst du doch? Hahaha. Sollst ja so ein Bücherwurm sein, haha. Leseratte. Ha.Papier gibt es hier genug.

Working under a difficult woman like Mrs Wachtel is another hurdle which Hilla has to surmount. Hilla's source of consolation is her ability to write. When she is absorbed in writing, she does not feel lonely.

Meine Hand auf dem Papier sagte mir, du mußt ja nicht weinen. Fürchte dich nicht! Nicht die Hand des Vaters, nicht die Augen der Mutter tun dir weh. Du bist richtig, sagte die Hand.Solange du schreibst, bist du nicht allein. Auf dem Papier bist du nie allein (Hahn 2001: 514).

Mrs Wachtel, who is known for her uncultured behaviour, wants to make life miserable for Hilla. She closes the door and windows of the office, smokes her cigarette, and blows the smoke on Hilla's face, causing Hilla to gasp for air.

Sie blies mir Rauch ins Gesicht. Ich machte einen Schritt rückwärts. Und jetzt hörst du mir einmal gut zu. Das Fräulein Palm ist faul. Das Fräulein Palm ist aufsässig. Das Fräulein Palm taugt nichts. Das Fräulein Palm hat diese Stelle nicht verdient. Das Fräulein Palm gehört nicht her (Hahn 2001: 547).

The gasp for air and dizziness caused by the smoke makes Hilla spit on the ground. Hilla is punished and a letter of attestation of good behaviour has to be signed by her father. Hilla is punished unjustly both at home and at work. Nobody cares to hear her side of the story. She becomes demoralized and takes to drinking alcohol in the hope that it will solve her problem.

It is at the get-together of all the graduates of the school that her teacher Mohren noticed a drastic change in Hilla. He notices that she has taken to drinking and invites her to his house. Hilla opens up to him, telling him of the bad treatment she receives at her work and the unjust punishment meted out to her by her father without hearing her side of the story. She reiterates her intention to go back to school. The teacher discusses with Pastor Kreuzkamps who intends to sponsor Hilla's education. Both undertake to pay a visit to Hilla's father to convince him of the need for Hilla to continue with her education. On the expected date of meeting with Josäff, Hilla's father, the pastor says:

Schließlich hielt der Pastor eine Art Ansprache. Von den Talenten, die der Herr seinen Knechten anvertraut habe, erzählte er, und daß es Sünde sei, sein Licht unter den Scheffel zu stellen. Auch für ein Mädchen. ... Und das Schulgeld, sagte Mohren, ist auch frei (Hahn 2001: 619).

Bertram is Hilla's younger brother. He is attached to Hilla and they share the same room. The appearance of Bertram in the novel begins at the time Hilla and Bertram take a walk with their grandfather in his field along the Rhein. Their grandfather has taken out his *Buchstein* to tell them his stories. Bertram usually relies on the assistance of his sister. Whenever he falls asleep before doing his assignment, he relies on his

sister to wake him up. “*Bertram, rüttelte ich den Bruder, et jibt ne Jeschischte. Ihm schlafen zu lassen, hätte er mir nie verziehen*” (Hahn 2001: 14). When the grandfather begins the story looking at the stone, Hilla wants the stone and Bertram wants to have it as well. Hilla says: “*Jib mir dä Stein, Opa sagte ich und wies den Bruder, der auch seine Hände ausstreckte, zurecht, du bes doch noch vell ze kleen. Du kannst doch ja nit läse*” (Ibid: 14). Bertram though small, wants to have a share of whatever is given to Hilla. Bertram who is not as intelligent as Hilla looks to his sister for assistance. Hilla undertakes to teach him when they are in the room at night. Both of them play with the words as a means of learning, as (Hahn 2001: 63) further illustrates:

Abends im Bett warf ich dem Bruder Wörter zu. Wir spuckten sie aus, saugten sie ein, machten sie groß und klein, dick und dünn, laut und leise. Wörter waren da, wie die Steine am Rhein, das Gras in den Wiesen, soviel und wann immer man wollte. Aus der Luft konnte man sie greifen und wieder in Luft auflösen. Mutter, Butter, Kutter- wir entdecken den Reim. Wenn er nicht weiterwußte, stellte ich ein neues Wort.

Bertram is Hilla’s playmate and companion. Whatever Hilla learns from school is transferred to Bertram when she comes home, so Bertram looks forward to learning from his sister. Hilla tells him the fairy tale that was usually taught. “*Abends erzählte ich das Märchen dem Bruder, und am nächsten Morgen spielten wir es*” (Hahn 2001: 68). The act of telling and acting becomes a method of teaching. Bertram understands his sister more than any member of their family. He knows when she is happy or not. He has a sense of compassion and consoles her whenever she is flogged unnecessarily by their father.

Bertram plays an intermediary role between his sister and her first love Sigismund. He collects mail from Sigismund for Hilla and sends back the reply, which is normal among siblings who are in their teens.

Sigismund and Bertram attend the same school which makes it easier for the exchange of mails.

Mitte Februar steckte mit Bertram wieder einen Zettel zu. Hilla, schreib Sigismund: Ich bin heute nachmittag im Café Haase. Die Olympiade hat angefangen. Kommst Du auch? S. Das war alles (Hahn 2001: 340).

At school, Bertram has a lot of difficulty in learning Latin but Hilla develops a sense of playing with Latin words to make it easier for him to learn. Both begin to greet themselves with the conjugation of the Latin word “to love”. Bertram greets Hilla with the words “Amo, amas, amat and she responds Amamus, amatis, amant” (Hahn 2001: 618).

Bertram shares in the joy of his sister Hilla especially when the priest promises to sponsor her education. Bertram in the whole novel looks to his sister for direction. Though a boy, he recognizes his sister’s intelligence and becomes a great beneficiary of her natural endowment.

Josäff, Hilla’s father, can be described as a very difficult personality who does not consider the feelings of his children. He is a very strict and overbearing man. He cannot understand why money should be wasted on educating a girl. The fact that Hilla’s intelligence is acknowledged by all and sundry, which normally should have been a source of pride to him, becomes anguish. He hits Hilla with a cane or his belt when there is no need for the flogging or at the least provocation. His brutality and bullying begin when Hilla is in nursery school and a chicken in their house runs away. She goes to school and tells Sr Aniana who prays with her that the chicken will come back safe to them.

Ich betete für Hänschen mit Aniana und abends noch einmal mit dem Bruder. Heimlich. Für ein Tier zu beten, hätte die Großmutter nie erlaubt. Wir beteten am Donnerstag, wir beteten am Freitag, am Samstag. Dann war Hänschen wieder da (Hahn 2001: 31).

The joy of seeing the lost chicken is so great that Hilla wants to get up and welcome it when they were eating. This behaviour is usually associated with children. A gentle father will tell the child to sit down

and finish her food first but Josäff the father held her by the neck and pressed her down.

When Hilla finishes “*Volksschule*”, she wants to further her education but knows it will be difficult because her father will not pay for her fees. “*An eine höhere Schule dachte bei mir zu Hause keener*” (Hahn 2001: 133). The teacher tells her father how intelligent Hilla is and the need for her to go to “*Realschule*”. The father sees it as a waste of money to send a girl to school. He asks the teacher who will pay the fees and the teachers answers that the community will pay the school fees.

Un wer soll dat bezahle? Fragte er endlich. Das werde die Gemeinde übernehmen, sagte der Lehrer. Ävver nur för de meddelscholl, sagte der Vater, et is doch nur e Weet (Hahn 2001: 134).

Josäff is a sadist and a wicked man. He finds fault with everything Hilla does, even when she does things that are usually associated with children. When noodles made with alphabets (*Buchstabennudeln*) are cooked, Hilla and the brother make a bet on who can form the longest word with the noodles. The brother has already formed the word *Hasent* and Hilla who has formed *Engelshaar* is looking out for the word *kron*e to form her words *Engelshaarkrone*. The father suddenly grabs her by the neck and pushes her face into the hot soup, which gave her some marks on the face. Hahn (2001: 188) states:

Do häs de et. Do häs de et. Häs de ding Boochstabe. Seine Hand in meinem Nacken umspannt meinen Nacken, umschließt meinen Hals, ich schnappe nach Luft, die Hand drückt den Kopf nach unten, immer weiter nach unten, da ist der Tisch, da ist der Teller, da ist die Suppe, gute Rindfleischsuppe, da sind die Nudeln, da sind die Buchstaben, und da ist mein Gesicht, da ist meine Nase, meine Haut, da ist mein Gesicht in der Suppe, heiße Suppe, kräftige Suppe, Fettaugen drauf, Markbällchen drin, Eierstich. Brandblasen gab es nicht, aber rote Flecken auf Wangen und Nase von erweiterten Gefäßen. Lebenslänglich.

This action prompts one to ask what kind of father can wound his own daughter to such an extent for no reason. Why is it Hilla that is punished for playing with the noodles. What of the brother Bertram, why is he not punished?

Hilla wants to improve herself. Having been invited by her friend Doris for a meal, Doris's mother notices the difficulty she has in eating with cutlery. She teaches Hilla, who at home wants to practice more of it. This behaviour annoys her father who throws her fork to the ground and asks who she thinks she is: *“Wat denks de egentlich, wer de bes! Denks de, dat de jet Besseres bes? Denk jo nit, dat de jet Besseres bes. Janix bes de, janix!”* (Hahn 2001: 184).

When Hilla changes her name from Hildegard to make it easier for people to say it, her father flares up again and says she can do whatever she wants to do, she remains the child of a proletariat. *“Mach, wat de wells. Du blievs doch, wat de bes, dat Kenk vun nem Prolete”* (Hahn 2001: 191). A normal father will be happy to see that his children are progressing but Josäff resents Hilla for who she is, first as a girl who wants to have a higher self-identity from the one she has inherited from her parents; secondly as an intelligent girl who notices that it is only education that can make her achieve her goal. Whenever Hilla practises her reading, her father snatches away the book from her, tears it into two and asks if she has nothing to do except read.

When Mrs Wachtel almost suffocates Hilla by closing the windows and blowing cigarette smoke in her face bringing spittle to her mouth, and makes her dizzy and gasp for air, Hilla has no option than to spit out the spittle in the office. Mrs Wachtel calls the director, who upon seeing the spittle asks Hilla to get a letter of attestation of good behaviour from her parents. A good father will try to find out from his daughter what happened. On the contrary, Josäff brutally takes a cane, flogs her, and holds her by the neck

Josäff's aggressive behaviour makes Hilla stay clear of her father. Sometimes she asks herself why her father hates her so much. Hahn tries to explain in an interview granted with *BONUS* magazine in Bonn 2017 that her father in particular actually handled her the way he was handled by his stepfather. He thought it was the best way to bring up a child.

Mein Vater war ein hochbegabter Mensch, der selbst keine Chance hatte als Bauernkind, das mit elf von der Schule gehen musste und einen Stiefvater hatte, der alles brutal aus ihm rausprügelte (BONUS 12/17, 20).

Hilla's mother, Mrs Palm is a woman who subjects herself to the leadership of her husband. She is a housewife, works in the garden, sews and patches clothes for the children, and does the household chores. She relies on Josäff her husband for everything and is incapable of making a decision. She has no mother/daughter relationship with Hilla. She believes that Hilla is a rascal and a little devil and calls her "Teufelsbraten". "*Eine Mutter, für die ich ein Dävelsbrode war, schien mir ziemlich fragwürdig*" (Hahn 2001: 63)

It is believed that every mother is happy with the progress of her children; more especially if any of her children are recognized for their intelligence. Mrs Palm, on the contrary, is not happy that her child Hilla spends most of her time learning and reading her book. Even with her neighbour's advice that she should be proud of her daughter "*Na, sehen Sie, wie das Kind sich freut. Frau Unkelbach schneuzte sich. Sie können stolz sein auf Ihre Tochter, Frau Palm*" (Hahn 2001: 76).

In every family setting, the mother corrects her children when they misbehave. Mrs Palm under-estimates the role of a woman in a family. She sees herself incapacitated to correct and arrogates all power to her husband Josäff. Whenever she thinks that Hilla needs to be punished she says "*Waat, bes dä Papp no Huus kütt*" (Wait till your father comes home) (Ibid: 78). This particular phrase is used up to 30 times through-

out the narrative. It shows that she has a low image of herself and of women in general. Her identity is shrouded in the identity of the husband. It is the husband who has the right to admonish and correct. The woman has no image. She is only a shadow of a man. This concept corresponds with Beauvoir's notion that many women have no opinion of themselves and so have no voice (Beauvoir 1989: 66).

Because Mrs Palm has a low opinion of herself, she finds it difficult to understand how Hilla wants to have a high and better identity for herself and why she has to preoccupy herself with reading.

Mrs Palm does not trust Hilla, especially when it comes to books. Hilla is given some books as a gift by the chaplain's sister. She brings them home and shows them to her mother. Her mother does not believe they were a gift and goes back with her to verify. Hahn (2001: 84) explains further:

Die Mutter glaubte es nicht, warf die Bücher in die Einkaufstasche und rannte mit mir zur Kaplanei. Es dat och wohr, platzte sie mit verlegenem Ärger heraus. Et kost kenne Penne? All dä Krom he? Die Mutter zählte die drei Bücher auf die Kommode in der Diele wie falsches Geld. Ja, das ist richtig. Hat Ihnen Hildegard das denn nicht gesagt?

An act of trust is built where good relationships thrive. The fact that Mrs Palm has no cordial relationship with her daughter results in daily conflict and misunderstanding. The lack of trust and misunderstanding is shown when a letter comes for Hilla from an Italian man she meets at the Rhein. Her mother, who normally stays at home, receives the letter on behalf of Hilla and opens it. One might expect Mrs Palm to discuss the issue with her daughter but on the contrary, she concludes that Hilla is having an affair with the man. Hilla at that time is acquainting herself with Peter Benders. His mother and Hilla's mother have given consent to the marriage of their children. Hilla's mother goes immediately to

inform Peter's mother of the letter from the Italian man, which makes Peter stay away from Hilla. Hahn (2001: 423) illustrates:

Meine Mutter hat deine Mutter am Samstag auf dem Kerschhof jetroffen. An Küsters Jrab. ...Isch weiß nit genau, wat deine Mutter meiner Mutter erzählt hat. Sie haben misch weggeschickt zum Komposthaufen, du weißt ja, janz am anderen Ende, mit der schweren Schubkarre. Peter machte erneut eine Pause. Ich sah ihn an. Wir schweigen. Aber es war nicht länger das gemeinsame Schweigen unserer guten Tage.

A mother protects the interests of her children. No mother is expected to talk at random without proper investigation. Lack of trust can cause a lot of damage which may be not be reversed. Mrs Palm, who is supposed to understand her daughter Hilla, lacks such motherly understanding, which estranges her from her daughter instead of building the bond that is expected to exist between mother and child.

Mrs Palm belongs to that class of women who do not believe in themselves but believe solely in their husbands. She is a true representative of what the patriarchal norm expects from a woman: housewife; mother; doing household chores such as cooking, washing, and ironing; lack of initiative; lack of access to resources; dependence on the husband for everything; and a lack of education.

Hilla's grandfather is a wise man. In his wisdom, he captures the relationship between Orality and Literacy. He plays a very important role in Hilla's life. He takes his grandchildren to his grazing land along the River Rhein. There, he allows Hilla and Bertram to collect stones which they throw into the river. He examines the stone they have collected. He tells them stories and fairy tales, looking at the stone. It is he who initiates Hilla into the world of learning. He takes a look at the stone they have collected and says that Hilla has chosen something special.

Tja, sagte der Großvater und sah mich an. Seine Augen schimmerten in einem Kreis feiner Fältchen grau und grün wie die Blätter der Weiden. Do has de dir wat janz Besonderes usjesöökt. Dat he es ene Boochsteen. Ein Buchstein (Hahn 2001: 13).

He goes on to tell them the story of the precious stone which falls from heaven and breaks into a thousand pieces. The stone shines in the darkness and whoever finds this stone, becomes a light and shines in the world. The stone is the bookstone, "*Buchstein*". He speaks in a metaphorical language. By the bookstone he means the world of reading and writing. Whoever is lucky enough to be educated will shine in the world. Education is the key to success in life.

He encourages Hilla to read. He gives her the stone to keep and to read from it always. Reading from the stone denotes telling stories. He brings her into the oral culture. He teaches Hilla how to tell stories, thus giving her basic foundation for education. He knows the importance of education and wants to bequeath it to his grandchildren before he dies.

He loves his grandchildren and understands them. They love him more than they love their parents. It is therefore not a surprise that Hilla and Bertram are ready to do anything including stealing holy water contained in a statue from the house of Resi Pihl and bringing it to the grandfather when he is sick so that he can be cured:

Im Flur der Wohnung stand auf der Kommode neben Kruzifix und Öllämpchen eine Madonna in weißem Gewand mit breiter blauer Schärpe und Krönchen. Diese Muttergottes, so Frau Pihl, habe ihr dat Schmitze Billa aus Lurdäs mitgebracht. ... Am nächsten Tag nahm ich Hannelores Rechenbuch mit nach Hause und brachte es ihr mit dem Bruder zurück. Kaum dort, fing er wie verabredet in Hof zu schreien an. Alle stürzten hinaus, ich schraubte der Figur den Kopf ab, goß das heilige Wasser in mein Liebesperlenfläschen, füllte die Muttergottes

mit Kranenwasser auf und nahm den Bruder bei der Hand (Hahn 2001: 124).

The prank of distracting people with shouting while Hilla gets the holy water does not yield a positive result because the grandfather is not cured. The children commit the offence because of the love they have for their grandfather who is sick and at the point of death. Though the grandfather eventually dies, Hilla and Bertram are ready to make a lot of sacrifices for him to prevent him from dying.

Hilla's grandmother can be described as a devout Catholic who is fanatical about Catholic teachings. She is engrossed in prayers and Holy Mass and Latin, which she calls the Language of God, "*Die Sprache Gottes*" (Hahn 2001: 76). Considering the time in which she lives, one can easily conclude that she witnessed the religious war between Catholics and Protestants as the friction between the two religions is still in existence in her time. This religious conflict affects her behaviour which seems to say that she has nothing to do with anyone who is not Catholic. She undertakes to teach Hilla prayers at an early stage as soon as she can speak her first word:

Sobald ich Mama sagen konnte, Wauwau, Bää und Hamham, brachte die Großmutter mir das Beten bei, Lieber Jott, mach misch fromm, dat isch in dä Himmel komm (Hahn 2001:15).

The grandmother understands that the training of a child begins early in life and for her, the basis of each training begins with the learning of prayers.

Gebete mußte man lernen. Noch bevor ich in den Kindergarten kam, lernte ich das Gegrüßet seist du, Maria und das Vater unser" (Hahn 2001: 17).

The only thing that counts and interests the grandmother is the fact she is a Catholic, who says her rosary and believes in the words of her pastor. Hildegard changes her name to Hilla, and her father derides her by saying she can do whatever she wants to do, she will still be the child of a poor worker. *“Mach, wat de wells. Du blievs doch, wat de bes, dat Kenk vun nem Prolete”* (Hahn 2001: 191). The grandmother sharply responds that they are not poor workers, rather they are Catholics. *“Prolete, zischte die Großmutter, mer sin ken Prolete, mer sin kattolesch!* (Ibid: 191).

Hilla's grandmother's intolerance of people of other religions is shown when Hanni a Catholic falls in love with Ferdi, who attends an Evangelical church. After much debate which eventually is resolved with the help of the parable of the ring, a mixed marriage is performed. A week after the wedding, Ferdi is involved in a fatal accident and dies. During the funeral service, prayers are said by both pastors:

Lasset uns beten: Vater unser, began der Pfarrer unterm kahlen Kreuz, der du bist im Himmel, betete der fremde Pfarrer... Denn dein ist die Kraft und die Macht und die Herrlichkeit in Ewigkeit, schloß der evangelische Pfarrer, während wir der Erlösung vom Übel unter Führung der Großmutter unbeirrt das übliche Gegrüßet seist du Maria folgen ließen. Wäre nicht Pastor Kreuzkamp dem bedrängten Kollegen zu Hilfe gekommen, wir hätten mindestens noch ein Gesetz aus dem schmerzreichen Rosenkranz angehängt. Herr, gibt ihm die ewige Ruhe, donnert der Pastor. Und das ewige Licht leuchte ihm, antwortete die Großmutter, froh, dass am Ende der richtige Gott das letzte Wort behielt (Hahn 2001: 223).

This shows how the grandmother holds tenaciously to her Catholic prayers even as she is in the Evangelical church for a funeral service. Though the funeral is conducted in an Evangelical church by both the Catholic priest and the Evangelical pastor, the grandmother sees Ferdi's

death as God's judgement. "*Für die Großmutter blieb Ferdis Tod trotz der beiden Pastoren ein Gottesurteil*" (Ibid: 224).

The grandmother is so obsessed with her Catholic teachings, especially prayers and songs in Latin, that anybody with another religious affinity becomes her enemy.

The two minor characters Pastor Kreuzkamp and the teacher Mohren are the pillars behind Hilla's education. Pastor Kreuzkamp is the pastor in charge of the Catholic church in Dondorf. He is the instrument used by God to bring Hilla's aspiration to fulfilment. Pastor Kreuzkamp is humane and tolerant, a critical thinker who thinks before he acts. When Hilla places her black doll beside the child Jesus in a manger in the church with the hope that the child Jesus will baptize the black doll and make him white, her mother and other people in the church consider it a desecration and Hilla must be severely punished, he calms the situation and asks Hilla to see him after Mass. He asks her these questions:

Was hast du dir den dabei gedacht, hm? Was sollte denn das Fritzchen bei dem Jesuskind? Hilla responded: Dat Fritze is doch schwaz, sagte ich, und esch han doch so viel jebetet, et sollte doch weiß werden, weil et doch kein Heidenkind mehr ist. Un esch hab jedacht, dat Jesuskind kann dat. Ävver isch habe noch wat vergesse... ich nestelte meinen Rosenkranz aus der Tasche und wand ihn der Puppe ein paarmal um den Hals. So, dat und dat Christkind, dat muß hölpe (Hahn 2001: 49).

The answer given by Hilla at the age of four which can be classified as an act of faith for a child of her age, makes the pastor praise Hilla and wish her a Happy Christmas. The pastor secretly follows the development of the child.

Pastor Kreuzkamp's important role in the life of Hilla manifests itself at the height of her depression due to the treatment she receives at her workplace and at home. She takes to drinking and dies all her clothes black. She is not allowed to continue her education because her

parents cannot afford it. Rosenbaum, her former teacher notices the changes in Hilla and invites her to his house. When he learns of her frustration, he goes to discuss the matter with the pastor so that the church will undertake her training. On the appointed day of the meeting with Hilla's parents, the pastor speaks of the talents that a master gives to his servants and ends by saying as it is a sin to hide a light under a bushel, so it is for a girl: it is a sin to hide Hilla's talents without developing them. He asks Josäff, her father, to allow her to enrol in a secondary school and the church will pay the fees. Hahn (2001: 619) reports:

Schließlich hielt der Pastor eine Art Ansprache. Von den Talenten, die der Herr seinen Knechten anvertraut habe, erzählte er, und daß es Sünde sei, sein Licht unter den Scheffel zu stellen. Auch für ein Mädchen. Kreuzkamp erhob sich, nahm meine beiden Hände in seine, wie er sie vor Jahren in die Hände genommen hatte, meine Hände mit dem schwarzen Fritz, und drückte sie sanft. Und das Schulgeld, sagte Mohren, ist auch frei.

Good teachers are a source of inspiration for their pupils. Mohren is Hilla's teacher in primary school. Children in the 1950s are classified according to their parent's occupation. On the first day of school, pupils indicate their names, their address, and the occupation of their fathers. These are written down in a register. When Hilla proudly indicates where her father works, she learns he is unlearned. Mohren says he is an unlearned worker which makes Hilla decide instantly to be learned herself. Hahn (2001: 54) explains in detail:

Dä jeht op Arbeed bei Krötz und Ko, sagte ich. Ungelernter Arbeiter, murmelte Mohren. Ungelernt? Wieso ungelernt? Der Vater konnte Bäume pfpfen und Schuhe besohlen, Fahrräder flicken und Schuppen bauen, die Nachbarn holten sich Rat bei ihm, wenn die Rosen Rost hatten oder Mehltau, und die

Verwandschaft bewunderte sein Gedächtnis. Der Vater war ein Arbeiter. Aber ungelernet? Der Lehrer hatte es in ein dickes Heft geschrieben, Klassenbuch nannte er das, neben Namen und Adresse, also mußte es stimmen. Der Vater war ungelernet. Ich würde lernen. Lernen. Alles.

Though the word sounds demoralizing, but it becomes a source of inspiration to Hilla who decides to learn all so that she will not be addressed as unlearned.

It is also Mohren who explains to Hilla that stories are not told using the stone (Buchstein) as Hilla tells her story looking at the stone just as her grandfather taught her. The teacher explains to her that there are various methods of reading but in the school, they read books and he explains further that one learns it by learning the alphabets. These words made a deep impression on Hilla who begins to learn the alphabet.

Lehrer Mohren räusperte sich. Nun, sagte er, es gibt viele Arten zu lesen. Steine werden anders gelesen als das, was auf dem Papier steht. Mit dem Großvater kannst du weiter von deinen Buchsteinen lesen. Mohren gab mir den Stein des Großvaters zurück und strich mir über den Kopf. Jedes, aber auch jedes Wort der Welt könne man lesen, lockte uns der Lehrer, wenn man nur diese sechsundzwanzig Buchstaben, Alphabet genannt, kenne (Hahn 2001: 56).

Mohren is also a disciplinarian. He lays down some rules in the class to ensure order and discipline. That is in the days when pupils are punished in school for misbehaving, even though excessive punishment is not encouraged. Some of his rules are thus enumerated

Zu spat kommen, flüstern, mit den Füßen scharren, seufzen, gähnen, aus dem Fenster glotzen, herumfummeln, selbst husten und niesen waren mit Eckestehen oder einer Ohrfeige auf der Stelle gesühnt. Schwere Strafen für schwere Verbrechen wie

vergessene oder fehlerhafte Hausarbeiten, Widerworte, Patzigkeit, Lügen wurden erst kurz vor Schluß der Schulstunde verabreicht, bei besonders schlimmen Vergehen bis zum Ende des Unterrichts aufgeschoben (Hahn 2001: 126).

Mohren instils a lot of discipline in his class. At the end of the school year when the pupils are to go into middle school (*Realschule*), Mohren knows the ability of each of his pupils. He asks those who are going to the next school to stand up beginning with the boys. Then he asks the girls to stand up. Those whose parents can afford the school fees are asked to stand up. Hilla remains seated knowing how difficult it will be for her to continue. Mohren asks her to stand up. She is surprised. Mohren later discusses with the head of the community who promises to pay her fees. He comes and informs Hilla's father that Hilla should be allowed to continue with her education. The father quickly asks who will pay the fees and Mohren assures him that the community will pay for her.

Als der Lehrer zu uns kam, verzog der Vater keine Miene. Saß am Küchentisch und schlang sein Essen hinunter, nickte ein paarmal, sagte nichts. Un wer soll dat bezahle? Fragte er endlich. Das werde die Gemeinde übernehmen, sagte der Lehrer. Ävver nur för de Meddelscholl, sagte der Vater, et is doch nur e Weet (Hahn 2001: 134).

The father responds "*Ävver nur för de Meddelscholl, et is doch nur e Weet*" saying Hilla should only attend middle school because she is only a girl, even though he is told that the community will pay for Hilla's school fees (Ibid: 134). This shows that the education of women is not considered worthwhile.

In conclusion, *Das verborgene Wort* is a formation novel (Bildungsroman) which deals with the growth of the hero/heroine. The Bildungsroman deals with self-discovery and identity. Hilla, the protagonist,

wants to discover herself and give herself an identity different from that of her parents. Having learnt that education will make her shine in the world according to her grandfather, she plunges herself into reading and writing to obtain an education and shine.

This path of development is not easy for Hilla who has to endure a lot of taunts from her father. He believes that it is not important to train a girl or a woman because a woman is considered in her traditional role of being a wife and a mother. Since a woman is destined to marry according to his understanding, it is better to train a boy who will earn money and look after his family. Hilla, in trying to swim against the current of the German culture of the 1950s, becomes an object of criticism from family members. In her determination to read and practice literature and do her homework, she is continually harassed by her parents. Her father flogs her with a belt, calls her names, and tears her books. Such treatment does not deter Hilla from reading hard. Rather it becomes a source of encouragement to her knowing that education will make her shine in the world and give her a different identity different from her parents who are poor peasant workers. Her determination to succeed despite all odds eventually gives her a status higher than her peers. She eventually becomes a renowned writer and is still shining in the world as predicted by the grandfather.

Going by the fact that Hahn wanted to present her childhood experience and the position of women, one may be tempted to ask why she decided to write an autobiographical novel instead of autobiography. Hahn in one of her interviews clearly said that she could not think of writing an autobiography because she wanted to distance herself from the story and use whom she calls “her other self” so that she could tell the story as it happened. Some events happen in one’s life that one cannot easily put in ink and ascribe one’s name to.

Eine Autobiographie erschien mir absurd. Zudem ermöglichte die enge Koppelung der Ulla Hahn an meine Hilla Palm sowohl, von mir

abzurücken, ja mich zu vergessen, als auch, mir selbst näherzukommen, mich deutlicher und klarer wiederzufinden (BONUS 18 12/17).

Hahn's response that there are things that one cannot freely write in an autobiography corresponds with the opinion of Wagner-Egelhaaf (2005: 41) who in *Autobiographie* notes that there are many factors that prevent one from writing the truth in an autobiography:

Es gibt genügend Gründe für einen Autobiographen, von der faktischen Wahrheit abzuweichen: So ist es unmöglich, in einer Autobiographische alle Fakten eines Lebens anzuführen, mit Rücksicht auf andere kann der Autobiograph Skrupel haben, bestimmte Umstände zu erwähnen.

Moreover, truths are easily stated in an autobiographical novel than an autobiography. According to Lejeune (1989:26) "Memoirs are never more than half sincere, however great the concern for truth may be, everything is always more complicated than we say it is. Perhaps we even come closer to the truth in the novel." Hahn, in using childhood experiences in her writing, testifies to the opinion that our childhood defines the rest of our life. Maanvi Singh (2014: 2) in his news article about child development *Some Early Childhood Experiences shape Adult Life* states that "most of us don't remember our first two or three years of life – but our earliest experiences may stick with us for years and continue to influence us well into adulthood. The type of emotional support that a child receives during the first and a half year has an effect on education, social life and romantic relationships even 20 or 30 years later."

Since some early childhood experiences shape our lives, it is not surprising that Hahn's love for education which she developed as a child influences her till this day. Her love for education is aptly captured at the beginning of the novel: "*Mit Schreiben und Lesen fängt eigentlich das Leben an*" (Life really begins with reading and writing) (Hahn 2001: 6). The values and habits cultivated as a child lead one into adult-

hood. The sustenance of these values may come with a lot of difficulties but the will to surmount these difficulties leads one to succeed in life.

Apart from struggling to develop herself amid the hurdles, Hahn also wants to present the position of women in the 1950s to the 1970s (*Historische Realität*). Searle, in his work *The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse* (1979: 325), notes that “a fictional story is a pretended representation of a state of affairs.” The word pretend according to Searle means intention; therefore, Hahn has the intention of presenting the state of affairs with regard to the status of women. In her presentation, key points are thus enumerated: the inequality between boys and girls, the dependence of women, the traditional concept of a woman based on her gender enshrined in motherhood and housework, and the inaccessibility of education for girls, especially those from poor homes.

Education is the keyword presented in the novel. The novel exposes how the protagonist despite all odds perseveres in her quest to be educated and gives herself a new identity when girls of her age and social status are condemned to marriage. The novel teaches that education is the key to success.

**PART III.**

**THEMES OF THE SUPPRESSION  
OF WOMEN IN *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN* AND  
*DAS VERBORGENE WORT***



## **CHAPTER 6.**

### **VARIOUS MEANS OF SUPPRESSION OF WOMEN**

#### **6.1 Overview of the Suppression of Women**

Women in many cultures across the continents have always lived with suppression. They have limited opportunities as compared to their male counterparts in terms of education, economy, and social power. Various explanations have been given by philosophers, theorists, and social scientists as to the causes of this suppression. “Engel proposes that changes in ownership of property and thus in economic structure brought about a reduction in the originally equal status of women” (Stewart and Winter 1977: 532). This implies that the suppression of women lay in changes in the economic structure. He opines that the status of women would have a positive change if women were employed in industries. The employment of women would lead them to emancipation. Other theorists argued that women’s involvement in the modern economy would improve the status of women. Various women’s movements have fought for reforms to improve the status of women, such as better contraceptives, women’s control over their bodies, payment to women for domestic work, and so on. Other scholars note that dependence on men as the breadwinner of the family contributes to the suppression of women since women lack economic independence. Some thinkers also note that certain religions promote the treatment of women as a

second fiddle. Some cultural values and myths also play a role in the subjugation of women. Education is seen as a means of raising the status of women.

Women are discriminated against because of their gender. This discrimination can only come to an end through the struggle for social change. Since most cultures are patriarchal, Goffman (2008: 209) in *Interaction Ritual* argues that “gender roles encourage males to go where the action is, i.e., to social settings that involve the wilful undertaking of serious chances whereas gender roles for women endorse the virtues of modesty, restraint and virginity which seem to promote anything but action.” This indicates that men, because of their gender, are meant to perform duties where explicit actions are needed, for example leadership positions; whereas women are meant to take up lower jobs like cleaning where humility is required.

In patriarchal societies, women are looked on as the weaker sex and are excluded from power structures. The presentation of women as weak and dependable beings makes them vulnerable and exposes them to various kinds of violence. “Gender-based violence was once considered a taboo subject, expressed in whispers or suffered in silence, now it is part of the public agenda” Fried (2003: 89). Due to its devastating effect on women, many activist organizations with or without the help of their governments are struggling to put an end to this social malaise.

Violence against women is one of the common forms of human rights violations practised all over the world. “Estimates expose the magnitude of gender-based violence: One out of three women in the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime – and the abuser is usually a family member or someone otherwise known to her” (Fried 2003: 91). Domestic violence is responsible for the death of many women aged between 14 and 44.

Violence brings a lot of terror to women and restricts them from contributing freely to the social, economic, and political developments of

their communities. Violence prevents women from exercising their human rights and restricts their ability to function as citizens of their societies. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993 defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life “ (Fried 2003: 96) The Declaration maintains that violence against women is based on gender inequality between women and men which manifests itself in various forms, for example physical, psychological, and economic.

Gender-based violence is usually practised irrespective of race, class, religion, age, ethnicity, culture, or geographical region. Any woman can be a victim and a survivor of gender-based violence. It is, therefore, the responsibility of government and non-governmental agencies to prevent and protect women and children from violence and to bring the perpetrators to justice. Some of the violence against women includes rape by intimate partners or strangers, beatings by husbands or fathers, sexual harassment in the streets and in the workplace, forced marriage and forced prostitution, virginity testing, acid attacks, and gang rapes.

## **6.2 Experience of Violence in the Texts**

In the novels *Second Class Citizen* and *Das verborgene Wort*, the protagonists are subjected to one violence or the other which is dehumanizing and inflicts pain on them, depriving them of their human rights and dignity. The violence perpetrated against the protagonists is mainly carried out by family members, confirming what Fried has earlier proposed: “Estimates expose the magnitude of gender-based violence: One out of three women in the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime- and the abuser is usually a family member or someone otherwise known to her” (Fried 2003: 91). The

violence experienced in both texts reflects what women suffer in society especially at the hands of men, be it their husbands or fathers or brothers. Some women have strangely chosen to treat their fellow women with ignominy. Violence against women committed by a family member or a partner has testified that the “family is not always a safe and secure place for women” (Fried 2003: 94). Domestic violence which includes battering, intimate partner violence, family violence, or intrafamily violence is the most common type of gender-based violence practised. Intimate partner and family violence are those experienced by the protagonists, among others. This act of violence is specified by the authors to expose the evil of violence. It will help the legislatures of each country to enact laws that will protect women and girls and bring the perpetrators to justice. Among the violence experienced by the protagonists are sexual violence, physical violence, social violence, economic violence, the objectification of women, and racism/exclusion. These are discussed in the subsequent sections.

### **6.2.1 Sexual Violence**

Sexual violence occurs in every society throughout the world. It is a manifestation of male dominance and gender inequality. It is non-consensual sex ranging from the use of threats and intimidation to unwanted touching and forced sex. The World Health Organization defines sexual violence as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” (Brown et al. 2006: 269). Sexual harassment at work undermines women’s confidence. Mbadugha (2016: 11) expands the scope of sexual violence to include “an attempted or completed sexual act involving a person who, because of illness, disability or the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or because of intimidation or

pressure, is unable to understand the nature or condition of the act, decline participation, or communicate unwillingness to engage in the act.” Sexual violence is further manifested “in the form of fondling, exposure to pornography, denial of the partner to use condoms, forced sex during dating, engagement or marriage, as well as attitudes and obscene gestures in dealing with women” (Amarijo et al. 2014: 702).

Sexual violence is an extreme restriction of the sexual and reproductive rights of women. “The Fourth International Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, recognized the right of women to decide about their fertility and sexuality, without suffering any form of coercion, discrimination or violence” (Blake et al. 2014: 10). Yet the violation of this right takes place in many cultures and societies, especially in cultures where women are still subordinate to the dictates of men. Many victims of sexual violence do not report their ordeal because of a lack of enabling laws and where such laws exist, because of the difficulty in getting law enforcement to cooperate to give them justice. This is besides the horror of the stigmatization suffered by the victims. As such, the victims often prefer to be silent and live with psychological trauma.

Sexual violence is considered a public health problem because of the biopsychosocial health of the victim. It also has a devastating effect on the physical and mental health of the victim. It can cause physical injury and has a risk of causing sexual and reproductive health problems. Sexual violence is a means by which HIV can be transmitted to the victim which can result in their death. Many victims commit suicide because they cannot withstand the abuse they have received. Sexual violence often leads to unwanted pregnancies and forced abortions. It affects the social wellbeing of the victims since they are traumatized, stigmatized, and in some cases ostracized by their families. Women victims of violence may develop problems in their sexual, emotional, social, and professional lives. They end up being vulnerable, feeling insecure about defending themselves. They become less sure of themselves which gen-

erally affects their self-esteem and self-image and can lead to negative feelings and frustrations (Baptista et al. 2015: 211). Therefore, women who suffer sexual violence need attention for various medical conditions, social support, psychological treatment, guidance on legal matters, and advice on preventing unwanted pregnancies (Blake et al. 2014: 11).

Sexual violence is one of the devices which men use to maintain their power and put women under their control. Sexual violence, which includes rape by intimate partners (husbands), is still not recognized by some African countries as violence. Rape is a crime of extreme violence and is defined “as an expression of dominance, power, and contempt, a rejection of the woman’s right to self-determination, a denial of her being. Rape is not passion or lust gone wrong. It is first and foremost an act of aggression with a sexual manifestation” (Niarchos 1995: 650). Rape indicates non-consent. In many marital relationships, women are forced to have a sexual relationship by their husbands. In traditional societies, men consider it their right to sleep with their wives whether the women are in the mood or not. This action not only denotes that the woman has no right over her body but indicates that she is the mere property of the man. Sexual violence is one of the types of violence experienced by the protagonists. In the novel *Second Class Citizen*, Adah is considered the property of her husband because she is married and has given up her father’s name. Marriage makes a woman the property of the man. Emecheta captures this in saying that the protagonist Adah “had become an Obi instead of the Ofili she used to be. Boy had resented this, but his presence at the wharf showed that he had accepted the fact that in Africa, and among the Ibos in particular, a girl was little more than a piece of property” (Emecheta 1974: 34).

Being a piece of property means that she has no right over herself. She belongs to the man, who owns her, and the owner has the right to do with her whatever he wants. The giving up of the father’s name to take the name of the husband from this perspective is not an act of slavery. It

is an act of love and oneness with the man. It is this kind of mentality, being a “piece of property” that makes Francis believe he can have access to Adah whenever he wants. He does not consider Adah’s health or whether she is in the mood for it. Adah is his property and he has to exercise his superiority over her. For Francis “marriage was sex and lots of it, nothing more” (Emecheta 1974: 41). Francis’s notion of marriage which is synonymous with sex makes it difficult for him to consider his wife’s welfare, thereby making the act one-way traffic. According to Adah, “but how could she protest to a man who was past reasoning? The whole process was an attack, as savage as that of any animal” (Ibid: 40).

Francis’s notion of a woman shows that a woman has no right over her body. She remains an object for man’s gratification. “To him, a woman was a second-class human, to be slept with at any time ... and, if she refused, to have sense beaten unto her until she gave in; to be ordered out of bed after he had done with her, to make sure she washed his clothes and got his meals ready at the time” (Emecheta 1974: 165). Francis’s notion of a woman forms the basis of the problem Adah encounters in her marriage, which mirrors the fate of many women. Many men share the same opinion. This one gratification gives rise to a situation in which Adah’s children are not well spaced with the three children at the time being contemporaneously in nappies. “Many international studies have found that women who suffer physical or sexual abuse from an intimate partner are more likely than non-abused women to have many children” (Ellsberg et al. 2001: 1).

It is striking that when Adah decides to practice birth control because the children are not spaced, Francis stands against it with the ironic excuse that men know how to control themselves, according to him as it is done in the bible: “You hold the child and you don’t give it to the woman, you pour it away” (Emecheta 1974: 141). This implies the withdrawal method which is not effective. Adah’s refusal to give in to his demands earns her another beating. He forces himself on her and she

becomes pregnant once again. This action causes Adah to cry as she bemoans her situation and says, “My sons will learn to treat their wives as people, individuals, not like goats that have been taught to talk” (Ibid: 122).

These scenes in the novel show that sexual violence is a malaise which is prevalent in many marriages. It enslaves a woman and reduces her worth as a human being. The woman is thus deprived of her basic right, the right over her body. The pleasure in self-giving that ought to be derived from the sexual relationship becomes torture. Many women are being raped in marriages by their husbands. In the same vein, sexual violence in the form of rape is witnessed in *Das verborgene Wort*. Trudi, one of the village girls that works in the paper factory is raped along the Rhein by a young boy who gives her a gin called *Escorial grün*. The drink makes her drunk and she loses consciousness. As she loses consciousness, the boy grabs her and rapes her as the story states:

Aus dem Griff des Kääls sei sie auf alle viere gefallen wie ein Hund und habe zu würgen angefangen, zu kotzen. Dabei habe sie gemerkt, wie der Kääl ihr Rock gehoben und die Hose runtergezogen habe, et wor jo warm, stöhnte Trudi, esch hatt vell an (Hahn 2001: 581).

The young woman does not even know how long she is raped. It is only when she regains consciousness that she sees blood around her indicating that she has been deflowered. She washes herself in the Rhein. She keeps quiet about her ordeal. Her father will flog the hell out of her when he hears of this disgrace.

Zu Hause habe sie keinem etwas erzählt. Der Vater prügelt sie tot, wenn er von der Schande erführe. Und die Mutter habe vor dem Vater mehr Angst als vor der Hölle (Ibid: 581).

Many who are raped are silent about the dehumanizing encounter because of what the society will think of them. As Trudi confides in

Hilla that she is in her second month of pregnancy, Hilla arranges that both will attend Sunday church in Heinz's village, trace who is responsible for the pregnancy, seek him out, and report him to his elder brother. Hilla reports the whole affair to Walter. It is decided that Hilla and Trudi together with the rapist Heinz and his brother Walter will assemble at the place where the act was committed. Heinz admits of his offence. The brother who is shocked with the action of his brother after all the warnings he has given him insists that Heinz goes and sees Trudi's father to perform marital rites. Trudi, who has no other option, decides to marry Heinz because of the baby she is already carrying and to save herself the shame of having a child outside wedlock.

Rape sends out a message of dominance. Rape is a cross-cultural language of male dominance. Knowledge of the rape makes the victim a social outcast and in many patriarchal societies leads to the rejection of daughters or wives by their fathers or other men. Trudi is so scared about what her father will do to her if he hears of her predicament. She has no other option than to marry Heinz whom she does not know well. Rape disrobes a woman of her integrity and the opportunity to take a choice. She can no longer choose a man of her choice. In some societies, the woman is meant to marry any man that will take her and the child, which in most cases would be a much older man. Others are forced to marry the rapist if he is known, as in the case of Trudi. How can a woman marry her rapist? How can such a marriage be sustained? It is no longer a marriage based on love, but a marriage based on circumstances and convenience. In many societies where the woman usually takes the blame once she is raped, the woman seeks not her own rights but is ready to abide by any condition which is decided by the community, thereby robbing her of her self-worth and respect. The woman is withdrawn and suffers psychological trauma while the man moves freely in the society. Victims of rape suffer acute reactions such as anxiety, fear, depression, loss of self-esteem, self-blame/guilt, disturbed social ad-

justment, and sexual dysfunction. Rape, therefore, portrays a gender inequality between men and women. It showcases the deficiency in the rights accorded to women and portrays that gender inequality facilitates acceptance of violence against women.

### **6.2.2 Physical Violence**

Violence against women is a worldwide problem cutting across cultural, religious, social, and economic boundaries. The most common type of violence is domestic, which is violence perpetrated by intimate partners or ex-partners. It is further described as “assaultive and coercive behaviours that adults use against their intimate partners” (Yount and Carrera 2006: 355). Intimate partner abuse known as domestic violence which includes wife-beating and battering is usually accompanied by psychological abuse as well as forced sex. “Pushing, slapping and throwing of objects at the respondent are classified as acts of moderate violence, whereas kicking or hitting the respondent with a fist or with an object, beating up, and threatening or using a knife or gun are classified as acts of severe violence” (Ellsberg et al. 2001: 5). The World Health Organisation gives an in-depth definition of intimate partner or domestic violence as “acts of physical aggression such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating, psychological abuse such as intimidation, constant humiliation, forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion, and various attempts to control a partner’s behavior such as isolating her from family and friends, restricting her movements, and limiting her access to information or income”(Garcia-Moreno et al. 2003: 113).

Many women who are victims of abuse by their spouses have been abused many times. The causes of abuse relate to various reasons which include resources of the household or male partner. Some personal, social and cultural factors often lead to domestic violence. People have argued that physical (overt) force and threats are resources which are used to control the action of others. It is “posited that people will rely on

overt force when they lack other resources, or when other resources have failed to help them achieve their goals” (Yount and Carrera 2006: 356). Low income is also a factor which leads to the physical abuse of the wife. Low income earning may bring about a lot of stress which leads to violence. Women’s economic dependence has also been associated as a cause of physical violence. When a woman depends entirely on the husband for her maintenance and that of the entire household, and if the man at a particular time cannot cope with the demands of the family, this usually leads to quarrelling and wife-beating. Other reasons for physical violence are seen when the economic resources of the woman exceed that of her male partner. The man feels that his identity is threatened and so resorts to violence to assert his power and authority. Studies have also shown that women whose marriages are arranged or those who marry at young ages are usually victims of domestic violence. Arranged marriages are not contracted out of love and those who engage in child marriages have neither skills nor livelihood. Moreover, early life experiences of partners may increase involvement in domestic violence. “Witnessing family violence or experiencing direct maltreatment may increase the risk of domestic violence in adulthood because such experiences teach children to view violence as normal” (Ibid: 359). Children who grow up in such an environment end up being perpetrators or victims of intimate partner violence.

Violence perpetrated against women by their partners or ex-partners is often accompanied by emotionally abusive and controlling behaviour. Many acts of domestic violence have led to the death of women while others have been maimed by such means as through acid baths. Many women keep quiet about abuse from their partners. Reasons for keeping quiet are sometimes based on cultural beliefs which encourage men to punish their wives and keep them under their control through beating. A woman’s educational qualifications and resources may change her views about violence. Dependent women who have no other source of income

are more tolerant of such abuse or can even see it as a demonstration of “authority”. Others may base their arguments on their children. They remain in abusive marriages for the sake of their children and do not want to be seen as divorcees. These cultural and social reasons deter some women from reporting the abuse they receive from their partners at a costly price; some pay even with their lives.

In Nigeria, there is overwhelming evidence of domestic violence. There are severe cases of acid baths and permanent maiming which often lead to death. Most of these cases are documented only by non-governmental agencies. Gender-based violence is not considered a serious issue. “A major factor in the high number of incidents of violence against women is a culture of gender inequality which is worsened by a deficient criminal justice system which is not sensitive to women” (Ojigho 2009: 87). The cultural and religious settings in Nigeria make it difficult for women to speak out against violence meted out to them. “Cultural norms reinforce patriarchy by enforcing the notion that the male is superior to the female and in this sense, women must serve the interests of men” (Ibid: 88). “Violence against women by male partners is widely condoned by many in Nigerian society, where the belief that a husband may chastise his wife by beating her is deeply embedded in the culture” (Oyediran and Abanihe 2005: 39). The penal code also supports the notion that men have authority over women and so if a woman is given some beatings to correct her, it is permissible. It is therefore not a wonder that Francis in *Second Class Citizen* feels it is his right to beat Adah the protagonist to bring her to her senses and to show his authority.

Physical violence is not only restricted to intimate partners. It can occur between fathers and children or teachers and students or between two people. Violence is associated with an act of physical force. Vittorio Bufacchi (2004: 170) in his article “Why is Violence bad” maintains that “violence is better understood as the unwanted physical interference by

groups and/or individuals with the bodies of others, which are consequentially made to suffer a series of effects ranging from shock, bruises, scratches, swelling or headaches to broken bones, heart attack, loss of limbs or even death.” Violence cannot only be reduced to physical injury and suffering. Psychological cruelty is also part of violence.

The novel *Second Class Citizen* reports various degrees of physical violence ranging from flogging from which pain is inflicted on the protagonist to domestic violence which includes beating with objects, slapping, and coerced sex. Adah the protagonist is thoroughly caned by a teacher for smiling in class. The teacher announces the list of available secondary schools and asks the pupils to apply. Adah is carried away with her dreams in which she sees the “Presence”, in the form of a being telling her “You are going, you must go and to one of the very best of school” (Emecheta 1974: 20). This makes her smile. The teacher asks her what is so funny about what he said. Adah responds that she is not laughing. Four boys hold her to be flogged by the teacher. The pain is so intense that Adah bites one of the boys to assuage her pain: “To ease the pain, she sank her sharp teeth deep into the back of the poor boy who was backing her. He started to scream loudly, but Adah would not let go, not even when the caning stopped. The boy wriggled in agony and so did Adah. All the teachers came to the rescue. Adah’s teeth had dug into him that fragments of his flesh were stuck between her teeth. She quickly spat them out and wiped her mouth, looking at them all wide-eyed” (Ibid: 20). This episode shows the kind of physical punishment that was given to children then. Why would a child of nine be punished that way just for smiling at her ideas?

Another incidence of violence is shown as Adah is given two shillings to buy steak by her cousin. She needs the money to register for the entrance examination. She knows that nobody is interested in her education and nobody will give her the money, so she decides to withhold the money and tell the cousin that it got lost on the way to market. The

cousin sends her to buy “*koboko*” which is a cane used by the Hausas for tending their horses. The cousin demands the truth from Adah, but she keeps quiet because she will lose the opportunity of going to school. “She had to go to the Methodist Girls’ High school or die” (Emecheta 1974: 21). “After a hundred and three strokes, he told Adah that he would never talk to her again: not in this world nor in the world to come. Adah did not mind that. She was, in fact, very happy. She had earned the two shillings” (Ibid: 22).

There are many ways of correcting a child. Though Adah takes the money which she uses to register her exams, she could have been corrected in another way. To flog a child 103 times because of €1 is wicked and uncalled for. The 103 strokes must have inflicted a lot of pain and bodily injury on Adah. Such a beating is not corrective but malicious. If the family was interested in Adah’s welfare or interested in her quest for education, Adah would not have stolen the two shillings. She wants to pave the way for her education and is ready to endure any pain to achieve her aim of registering for the entrance examination to a secondary school. Besides, if gender equality existed between Adah and her brother Boy, for whom some money has been allocated for his education, Adah would not withhold the money given to her to buy steak. But knowing that her cousin Vincent can afford the money for another steak, she wants to use the money for her entrance examination.

Coerced sex, another kind of intimate-partner violence, is also recorded in the novel. Adah, already pregnant with her third child, does not want to have further sexual relations with Francis. On this particular night, Francis who is used to having other girlfriends cannot go out since it was 3.00 am. “It was a time when it was too late for Francis to run to any of his girl friends for help; it was the time when only Adah could meet all his wants” (Emecheta 1974 :86). Francis pressurizes Adah who gives in to avoid being beaten “she might as well give in to him, now, otherwise it would result into blows” (Ibid: 86).

A further instance of physical violence is also recorded when Adah separates from Francis. She rents another house to live with the children. Francis follows the daughter secretly after school and finds out where they are staying. He bangs on the window. Adah opens the door and asks what he wants. He responds: "In our country, and among our people, there is nothing like divorce or separation. Once a man's wife, always a man's wife until you die. You cannot escape. You are bound to him. When reminded that a wicked man that knocked his wife about, ran the risk of losing her. He says, my father knocked my mother about until I was old enough to throw stones at him. My mother never left my father" (Emecheta 1974:172). In the course of the argument between Francis and Adah, Francis threatens her with a knife he is carrying. He smashes her radio on her head and beats her up mercilessly. The doctor who treats her says to her "Next time you might not be so lucky with a man who can beat you like this" (Ibid: 173).

Wife battering has led to the death of many women across the globe. Many others have been badly injured. Francis believes that by culture, Adah is bound to be with him. He forgets that culture is not static but dynamic. A woman is not bound to a violent man. She ought to divorce him and move on with her life. Francis reaffirms the notion that a child's family experience makes him a perpetrator or a victim of violence. Since Francis father knocked his mother about, he believes he should knock his own wife about because that is what he learnt as he was growing up. Childhood experience plays a great role in adult life. Adah is lucky that she survives the violence. Many are not so lucky. The retention of one's life and sanity is better than living with a violent person.

The kind of violence witnessed in the novel *Das verborgene Wort* is the violence the father exerts over the daughter, the type of violence perpetrated on the woman or the girl by the male member of the family. Hilla the protagonist experiences a lot of violence from her father. The fact that she wants to give herself a new identity through education

which differs from those of her parents who are unlearned workers earns her strokes of canes and beatings from her father. Examples of such are replete in the novel. One day, the family is having an evening meal. They begin to say the grace before meals in their native dialect. Hilla who has learnt Standard German prays simultaneously in that language. The father is irritated, gets a cane, flogs her, and says: Who do you think you are. Do you think you are better than us? You are nothing. “*Wat denks de egentlich, wer de bes! Denks de, dat de jet Besseres bes? Denk jo nit, dat de jet Besseres bes? Janix bes de, Janix!* (Hahn 2001: 184). Hilla also learns a better way of eating with a fork and knife. She is taught by her friend Doris’s mother when she is invited over for a meal. She goes home and continues to practice. On a Sunday afternoon as the family is having their lunch, Hilla starts to eat with a fork and knife. Her father suddenly grabs her hand and the fork falls. The father throws the fork on the ground and stamps on it.

Ich hatte meinen Teller halb leer gegessen, als plötzlich eine Hand meine Linke umklammerte. Ich schrie auf, ließ die Gabel fallen. Ach nä, höhnte der Vater und ergriff meine Gabel. Met ner Javvel ze ässe es der wall nit fürnähm jenuch. Dann brochs de se jo och nit. Der Vater warf die Gabel auf den Boden, setzte den Fuß darauf. Es knirschte. Josäff, die Javvel, schrie die Mutter (Hahn 2001: 187).

Why would a father be annoyed that his daughter is eating with cutlery? Some days later, her mother cooked some alphabet noodle soup. Hilla and her brother Bertram make a bet on who will form the longest word with the noodles. Bertram had already formed the word *Hasenst* and is looking for an A and an L to complete his word. Hilla, who has formed the word *Engelshaar* is trying to form a new word ‘*krone*’ to add to her words so that it becomes *Engelshaarkrone*. Josäff, Hilla’s father, grabs her in the neck and pushes her face into the hot soup saying:

Da ist der Tisch, da ist der Teller, da ist die Suppe, gute Rindfleischsuppe, da sind die Nudeln, da sind die Buchstaben,

und da ist mein Gesicht, da ist meine Nase, meine Haut, da ist mein Gesicht in der Suppe, heiße Suppe, kräftige Suppe, Fettaußen drauf, Markbällchen drin, Eierstich (Hahn 2001: 189).

Hilla has not committed any offence. Why does he not push Bertram's face into the soup as well since both are forming words with the noodles? Gender favouritism and bias against the girl play a role in this scene. Since it is the girl who practices with words most of the time and whose further education does not interest the father, she is taunted by the father and treated violently.

Other scenes in the novel show violent treatment of the father. Hilla is seen reading one of Schiller's books "*Räuber*" in the parlour. It is raining outside and so she decides to stay in the parlour to do her reading. Her father comes in, sees her reading, asks if she has nothing better to do, brings out his belt to flog her and tears the book.

Ich rutschte vom Sofa, wollte mich an ihm vorbeidrücken, als er den Gurtel schon aus der Hose gezogen hatte und auf meine hand mit dem Reclamheftchen pfeifen ließ. Häs de nix Besseres ze dun, als hie op dä fuule Huck zu lije, schrie er. Das Heftchen fiel mir aus der Hand, heulend drückte ich die gezeichnete Rechte mit der Linken an die Wange, duckte mich untern Tisch. Sah die Hand des Vaters das heft ergreifen, hörte, wie er es einmal, zweimal zerriß (Hahn 2001: 237).

Hilla's father cannot understand why she is engrossed with reading. For him reading signifies education of the girl child and is a waste of time. This is why he asks if she has nothing better to do. He instils fear into Hilla because every meeting with him ends in violence. The fact that Hilla is reading a book does not justify the tearing of the book. The tearing of the book is an act of wickedness. He has never bought a book for her. She is trained by the community, so the book was bought

by the community. Why does he destroy it? Hilla sees herself as someone in bondage, someone whose freedom is restrained. This is why she says that her freedom lies in her head: *“Freiheit war im Kopf! In meinem Kopf kann mir niemand dreinreden, Denken war Flucht in den Kopf, in die Freiheit”* (Hahn 2001: 238). Hilla finds peace and freedom only when she reads. The acquisition of knowledge moulds her person since the essence of education is the acquisition of knowledge and the formation of character. Hilla sees that it is only education that can give her the freedom she needs. Education can give her the self-identity she needs. Because of how Josäff her father is treating her, Hilla sees him as a villain and they begin to avoid each other. *“Der Vater und ich schlichen umeinander wie zwei Boxer, die wissen, dass die Zeit für den entscheidenden Kampf noch nicht reif ist”* (Ibid: 288).

It is the duty of the father to protect his children and especially his daughters. Whenever a complaint is brought against Hilla, her father does not ask her what happened; he is not interested in hearing her side of the story. He immediately bullies her and flogs her with his belt. From such acts of violence and the attendant psychological trauma as well as bodily harm that Hilla suffers from at the hands of her father in the novel.

### **6.2.3 Social Violence**

Social violence includes all social norms and cultural beliefs that not only foster violence to women but deprive women of their equal rights with men. It means the violence that is perpetrated against women in society through tradition, culture, law, religion, and government. The natural habitat of violence of women is in domestic violence manifested through beating, harassment, rape, desperation, and abandonment. In the community, it expresses itself through gender inequality, lack of economic access, joblessness, and unemployment. It is also shown through pressure to marry and have children, peer pressure, prostitution, stereo-

types, and advertisements that objectify the woman. The cultural dimension of violence is seen whereby specific roles are reserved for men and the lack of inclusion-exclusion of women. In some cultures, violence is reflected in the treatment given to widows, whereby widows are grossly disadvantaged as if being punished for the death of their husbands.

Religious violence denies women roles because of gender. The male image is configured to God, the female image is configured to weakness. Religion entrenches stereotypes. In politics, women cannot assume roles because of their gender. Literature and Arts portray the woman as naked. They are made objects. Educationally, women are denied the right to attend school. Boys are sent to school before girls. In government, laws are made by men and women are not part of law-making. Their interests, therefore, are often not represented. Traditional cultures relegate women to the background. In every sphere of society, a girl or a woman's right is violated.

Moreover, social norms about gender roles prevent a woman from taking absolute control of her life and arrogate key roles to men. For instance, issues of marriage, which includes bride price and ownership of property and inheritance, the stigma of being single or divorced, the general support of men in most matters, and the lack of support from family and friends.

Women in some cultures cannot decide whom to marry. They are forced to accept arranged marriages already chosen for them by their parents or accept the highest bidder, who pays the bride price. It is the men who decide the bride price, thereby reducing the women to mere property, commodities of men which can be possessed and dispossessed at their will. The woman in such a situation plays the gender role of subservience. Some cultures allow women to be beaten and chastised by their husbands. These women have no autonomy since it is determined and controlled by their husbands. Some of these women who experience violence from their spouses remain in such abusive marriages due to the

stigma of being called a divorcee or a single mother. Others have been beaten and strangled to death.

In many cultures, women are denied ownership of property and the right of inheritance. A woman is allowed to buy land only when accompanied by a man or a boy irrespective of his age. No matter the amount of money a woman has, she cannot buy land without a man or a boy being present. Gender plays an active role in such a situation which points to the superiority of a boy over a girl and makes a woman dependent. In the novel *Second Class Citizen*, Adah faces some of these social norms which deprive her of her autonomy and right as a human being. At 11, she is being pushed to older men for marriage which she resents. Emecheta notes that “unfortunately, her obstinacy gained her a very bad reputation; what nobody told her then was that older men were encouraged to come and talk to her because only they could afford the high bride-price Ma was asking. Since, however, she didn’t know this, as soon as she saw one of those baldies in his white starched trousers, she would burst into native songs about bad old baldies” (Emecheta 1974: 19). Adah’s emotional feeling and choice are not taken into consideration. She is encouraged to marry men as old as her father because it is such men who can pay the bride-price, which enslaves her to the man and makes her his property. Even though she married Francis who could not pay the bride-price her family demanded, “she got great satisfaction too, from the fact that Francis was too poor to pay the five hundred pounds bride-price Ma and the other members of her family were asking. She was such an expensive bride because she was ‘college trained’, even though none of them had contributed to her education. The anger of her people was so intense that none of them came to her wedding” (Ibid: 22).

Despite being the breadwinner, Adah is relegated to the background in all decision processes in her new family. She reports that “most of the decision about their own lives had to be referred first to Big Pa, Fran-

cis's father, then to his mother, then discussed amongst the brothers of the family before Adah was referred to" (Emecheta 1974: 27). Adah finds the situation ridiculous. Worse still if the discussion involves finance. She is the person who pays for the plan in most cases, but the decision is made behind her back.

The plight of Adah reflects the condition many women find themselves in, in various cultural societies. They have no say in what concerns them. They have no say in the marriage they are in. It is the husband and his brothers together with their parents that make decisions. The woman is just at the receiving end. She is bound to implement and accept decisions already taken. Her feelings and consent are neither sought nor taken into consideration. She is enslaved and sees herself as a second-class citizen. In Adah's case, she is the one who will bring out money for whatever decision is taken. Though she works to get the money, it is the men that decide how the money will be spent. Such social violence dehumanizes a woman and makes her dependent.

In the novel *Das verborgene Wort*, social violence is also seen in the patriarchal German society of the 1950s. Hilla is harassed and beaten by her father because she is a girl who wants to go against the norms of the society. She wants to be educated and create an identity for herself. As a girl, she is expected to be content with basic education and get ready for marriage. Her father cannot understand why a girl should be so enthusiastic about learning. Such educational qualifications should be done by her brother Bertram. This is why the father asks her if she has nothing better to do than to be reading. "*Häs de nix Besseres ze dun, als hie op dä fuule Huck ze Lije*" (Hahn 2001: 237). The father does not end with asking questions. Beating and flogging usually accompany the questions so that Hilla suffers for what she believes in. For him, reading is a waste of time for a girl. It is only a boy who should read so that he can be placed in a better position which will enable him to take care of his wife

and children. Why should not a girl read and be placed in a higher position in society? Why should a woman be made to be dependent?

Education means nothing to a girl who should be married and be under the supervision of the husband. This also explains why Hilla's father sees it as a waste of money when the teacher tells him that the community will pay for Hilla to continue her education. He says she need only go to middle school because she is only a girl: "*Ävver nur för de Meddelschool, sagte der Vater, et is doch nur e Weet*" (Hanh 2001: 134), signifying that a girl is not supposed to attend a high school which is meant for a boy. Money can be spent to send a boy to school but for a girl, it is not worth it.

Married women as seen in other patriarchal cultures are not free. They are dependent and under the control of their husbands. Many girls working in the factory are those who have acquired a basic education and are working in one industry or another waiting to be married off. Once they are married, their freedom is curtailed as Hahn (2001: 288) states:

Die meisten Frauen bei Maternus waren unverheiratet. Wie ein Gefängniswärter hielt jeder ledige Mann den Schlüssel zu ihrer Freiheit. Heirat als Gnadenakt. Ehe als Befreiung, auch wenn die Verheirateten säuerlich lächelten und sagten, Waat aff! Sie waren eben an den Falschen geraten. Eine verheiratete Frau, die arbeiten gehen mußte, zählte nur halb. Ihr Ansehen war geringer als das einer Nichtverheirateten. Einer Noch-Nichtverheirateten.

This extract shows how married women bemoan their lack of freedom in marriages as applied to their counterparts from other cultures. They live under the authority of their husbands and receive orders from them. They have no freedom of expression. They live under the bondage of men and see themselves as having made the wrong choice in life. Marriage is seen as the only option for a woman. She is reduced to her traditional role of being a wife and a mother. Nobody is interested in

harnessing other potential she has and what she can give to mankind. She is not allowed to develop her talents. But a male child can develop his talents.

Social violence against women is seen in both novels which signifies that violence against women cuts across cultures and countries. Many women, irrespective of colour, age, culture, and country are subjected to intimidation, dependence, beating, harassment, gender inequality, and a lack of freedom and identity.

#### **6.2.4 Economic Violence**

Economic violence occurs when a woman is forced to work when she is incapacitated or underage to contribute to the economic needs of the family. It manifests itself also when girls are introduced into forced prostitution and the traffickers make money through them, reducing them to sex slaves. Other forms of economic violence include lack of employment, unequal pay for the same job between a man and a woman, being subjected to low and menial jobs which make the woman a dependent being.

Women in some countries are subjected to low-income jobs. A man is usually preferred whenever a job is advertised. Due to lack of experience, many women are not in the top management of banking or industries. When they have no good jobs, it limits their travel, ingenuity, and potential. A job a woman can do is reserved for a man and those who make an effort are maligned. All these constitute economic dependence.

In the novel *Second Class Citizen*, Adah's work as a librarian at the American consulate does not go down well with Francis who believes that his friends will laugh at him because Adah earns more than him. He goes and asks his father who says: "You are a fool of a man, you are. Where will she take the money to? Her people, who did not even come to congratulate her on the arrival of baby Titi? Her relatives, who did not care whether she lived or died? The money is for you, can't you see? Let

her go and work for a million Americans and bring the money here, into this house. It is your luck. You made a good choice in marriage, son (Emecheta 1974: 24).

Adah's worth is based on the money she brings into the family. She is being exploited. Though she makes the money, it is Francis and his father who dictate how it is used. When Adah finally arrives in London, Francis makes it clear to her that he married her because she is hard-working. She can work and get money. The marriage is not based on love but based on what Francis can get from her. "He had told her that he married her in the first place because she could work harder than most girls of her age and because she was orphaned very early in life, but since she had arrived in England, she had grown too proud to work" (Emecheta 1974: 41).

Francis knows that he is lazy and so wants somebody who will work and give him money while he whiles away his time and controls both the person and the money. Adah's economic value is exploited. When Adah is applying for jobs, Francis asks her to get a job in a shirt factory, like other Africans to make sure that Adah sees herself as a second-class citizen. Adah refuses, saying "After all, she had several "O" and "A" levels and she had part of British Library Association professional Certificate, to say nothing of the experience. Why should she go and work with her neighbours who were just learning to join their letters together instead of printing them" (Emecheta 1974: 40). This shows that Francis does not want Adah to have an identity better than his and other Africans. That is why all are against Adah when she finally got a job at Finchley Library which Francis and his group regard as a first-class job. Instead of rejoicing with her, it increases their hatred and they want Adah out of the neighbourhood. Adah realizes that Francis is tied to her because of her money. "The fact that she was still laying the golden eggs stopped Francis from walking out on her, as before, her pay bound him to her but the difference was that she now knew it" (Ibid: 42). Many

men like Francis feel threatened when their wives earn more than them because they feel they can no longer put the woman under their control. Economic independence plays a vital role in the freedom of women.

In the other novel *Das verborgene Wort*, Hilla at 14 is forced to look for a job because of deprivation. Her parents are not ready to give her money to join in a class excursion. It is during summer and many of her friends who come from noble homes have gone on summer holidays with their parents. She has to look for a job though underaged or forfeit the pleasure of joining the others in what concerns education. Because she is underaged, she is not permitted to work. She has to get written consent from her parents and her teacher. Her mother quickly signs the paper because they want her to work for the money since it concerns education which does not interest them. Hilla goes to ask the teacher who in turn asks why she wants to work instead of going on holidays. It is very obvious to all that Hilla comes from a poor home, so Hilla cannot understand why the teacher should be asking about what he knows already, and she says:

Wußte er nicht, warum einer arbeiten ging? Hatte er nie eine Lohntüte gesehen? War er nie in Manko? Seit die Klassenkameraden aus der Volksschule in die Lehre gingen oder op de Fabrik, jedenfalls Geld nach Hause brachten, setzte mir die Mutter zu, in den Ferien zu arbeiten. Im Herbst sollte es eine Klassenfahrt nach Süddeutschland zu den Altären Riemenschneiders geben. Von den Eltern würde ich dafür keinen Pfennig sehen (Hahn 2001: 278).

Moreover, the mother pesters Hilla to look for a job to help out financially in the house or buy herself what she needs. This is called child labour. It is the responsibility of the parents to provide for their children. When children are forced to do child labour, to work in a factory like Hilla, it exposes them to engaging in or listening to adult conversation which can distort their childhood. It can cause a hazard to their

health since they are still children. As Hilla is working in a factory where contraceptives are packed, she experiences pain all over her body:

Gegen elf konnte ich vor Rückenschmerzen kaum noch sitzen. Ich reichte mit den Beinen nicht auf den Boden, auch meine Arme waren kürzer als die Frauen, meine rechte Schulter, mein rechter Arm lösten sich langsam vom mir und verschwammen in einem lauten Schmerz (Hahn 2001: 285).

An underaged child who is involved in such work can experience pains in their body because their body is too young to engage in such tedious work. Apart from the health hazard which such work poses, the psychological development of the child runs the risk of being affected negatively, because of the conversations of the workers as (Hahn 2001: 285) reports:

Die Frauen aßen hastig, mit gebeugten Köpfen, und wieder das einzige Thema: Männer. Ich spitze die Ohren. Lauter Sachen, die nicht in meinen Büchern standen. Wörter, die ich nie zuvor gehört oder gelesen hatte. Wörter, die es gar nicht geben durfte, Wörter des Teufels. Wörter für Jo Kackaller am Levisberg. Sie trafen auf meine Ohren wie Dreck.

There are words which are not meant for children because they will not understand. These women working in the factories are discussing men and their associations with them which poses a danger to a growing child. The words begin to build up a fantasy in the mind of the child. Since the child cannot fully understand what the women mean, the child passes through mental violence. The words begin to have a negative influence on the development and the attitude of the child. This is one of the disadvantages of child labour. Hilla is exposed to the conversations of the adult women which she acknowledges she has never heard before and describes them as words from the devil.

Child labour can also expose the child to abuse either because the child may not work to the expected standard or somebody may use the

occasion to abuse them. Hilla is abused at the workplace not because she is not doing the work well but by a father whose son failed the exams that Hilla passed. He starts to bully Hilla at the workplace, asking what she is doing there and taunting her that she has nothing in her head except to read, thereby embarrassing her at the workplace.

Es war Herr Kluck, dessen Sohn mit mir die Aufnahmeprüfung für die Realschule gemacht, aber nicht bestanden hatte. Häs de nix Besseres ze dunne, als Pelle ze packe? Esch denk, du häs nix angeres em Kopp als läse (Hahn 2001: 295).

Such uncalled for embarrassment which causes psychological violence can be avoided if the child were at home. Herr Kluck continues with his taunts, storms across to Hilla's bag, opens it and says "*He werd jeärbeet, nit jeläse.*" (Ibid: 295). "*Hier wird gearbeitet und nicht gelesen*" (Ibid: 295). Hilla is rescued by a young man Georg who challenges Herr Kluck and orders him to return the book to Hilla:

Was Fräulein Palm in ihrer Tasche hat, geht Sie gar nichts an. Sie haben kein Recht, ihr das Buch wegzunehmen. Geben Sie ihr Buch unverzüglich zurück. Wortlos und als habe er sich die Finger schmutzig gemacht, ließ er das Buch in die Tasche zurückfallen und winkte die Wartenden an sich vorbei (Hahn 2001: 295).

### **6.3 Objectification of Women**

The term "objectification of women" portrays women as sexual objects or commodities. "Sexual objectification of women refers to the treatment of women as just a body that is used primarily for consumption by men" (Mikorski and Dawn 2017: 257). Objectification implies that a woman's body can represent her as a whole. When a woman is looked upon as a sex object, she is not seen as fully human, deserving of

respect and integrity. Sexual objectification leads to a variety of negative psychological outcomes for women which includes internalization of the objectification, body shame, emotional stress, disordered, eating and depression. “Sexual objectification theory postulates that women are nonsentient beings that are often treated as objects and used by men for their sexual utility” (Ibid: 257).

Objectification is enhanced also through media and social interactions. Gervais and Eagan (2017: 226) unequivocally state:

Objectification is clearly evident in media genres such as pornography, but it is also prevalent in mainstream media representations of women, including TV shows, movies, music videos and lyrics, billboards, video games and perhaps most prominently in advertisements within magazines and newspapers and on TV and the internet. When objectified in media, women are depicted with a primary focus on their bodies, with special emphasis on body parts that have been sexualized, such as breasts, buttocks, legs and lips.

When people view such media where women are portrayed in such a manner, they quickly perceive women as objects. Media often depict women as sexual objects. Women are portrayed as sexual objects when they are given the role of providing men with sexual pleasure through their physical attractiveness and sexual accessibility. Apart from media, objectification is often seen in interpersonal interactions. This is mostly experienced through objectifying gazes, in which one stares at a woman’s body or a particular body part or unwanted sexual advances when interacting with others.

Objectification reduces a human being to an entity (Wright and Tokunaga 2016: 955). This portrayal makes men think of women as entities that exist for men’s sexual gratification which may lead to sexual violence. The constant objectification has an adverse effect on how people see women and how women see themselves. When men objectify women, “they adopt a what-you-see-is-what-you-get perspective. They

focus more on women's observable superficial characteristics and focus less on their deeper, less observable attributes, such as their thoughts, feelings, goals and desires" (Gervais and Eagan 2017: 227).

Sexual objectification leads to self-objectification. Self-objectification involves treating one's body solely for the use and pleasure of others. Through self-objectification, women treat themselves as objects to be looked at, evaluated, and used. This means internalization of the viewer's perspective as a view of oneself. Notably, "when women self-objectify, they see themselves in ways that resemble looking in a mirror, focusing more on how they appear to others, their weight and sexiness rather than focusing on what is beneath the surface, including their physical health and their thoughts, feelings, goals and desires (Gervais and Eagan 2017: 228). This makes women focus more on their appearance and less on their performance or task at hand. This can lead to health problems such as depression, eating disorders and low self-image.

Also, sexual objectification may contribute to sexual violence because it dehumanizes women and reduces them to mere objects without agency and feelings. Since an object is not human, it can easily be inflicted with pain for it does not deserve fair treatment. Seabrook et al. (2019: 536) note:

Sexual objectification of women leads to violence both by teaching people to treat women as objects rather than subjects and by changing cultural expectations on how men should treat women. Therefore, exposure to both mainstream and sexually explicit media may contribute to sexual violence by suggesting that women are objects (rather than subjects) that exist in service to others (men) and are not deserving of humane treatment.

The objectification of women has been associated with the perpetration of sexual violence against women. Men who perceive women as objects are likely to rape and harass women sexually.

As objectification implies that a human being is treated as a thing, as an object, Nussbaum (1995: 257) illustrates seven ways in which a person can be treated as an object:

1. Instrumentality: The objectifier treats the object as a tool of his or her purpose
2. Denial of autonomy: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.
3. Inertness: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity.
4. Fungibility: The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type and/or (b) with objects of other types.
5. Violability: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.
6. Ownership: The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold.
7. Denial of subjectivity: The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings need not be taken into account.

When someone is treated as an object, these conditions are present. When a person is treated like a thing, the deprivation of the person's autonomy and self-determination is displayed. In sexuality, one sees the instrumental use of the person, and the denial of autonomy that is proper to them as a person. It is in this sense that Nussbaum (1995: 277) reiterates Kant's analysis of sexuality and marriage in which he opines that "sexual desire is a very powerful force that conduces to the thinglike treatment of persons, by which he means, the treatment of

persons not as ends in themselves, but as means or tools for the satisfaction of one's own desires." All human beings deserve respect. Respect for the human person does not correspond with treating people as instruments, devoid of autonomy and subjectivity. In some marriages, women are treated as objects. "Marriage with its historical connotations of ownership and non-autonomy, is one of the structures that makes sexuality go bad" (Ibid: 277), implying that in marriage, women are seen to be the property of men, whose freedom are dictated by their husbands, thus denying them autonomy.

Therefore, objectification takes place when a person is treated in a way that is appropriate for objects and inappropriate or unsuitable for people, which implies treating a person as a means to one's ends without consideration and respect for the other. "A man might count as a sexual objectifier of women if he fails to take into account a woman's own needs, desires, and ends, and treats her as a mere means to his own sexual gratification" (Saul 2006: 47).

In the novel *Second Class Citizen*, ownership, which is one of the seven ways in which the objectifier treats the object as something bought and owned, is manifested. This reflects the meaning of marriage which in some cultures act as a sign of ownership and non-autonomy of women, whereby a woman is owned by her husband and as such can be treated as his property. The narrator exposes this idea stating: "In Africa, and among the Ibos in particular, a girl was little more than a property. Adah had been bought, though on credit" (Emecheta 1974: 34). The act of being the property of another means that the owner of the property can do whatever they want with their property. Francis, Adah's husband believes that she is his property because he is married to her and he can treat her as he pleases. Because she is his property, she is the instrument that is used to satisfy his sexual pleasures. This explains why marriage for Francis "was sex and lots of it, nothing more" (Ibid: 41). Adah's feelings do not matter as long as he gets sex. Jütten (2016: 32) explains

this act of instrumentalization as follows: “On the instrumentalization account, it is just the fact the husband uses his wife for his own pleasure without regard to hers. Even though the wife consents to his advances, her consent is insufficient to absolve her husband from moral blame, because it is clear that the context in which he uses her is not characterized by intimacy, symmetry and mutuality.”

This act of using a wife to entertain one’s sexual pleasure further reflects Francis’s notion of a woman: “To him, a woman was a second – class human, to be slept with at any time, even during the day, and if she refused, to have sense beaten into her until she gave in” (Emecheta 1974: 165). It simply means that a woman is an object that can be used to satisfy a man’s sexual gratification. The emotion and the integrity of the woman is not considered. She is created to be at the service of her husband and to be bound to him. This explains why Francis beats Adah to a stupor whenever she refuses to yield to him. Adah’s health and feelings are never taken into consideration. She is denied her subjectivity as well as her autonomy.

Janet, a minor character in the novel, becomes another prototype of the objectification of women. Janet becomes pregnant at 16. Her stepfather sends her away unless she promises to give the child away. Janet’s mother is already dead leaving seven children with the stepfather. Janet is the eldest and wants to keep the child. Babalola, an African student, meets Janet at a phone booth and takes her to his house since she is homeless. Babalola uses Janet to satisfy his sexual needs and not only his: “Janet was being offered to any black man who wanted to know how a white woman looked undressed. Most of Adah’s neighbors had had their sexual adventures with Janet” (Emecheta 1974: 49). Janet becomes vulnerable because of her condition. She has become an instrument for gratifying the desires of those African students. Though she is pregnant, her health and state of being are never taken into consideration and since she has no home to go to, she becomes their sex slave.

After Janet gives birth, Babalalo, who is broke and needs money, realizes that the money Janet gets from the social welfare for herself and her child can pay for the rent. He starts to monopolize her and decides to live with her. He no longer gives her out to his friends which makes them ask: “You are not thinking of going with that thing you picked up at a kiosk? (Ibid: 49). Janet is no longer a person but has been reduced to a “thing”, an object which was previously used to satisfy their sexual needs. The phrase “a thing picked up at a kiosk” means something one picks something up to use at a time and is expected to discard it later. A person reduced to a thing has no integrity or respect. She is exchangeable. She can be given to anybody indicating that she has no worth. The objectification reduces the self-worth and integrity of the person who has been reduced to an object or a thing.

In the novel *Das verborgene Wort*, Trudi is treated as an object. On the farmland along the River Rhein she is under the influence of an alcohol called *Escorial grün*. A young man called Heinz comes after her and rapes her. The young man has been watching her and finds a good time to strike. He treats her as his tool to get sexual satisfaction. As Hahn (2001: 581) states:

Aus dem Griff des Kääls sei sie auf alle viere gefallen wie ein Hund und habe zu würgen angefangen, zu kotzen. Dabei habe sie genau gemerkt, wie der Kääl ihr den Rock gehoben und die Hose runtergezogen habe, et wor jo warm, stöhnte Trudi, esch hatt nit vell an.

The act of pouncing on a girl or a woman without taking into consideration the feelings and the condition of the person makes her an object. After raping Trudi, Heinz flees leaving her to her fate. He never considers her feelings and wellbeing. He is only interested in satisfying his sexual needs. When treated like an object, the person feels used and dumped and loses their integrity, self-respect, and self-confidence. These are the Trudi’s feelings as she gets up and finds blood around her

body. She is ashamed of herself. Sexual objectification leads to body shame and health hazards such as an unwanted pregnancy. Trudi keeps telling Hilla that she is ashamed of herself: “*Hilla sagte sie, wat denkst de jitz von mir? Esch scham mesch su*” (Hahn 2001: 580).

## **6.4 Racism/Exclusion in the Texts**

Racism is found in one form or another in every society. It is usually associated with intolerance and violence. The United Nations has organized a series of conferences to curb racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

Greer and Spalding (2017: 588) opine that “Racism has been conceptualized as a complex system in which members of racially privileged groups maintain values and ideologies that serve to thwart, exclude, and/or marginalize racially nondominant group members.” Racism may be enhanced by skin colour. To this extent, it is made up of race-based stereotypes (i.e., beliefs), prejudice (i.e., attitudes), and discrimination (i.e., behaviours) to disenfranchise people of colour from societal resources, status, and civil liberties (Ibid: 588). Racism, therefore, can be seen as a system of power based on the belief in racial superiority and inferiority (Jones 1997: 2). An act of racism is usually moved by a certain kind of belief or ideology that a race is inferior and so is not worthy of any consideration.

Racism is often measured as both perceived and internalized racism. Perceived racism refers to that fact that an individual has experienced racism because of their race or being unfairly stopped by police. Internalized racism refers to a state in which a person from a race believes the stereotypes that says that members of the race are not intelligent or that they are sub humans and the person allows such stereotypes to guide and affect their behaviour (Jones 1997: 5).

Racism lacks permanent content and status. It can be expressed in various ways to maintain its racial dominance. Many acts of racism are usually based on prejudice. Prejudice in this concept is a positive or negative attribute given to an individual based on pre-conceived notions of the group to which a person belongs. Racism thus has three main distinctions: “(1) The assumption that the group characteristics are based on biology, (2) the belief that one’s race is superior to another, and (3) this belief results in the hierarchical domination of one racial group over another” (Jones 1997: 11). This leads to the conclusion that racism begins with an individual’s beliefs which often are perpetuated through institutional and cultural practices (Ibid: 12).

Institutional racism which is also referred to as systematic racism, “refers to the existence of institutional policies (e.g. poll taxes, immigration policies) that unfairly restrict the opportunities of particular groups of people and foster ideologies that justify current practices” (Jones 1997: 13). These practices do not need the support of individuals since the policies already set in motion are considered normal and acceptable. Such policies are seen at all levels of the social system, such as economic, political and social, and been accepted as the norm in society. “This allows the system to allocate benefits to groups along racial lines, a process that rarely occurs in overt practices, but must be inferred from outcomes in inequality in areas such as education, economics, media, employment, the criminal justice system, and mental or physical health” (Bonilla-Silva 2004: 940). Apart from institutional policies that restrict opportunities for minority groups, racism is also practised through overt means. Overt racism refers to “intentional and /or obvious actions and policies designed to harm individuals and groups because of their conceived race. These actions may manifest in open discrimination, segregation, harmful language and even hate crimes” (Hall 2000: 271).

Racism is also closely associated with racial supremacy, for example white supremacy against blacks as witnessed in America, or during the

apartheid era in South Africa, and other countries in the world. White supremacy is the power held by whites that allows them access to conscious and unconscious benefits which are denied to blacks. It also gives so much power to the dominant white that its interests are seen to be normal while other groups' cultures are considered abnormal.

Using the United States as a case scenario in the relation between Caucasians and African Americans, there are various types of racism that affect day-to-day living in America and beyond. These are traditional racism and liberal racism. Traditional racism includes refusing to rent an apartment to a person of colour or killing people because of the colour of their skin which is based on arrogance and pride. "Traditional racism emerged to reinforce the transfer of wealth from people of colour to whites through colonialism, slavery, and legalized segregation" (Zamudio and Rios 2006: 486). Though traditional racism is no longer used as a means of transferring wealth as in the Post-Civil-Rights era, it is still being used as a means of reinforcing inequality at the market level and so cannot be labelled as a "thing of the past". Liberal racism, which is associated with a colour-blind mentality, reflects "the official rhetoric of formal equality and antiracism, but the deeply ingrained racism captured in private race talk reflects the racist ideology deeply embedded in our social structures and practices" (Ibid: 487). It simply means that racism still exists in the social structures which are advantageous to whites but serve as a disadvantage to people of colour.

In the novel *Second Class Citizen*, various kinds of racism, ranging from internalized racism in which blacks living in the 1960s in the United Kingdom considered and accepted themselves as second-class citizens to traditional racism in which houses were refused to blacks because of their colour were practised. Francis cannot get better accommodation for his family who is coming from Lagos. It is just a room, a very small room with a single bed without toilet facilities. He knows that his wife is coming with two children. There is no space between the bed

and the settee in the room. Adah is not happy with such accommodation. Francis is living among Nigerians who are working in factories, who believe that they are second-class citizens and have settled with such a stigma. Adah cannot accept such a low status. She has worked among Americans in Nigeria and has come to the United Kingdom to give her family a better status so that her children will be trained in Western education. How can she get lower than where she was in Lagos? Francis says: "You must know, my dear young lady, that in Lagos you may be a million publicity officers for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants: you may be living like an élite, but the day you land in England, you are a second class citizen. So you can't discriminate against your own people, because we are all second-class" (Emecheta 1974: 39).

Francis and his Nigerian friends have already accepted the fact that they are second-class citizens. They do not make any effort to improve their condition. They see themselves as being inferior to the whites. It is already in their psyche. They have internalized being called second-class citizens and they are living to the status quo of being a subhuman as far as the British whites are concerned. Being a second-class citizen implies living in a slum, taking up a job in a factory, and looking for foster parents for the children.

Adah is greatly troubled by the mentality of her husband who has also accepted the status quo and wants to enforce that on her. "What worried her most was the description 'Second Class'. Francis had become so conditioned by this phrase that he was not only living up to it but enjoying it too" (Emecheta 1974: 40). The fact that Francis has accepted living like a second-class citizen due to laziness makes him think that Adah can be persuaded to think of herself as such. As Adah looks for a job, Francis persuades her to get a job in a shirt factory or a menial job like cleaning a shop to remain and maintain the level of a second class. Adah refuses to yield to his persuasion, saying: "After all, she had several 'O'

and ‘A’ levels and she had part of the British Library Association Professional Certificate, to say nothing of experiences. Why should she go and work with her neighbours who were just learning to join their letters together” (Emecheta 1974: 38).

Adah applies to the North Finchley library and is accepted as a senior library assistant. As soon as Adah gets a job which her neighbours term “a first-class citizen’s job”, she is discriminated against by her neighbours who taunt her in various ways. They first speak through Francis who suddenly informs Adah that he will not be looking after the children when she goes to work. He complains that they will not learn good English and so will have to be fostered away. The landlord starts his own intimidation, insisting that they should get a foster-mother. He even puts up an advertisement without Adah’s consent. Unfortunately, no one offered to mind the two children aged 2 years and 9 months. The landlord and his wife are married without children. They complain that the children are disturbing them with their noise. The main problem is that Adah has refused to live like a second-class citizen. So many factors are working against Adah. First, she has a white man’s job, despite the warning from her neighbours. Second, she does not want to send her children out to be fostered like others, so their children are living with them as if they are first-class citizens. Third, they are Igbos with their own ideology. Their children are given a study space at the nursery school. Their Nigerian landlord and landlady complain that Adah is showing off her children when she comes down to fetch water. They decide to give Francis and Adah notice to quit the house within a month. The neighbours begin to taunt Adah with songs as soon as they see her around. “Most of the songs were about the fact that she and her husband would soon have to make their home in the street. What use would her education be then? The songs would ask. To whom would she show her children off then? It was all so Nigerian.” (Emecheta 1974: 72). With this attitude, one concludes that Adah is discriminated against by her

own people who cannot understand why she has to live as if she is a first-class citizen when they have accepted to live like second-class citizens. Since she does not want to fashion herself as they dictate, she has to leave their vicinity.

Adah witnesses traditional racism when accommodation is denied to them because they are black. Having been given notice to quit by their landlord, Adah has to look for other accommodation. Most of the vacant rooms usually read "Sorry, no coloured" (Emecheta 1974: 73). Adah continues to search until she finds an advertisement for two vacant rooms. She has to disguise her voice so that the owner might think that she is Irish or Scottish. This is stupid of her because the owner eventually will see them before accepting them to live in the house. When eventually they come to see the apartment as arranged with the owner, a woman, comes out and behaves as if she is losing her breath because of the blacks before her: "At first Adah thought the woman was about to have an epileptic seizure. As she opened the door, the woman clutched at her throat with one hand, her little mouth opening and closing as if gasping for air, and her bright kitten-like eyes dilated to their fullest extent. She made several attempts to talk, but no sound came. Her mouth had obviously gone dry" (Emecheta 1974: 77). When the woman eventually finds her voice, she simply says: the vacant rooms have gone. She points to some tumbledown ruins and asks them to look for accommodation there. Adah has never seen this kind of rejection just because they are blacks. "Rejection by this shrunken piece of humanity, with a shaky body and mopy hair, loose, dirty and unkept, who tried to tell them that they were unsuitable for a half-condemned house with creaky stairs. Just because they were blacks?" (Emecheta 1974: 78).

This kind of traditional racism makes one feel rejected and belittled. It makes one feel less of a human. Adah cannot understand why the woman behaves as if they are animals just because of the colour of their skin. These attitudes can undoubtedly be qualified as a form of racism

because they have some dehumanizing element. “It implies that people of colour are something other than human” (Zamudio and Rios 2006: 492). It is a sign of outright exclusion which makes one feel devalued and different. It brings about emotional and psychological distance and leads to social exclusion.

Social exclusion (Porter 2000: 77) is defined “as a label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.” Deprivation becomes the basis for creating groups of socially excluded people. Social exclusion depends on the extent to which an individual associates and identifies with others.

A person’s feeling of deprivation arises when they compare their life situation with those who are better off than they are. Deprivation and poverty are conditions in which a person is deprived of the essentials which enable them to live a quality life. Given poverty and deprivation, social exclusion can be interpreted “as the inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic and social activities of the society in which she lives due to persistence in the state of deprivation” (Bellani and Ambrosio 2011: 68). This state of deprivation deters them from associating with others in a given community and deprives them of access to social attributes such as education, healthcare, and meaningful relationships with friends and relatives. Social exclusion is, therefore, a difficult and painful experience which has both short-term and long-term detrimental psychosocial effects. It brings about the feeling of rejection and inferiority complex.

In the novel *Das verborgene Wort*, social exclusion is seen in the class distinction between Sigismus who comes from a rich home and Hilla whose parents are known to be poor. Hilla and Sigismus become friends after his accident with the bicycle. As classmates, Hilla goes to visit him and discusses with him the lessons taught in the class. Sigis-

mus's mother is not happy with such a relationship knowing Hilla's background. The class distinction between the two families becomes a barrier for Hilla's association with Sigismus. Sigismus's father, on the contrary, knows that Hilla is a very intelligent girl and so looks at her not from her family background but as a person with a bright future and good prospects. One day that Hilla visits Sigismus on his sickbed, his mother comes in and says "*Du bist ja immer noch hier, sagte sie, kniff die Augen zusammen und spitzte den Mund*" (Hahn 2001: 313).

As Hilla regularly visits Sigismus to help him in his assignments, she meets his father who encourages her to maintain her own thoughts and opinions in writing which he sees as being important. He encourages the friendship between Hilla and his son:

Am Tag nachdem ich Sigismund das Aufsatzheft zurückgebracht hatte, nahm mich der Vater beiseite. Hildegard sagte er, ich habe gelesen, was du geschrieben hast. Laß dich nicht beirren. Es sind deine eigenen Gedanken. Das ist das Wichtigste. Sich immer eigene Gedanken machen. Egal, was die anderen dazu sagen. Ich bin froh, dass du mit Sigismund Freundschaft geschlossen hast (Hahn 2001: 318).

The fact that Sigismus's father is happy with the friendship between his son and Hilla does not go down well with his wife who sees Hilla as unfit for her son because of her social background. She devises a way of telling Hilla that she is not welcomed to her home. As Hilla comes and knocks, she snaps at her and says her son is not there and slams the door.

Sigismus? Der ist nicht da, beschied mich seine Mutter unfreundlich, als ich zur gewohnten Zeit klingelte. Und die Hausaufgaben mache er jetzt wieder selber. Ehe ich etwas sagen konnte, fiel die Tür ins schloß (Hahn 2001: 319).

The act of slamming a door in another's face indicates that the person is not welcome and so should not be seen around that vicinity. Such

action makes the other lose their self-worth and develop a sense of inferiority complex. Sigismund is Hilla's first love as a teenager. She cannot bear the thought of losing him because of class distinction but her social status becomes a barrier in her love life. The truth of life dawns on Hilla; Sigismus has found another girl. Beate Maternus comes from a well-to-do family. Her father owns an industry and her social status is recognized in society. Sigismus and his classmates go sightseeing on a bus. Hilla thinks she will sit beside Sigismus only to discover that the seat is reserved for another person. She finds another seat for herself and realizes later that the seat is reserved for Beate Maternus (Hahn 2001: 601).

Hilla suffers exclusion by her friends because of poverty. She cannot freely mix with those she loves due to material deprivation and social status. The reality of life is that different degrees of social inclusion and exclusion can be experienced simultaneously. Hilla enjoys inclusion in the school because of her academic prowess but suffers exclusion because of her social status. Women are usually the most excluded in society. Porter (2000: 80) opines that "a successful businesswoman experiences inclusion in her career, but she may have other parts of her identity such as a minority ethnic religious identity that might exclude her in other situations."

Having analysed various ways in which women suffer suppression such as sexual violence, physical violence, objectification, racism, and exclusion, the next chapter focuses on means of empowering women to self-realization, self-reliance, and equal rights. The means to achieve all these is through education.

## **PART IV.**

### **EVALUATIONS AND CONCLUSION**



## **CHAPTER 7.**

# **EDUCATION AS KEY TO PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND AUTONOMY**

### **7.1 Education as a Means of Women Empowerment**

Education has been recognized as the cornerstone for women empowerment and sustainable development. Statistically, women represent two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults while the number of girls out of school represents a similar figure (Albert and Escardibul 2017: 158). The reasons for this misfortune are based on the exploitation and oppression of women, discrimination, early marriages, and adolescent pregnancy which lead to their holding subordinate positions in their families, societies, and countries. For women to be self-reliant, be integrated into the development process and obtain equal rights with their male counterparts, they need an all-round education. McMahon (2009: 478) opines that the proper education of women “is the most effectual means of establishing, promoting, and securing, on the most solid foundation, the domestic and social happiness of the present and future ages”. The importance of the education of women cannot be over-emphasized.

Women education is essential in the fight against poverty. It allows the woman to be gainfully employed which not only helps in the household welfare but gives the woman power in planning and taking family decisions concerning household welfare, especially household spending. Albert and Escardibul (2017: 158) assert that “Education is a key instrument in empowering women in the household because it helps them

gain a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities, and it can raise their confidence with regard to their possibilities, especially in less developed countries.” Consequently, women with a higher level of education usually make more household decisions on issues that concern consumption (daily shopping, purchases of consumer durables, and significant expenditure on children) and savings than those with a lower education. Education empowers women and helps in the economic development of their societies.

The United Nations recognizes the contributions made by women in the economic development of many thriving societies and the costs to the societies who exclude women in their economy. Gender equality is encouraged in all member states. Gender equality is the fifth among the seventeen sustainable development goals set by the United Nations in 2015 to transform the world. Anyanwu (2016: 171) reiterates the views of the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) on gender equality:

Gender equality entails that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. In addition, it means that girls and women have agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions about the course of their lives without the fear of coercion and violence. Therefore, equality between boys and girls as well as between women and men is both a human right issue and a precondition for, and indicator of sustainable, people-centred development.

Given this declaration, gender equality and women empowerment become vital in the development of any given society. Gender disparities in terms of economic opportunities and women’s access to education have not helped in the growth of the economy due to women’s exclusion in education. The World Bank, according to Anyanwu (2016: 172), also confirms the importance of gender equality:

Gender equality whether in education or other areas is both about economic empowerment, fairness, equity, increasing productivity, reduction of efficiency losses, and widening of the base of taxpayers and contributors to social protection systems. It is about improving the opportunities and outcomes of the next generation; enhancing development decision-making; greater opportunities for business to expand, innovate and compete; economic/ business freedom; and fostering of stronger, better, fairer, more sustainable and inclusive growth and development.

Therefore, women's access to education has a lot of positive values. Women education brings not only social and political stability but greater empowerment and autonomy. An educated woman contributes efficiently to the welfare of her home and her children. An educated mother understands the importance and value of education. She strives to educate her children thereby reducing illiteracy in the society. There is also a higher rate of participation in the labour market. An educated woman focuses more on job productivity. It also helps in the reduction of fertility issues and child mortality. "Educated mothers tend to have fewer children and to have children who are healthier and better educated" (Fafchamps and Shilpi 2014: 73).

Despite the clarion call for equal education between boys and girls, there are certain factors that hamper gender equality in education. These include child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. In many cultures, the adolescent period which should be a time of safe transition to a productive adulthood becomes a time of being married off or getting pregnant. Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy become a risk to the girl's wellbeing and future development. Victims are forced to drop out of school, bringing their prospects to an abrupt end. They enter into motherhood unprepared, have no livelihoods, and have not acquired any skill for their maintenance and survival. Women who marry and give birth in adolescence are not only at a higher risk of domestic violence but also at risk of maternal morbidity and mortality. Apart from child marriage and

adolescent pregnancy that prevent girls from attaining a basic education, there are also gender stereotypes about roles expected to be performed by men and women. Some of these gender roles based on religion, cultural, and social beliefs have brought about gender discrimination and gender inequality.

In some cultural societies, “women are still linked within the private domain of household, whereas men are associated with authority and productive work” (Kameshwara and Shukia 2017: 1). In many sectors of the economy, women are still under-represented in management positions in various kinds of professions, even though they are qualified. The link to the social belief that men are meant to be in authority is still unbroken in many societies. Kameshwara and Shukia (2017: 2) assert that “Women are disadvantaged and marginalized by the men’s culture and the associations that are constantly made, imagined about flexibility, rationality and efficiency at workplace. They suffer from discrimination and inequality in all societies despite there being no significant difference in productivity between men and women as managers.” Discrimination in the workplace begins at the stage of advertisement, in which a vacant position is advertised but reserved for men because of gender disparities. Women who have worked in various parastatals and have reached the level of becoming managers are most of the time retained and kept as deputy managers.

Gender inequality has a lot of negative effects on the development goals of any given society. Gender inequality, otherwise known as disparities between individuals based on their gender, has been defined in various ways. According to Sen (2001:5), gender inequality is “not one homogeneous phenomenon” but is interlinked and embraces many facets of life which includes “Mortality inequality; natality inequality, basic facility inequality for instance, unequal access to schooling for girls, special opportunity inequality such as, unequal access to higher education, professional trainings etc., professional inequality in certain occu-

pations, inequality in ownership of assets, and inequality within the household in the division of labour.” Sen also corroborates the view that gender inequality includes the “wage gap between men and women and unequal treatment meted out to women in higher promotions and postings” (Ibid: 5).

As gender inequality touches various sectors of life, so does its devastating effect on the social, economic, and development progress of any society. Gender inequality in education and access to resources brings about an increase in fertility and child mortality. It can lead to a reduction in economic growth. Some developing countries such as South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa are held back by high gender inequality in education.

Gender inequality not only leads to high fertility and low economic growth but creates a wide range of poverty. According to Klasen (2002: 347) “Economic growth narrows the gender gap in earnings and lowers fertility.” Women’s contribution to economic growth can be seen through human capital. Human capital, which is an essential source of economic growth, is aptly defined as “direct expenditure on education, training, health and migration” (Arora 2012: 148). Women’s role in economic development is “reflected in reduced maternal mortality and improved maternal care, better education and nutrition of children, reduced fertility, and increase in the average age at first marriage” (Ibid: 149). Women cannot participate in economic development without education. Education gives women the opportunity to enter the labour market which creates economic freedom for women. Even though many women who are in the labour market earn less than men for similar work which signifies gender disparity between men and women, yet it is my submission that women should not be discouraged, but should struggle to attain higher education which in time will bring about gender equality.

Education is also the means to women empowerment. Many development organizations have established conferences such as the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) 1979, the *Beijing Platform for Gender Equality* 1995; the *Dakar Education for All (EFA) Framework of Action* 2000; and the *United Nations Millennium Summit* in September 2000 at various times to discuss gender inequality and women empowerment. In these conventions, education has always been identified as the key to the enhancement of women's equality and rights in the economic and social milieu. Noureen (2015: 2) asserts that the *Beijing Declaration*, in presenting women empowerment as a means of development, says: "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace."

Empowerment has been viewed from various perspectives which include option, choice, control, and power. The World Bank (2008) defines empowerment as "the process of enhancing capabilities and capacity of social groups or individuals to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes." Empowerment, according to Noureen (2015: 3), "is an intentional, ongoing process through which people who are lacking an equal share of valued resources, gain greater access to and control over those resources". Empowerment is related to three important factors: "resources (access and future claims on material, human and social resources), agency (the ability to define one's goals and act on them), and achievements (well-being outcomes)" (Noureen 2015: 4). Women empowerment is a process in which women are encouraged to participate in development activities thus giving them the freedom of mobility and the power of speech (Khan et al. 2017: 217). Women empowerment simply means "making women self-dependent, giving them freedom, and access to

economic opportunities” (Ibid: 217). There are various levels of empowerment in which women seek equality which Khan et al. (2017: 218) enumerate as follows: “economic security, legal and political awareness, authority of sale and purchases, participation in decision-making, freedom of mobility, not treated as subordinate, participation in political and social activities and self-esteem”. All these promote gender equality. Yet we must recognize that there can be no empowerment unless women have access to information that aids their decision-making process, which comes through education.

Therefore, empowerment cannot be fully realized without education because “education is a systematic process through which one can acquire knowledge, experience, skill and sound attitude” (Uddin 2015: 221). Education is, therefore, a major catalyst for human development. Education develops the cognitive ability and allows one to gain access to knowledge, information, and new ideas which helps in personal development and decision-making. Education helps women to embrace changes in certain norms which dehumanize and subjugate womanhood. Education enhances freedom. Sen (2000: 5) argues that there is no development in an area without freedom. Freedom is not complete if all aspects of society including women are not free. This freedom according to Sen comprises “beings and doings”, which entails being and doing what one has reasons to value. This entails women being liberated from constraining factors that limit their freedoms to be and do what they have reason(s) to value and releasing them to embrace only those things they choose and have reasons to value. Such choices hinge on education. Therefore, the education of women has a direct link to the development of the economy.

Emphasizing the effect of women’s involvement in the development of an economy, Jameel (2014: 133) opines that President Obama at the International Day of Girls in Naples stated “the country would not grow if the politics did not pay attention to improving the treatment of women

and develop their education and rights.” Education enhances a woman’s autonomy which gives her some sense of independence. Women’s autonomy covers so many aspects of women’s situations in life. Autonomy can be said to be a woman’s right as well as her freedom to act as she chooses. Riyami et al. (2004: 144) define autonomy “as the technical, social and psychological ability to obtain information and to use it as the basis for making decisions about one’s private concerns and close relations”. This definition gears towards the ability to be in control over the circumstances of one’s life. Moursund and Kravdal (2003: 287) enumerate different kinds of autonomy which include: “economic autonomy (access to economic resources), physical autonomy (freedom of movement), and decision –making autonomy (opportunity to take part and be heard in discussions with parents, husbands and in-laws).” Riyami et al. (2004: 145) quote Jejeebhoy’s five aspects of women’s autonomy which are linked to education: “Autonomy of knowledge (educated women have a wider world view), decision-making autonomy (education strengthens women’s say in decisions that affects their own lives), physical autonomy (educated women have more contact with the outside world), emotional autonomy (educated women shift loyalties from extended kin to the conjugal family), and economic and social autonomy and self-reliance (education increases a woman’s self-reliance in economic matters and her ability to rely on herself rather than on her children or husband for social status).”

Education, therefore, plays an active role in the autonomy of women. There is a link between education and autonomy. Education enables women to take part in the labour market which creates access to both economic resources and freedom of movement, which in turn leads to decision -making on how the money will be spent. Education, therefore, acts as a catalyst in bringing about gender equality between men and women and in women’s autonomy in the society.

## **7.2 Spheres of Women Education**

Women have been taking part in various forms of education, since education is a tool for increased socio-economic opportunities and upward mobility. Melnic and Botez (2014: 113) opine that “education is the assembly of measures applied in a systemic way in order to create and develop the individual from an intellectual, psychic, physic, affective, socio-professional point of view.” It is thereby seen as an aid to the development of the human personality. Due to the divergent ways through which education develops a person, education can be said to have many sides. According to Melnic and Botez. (2014: 115), this includes the intellectual, moral, esthetical, technological, and physical, each of which is aimed at a certain part of the personality. Through education, one gets knowledge. Knowledge is acquired through learning. There are various forms of education through which knowledge and skills are acquired. These include formal education, non-formal education, and informal education. We will examine some of these basic forms of education to mine their roles in women empowerment.

### **7.2.1 Formal Education**

Formal education is a process whereby people learn in organized settings and environments such as schools, colleges, and universities. Colardyn and Bjornavold (2004: 69) define formal learning as learning that occurs within an organized and structured context (formal education, in-company training), and that is designed as learning. It may lead to a formal recognition (diploma, certificate). Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective. Yasunaga (2014: 7) further defines formal education as “Education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organizations and recognized private bodies and – in their totality – constitutes the formal education system of a country.” Such institutionalized learning is engendered by programmes. As

such Yasunaga further opines that “Formal education programmes are thus recognised as such by the relevant national education authorities or equivalent authorities, e.g. any other institution in cooperation with the national or sub-national education authorities” (Ibid: 7). As such, formal education consists mostly of initial education, vocational education, special needs education, etc. Some parts of adult education are often recognized as being part of the formal education system.

Informal education, the goals, locations, and methods are determined by the teacher or educational providers, simply defined as education at school. Formal education is, therefore, a structured learning based in the classroom. According to Manuti et al. (2015: 3) “It is a standard paradigm of learning: a form of learning within traditional educational pedagogical frameworks, based on didactic interaction.” There are certain characteristics which distinguish formal learning from other forms of learning, which Eraut (2000: 114) enumerates as follows: “a prescribed learning framework, an organized learning event or package; the presence of a designated teacher or trainer; the award of a qualification or credit, the external specification of outcomes”.

Formal education is, therefore, full-time education, which is organized and structured into different stages. It comprises primary and secondary schools, and higher and university education in which degrees are awarded at the end of the academic studies. In formal education, the centre of gravity is the tutor or the teacher who teaches with a curriculum and with other tools for learning. Formal education institutions are administratively organized. Students are required to appear in the classroom for lessons or lectures. There is continuous assessment and examination through which the student is promoted to the next class. Formal education contributes to forming the psycho-cultural profile of an individual. The importance of formal education cannot be over-emphasized. Education helps to expand economic opportunity especially in this era

where great emphasis is laid on the certificate. It promotes health and contributes extensively to gender equality.

In many countries, especially in developing countries where education is not free, many parents cannot afford to send their children to school. Also, the number of schools provided by the government cannot accommodate the populace. Jumani et al. (2011: 17) opine: “the formal system has failed to enroll all children of age 5-14 years without dropping them.” This inability leads always to the situation of an opportunity cost which in most cultures results in a situation in which the dice are loaded against the female child. Since formal education is always a definition of one’s ability to participate in the labour force of a country, the non-enrolment of many girl children in formal education leads to a gross disenfranchisement and eventual disempowerment of women in this regard. Therefore, any effective empowerment of women must ensure that the girl child has opportunity equal to what their male counterparts receive with regard to access to formal education. Such a situation places both men and women on an equal pedestal basing access to opportunities solely on competence where other debilitating stereotypes are obliterated.

Despite the prime position occupied by formal education in modern-day society, because skills are also needed in the development of any given society, Latchem (2014: 2) notes that a formal education system alone cannot respond to the challenges of modern society. He further notes that they are reinforced by non-formal educational practices and non-formal education needs, as de facto partners in the lifelong process and access. There is interdependence between the three forms of education since the three forms contribute to the development of an individual personality and can lead to the economic and sustainable development of any given society.

### **7.2.2 Non-Formal Education**

Non-formal education has been used as a means of empowerment. This type of educational process helps people gain control of their lives through planned activities in which learners participate actively. The concept of non-formal education emerged in the 1960s. It concentrates on adults, especially on their continuing education outside the formal education which was meant to provide access to children who had no access to education. Hamadache (1991: 111) opines: “In the early days, it was the inadequacies of the traditional school system that sparked this growing interest in out-of-school forms of education acting as a supplement or even a substitute for formal schooling.” Non-formal education becomes an aid to socio-cultural development, having been developed by researchers and institutions who were worried by the problem of development and were out to make use of divergent human resources. Non-formal education has been defined in so many ways. Michael Eraut (2000: 113) defines non-formal education “as any organized systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children.” Non-formal education is however connected to an institution or organization within the non-formal education system (Norqvist and Leffler 2017: 235). In the same vein, according to Yasunaga in the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2014: 3), non-formal education is:

Education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters to people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure. It may be short in duration and low density, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. Non-

formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognized as formal or equivalent to formal qualifications by the relevant national or sub-national education authorities or to no qualifications at all. Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, workskills and social or cultural development.

This definition encompasses the advantage of non-formal education, which complements formal education and helps in upgrading skills, especially in response to the growth of globalization and new technologies. It has been seen that the school alone cannot provide a basic, quality education for all. Many young people are not able to attend either primary or secondary school because of the disadvantages they face such as poverty, gender bias, rural location, and social discrimination. To make education accessible to all, Education for All (EFA) was prescribed in the World Education Forum in 2000. Various forms of learning are required to achieve this goal. Non-formal education is one of the tools through which learning is obtained. “Characterised by a high degree of flexibility and openness to change and innovation in its organisation, pedagogy and delivery modes, non-formal education caters to diverse and context-specific learning needs of children, young people and adults worldwide” (Yasunaga 2014: 4).

In non-formal education, the focus is on the students or individuals. The objectives, programmes, and methodologies are based solely on the needs of the person concerned, which aims at the development of the individual. Therefore, non-formal education can take place at the workplace and can be organized by a group, trade union, and even a political party. Non-formal education can simply be seen as a means whereby learners define exclusively for themselves what they want to learn based on their needs. Non-formal education is seen in many forms which according to Latchem (2014: 5) includes “part-time ‘second chance education’ for those unable to benefit from regular classes, youth clubs with

substantial educational purposes, adult and continuing education, community education, personal development programmes such as cultural, language, fitness and sports programmes, professional and vocational programmes for the unemployed and upgrading workforces”.

Non-formal education is lifelong learning, which gives the students or the individuals the opportunity to be creative and realize their self-potential and gives them the ability to set up their own professional and personal goals. It is also a type of education that enhances the self-development of the student’s personality. Lifelong learning is also an educational activity that is carried out to improve knowledge, skills and professional competencies. Singh (2015: 4) asserts that lifelong learning is seen presently “as a standard and an organising principle to promote learning on a holistic basis, to counter inequalities in educational opportunity and to raise the quality of learning”.

Ivanova (2016: 726) outlines some characteristics of non-formal education as follows:

- Voluntary, free choice of the area and type of activity; the curriculum, scope and pace of education; the teacher; the form and pace by which the educational program is learned; and the educational outcomes focus on the private needs of the individual.
- The activity seeks to motivate the individual to engage in cognition and creativity, extracurricular educational programs and services are offered in the interests of the individual, society and state.
- A lack of strict regulations governing the educational process, which creates favourable conditions for the development of creativity, innovation, initiative, and success in achieving a generally recognized goal, self-expression, and self-directed activity.

- The educational process is dominated by a mindset that prioritizes the individual experience of productive activity and learning (the process of creating knowledge) while taking into account free choice and the interests of all the participants in the group; however, the responsibilities of everyone involved in joint activities are clearly defined, and lively communication and interpersonal relationships are fostered.

These characteristics indicate that non-formal education is an individual-oriented form of education, which caters for one's needs to improve skills and knowledge. Its relevance gears towards the need of the individual, with a clearly defined purpose. It is flexible in its organization. Tudor (2013: 822) asserts that "non-formal learning is intentional, the person attending these forms of education makes it for one own's reason, and programs are organized for learning, coming to complement, support or as a source of valorisation of the learning experiences formally acquired."

Non-formal education helps the individual to rediscover themselves and their skills when engaged in various activities that are responsible for developing a creative personality who can change both themselves and the world around them. This type of education allows the child or the individual to choose the knowledge they to acquire, the activity they participate in, and the value orientation that helps them realize their goal which differs from the one laid down by general educational standards. It enhances creativity, meaning that it gives the learners space and time to realize their self-potential and their gifts so as to set their professional and personal goals. Vocational education belongs also to non-formal education. Ivanova (2016: 728) opines that "Vocational education programs provide a means of developing cognitive motivation, aptitude in the process of joint voluntary activity with peers and adults and active communication. They are tools for the targeted development of individuals abilities in order to master socio-cultural values." The skills ac-

quired at vocational institutes helps not only the individual to be self-employed but helps in job creation which aids in the development of a society. Therefore, non-formal education embraces knowledge and skills development in such areas as “crop science, animal husbandry, fishing, forestry, nutrition, water supply and sanitation, family planning, child-care, healthcare, HIV/AIDS prevention, gender equity, public safety and justice, reconstruction and reconciliation, computing and environmental, ecological and conservation issues” (Latchem 2014: 7).

Non-formal learning seems to provide means in which individuals can cope with their lives in various ways. “They constitute prerequisites for participating in life as a whole—professionally, socially and personally” (Singh 2015: 38). Non-formal education is greatly needed for the upgrading of human skills especially in developing countries to help in curbing poverty and unemployment, and bring about social and economic inclusion

With the global changes taking place in most cultures and countries, learning is no longer confined to the classroom. Learning is also conducted at the workplace to increase the skills of workers to make them more efficient at work. Workplace learning helps in the development of the individual as well as the development of the organization or the business where the individual works. The workplace is thereby “structured to maximize processes of learning where employees learn how to learn skills related to their own jobs and those of other workers” (Manuti et al. 2015: 3). This kind of learning is planned and organized learning which takes place within the working environment and the learning is solely on the job, how to improve working skills and maximise profit. This type of learning on the job is also one of the characteristics of non-formal learning.

Worthy of note is that non-formal learning is crucial to women empowerment. Given that in most developing countries due to years of the non-inclusion of women giving rise to a non-empowered population of

women, non-formal education opens an avenue for the amelioration of the disparity between men and women. Women who have passed the age of basic education but were denied access based on gender discrimination can now embrace the opportunities provided for their capacity building by non-formal education as adults. Again within the workplace, women who are already employed but who are disadvantaged by not having the pertinent skills in their profession due to inability to acquire them earlier can also take advantage of non-formal education in the workplace to attain a level playing ground with their male peers. Of particular importance is that non-formal education ensures that those already discriminated against and disempowered due to denial of earlier access to education have a second chance.

### **7.2.3 Informal Education**

Informal education usually takes place outside the school setting. Pilz and Wilmshöfer (2015: 233) define informal learning “as a natural accompaniment to everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning and so may well not be recognized even by individuals themselves as contributing to their knowledge and skills.” Given the method of this form of learning which can take place outside the classroom and even without a teacher, Eshach (2007:172) states that informal learning can be defined “as the sum of activities that comprise the time individuals are not in the formal classrooms in the presence of a teacher.” It is a form of learning through which every person acquires knowledge and skills from daily experiences and exposure to the environment. Singh (2015: 20) summarizes: “Informal learning is a learning that occurs in daily life, in the family, in the workplace, in communities and through the interests and activities of individuals. It can also be called experiential learning.” Informal learning is an effective method of learning which is usually used by adults. In the twenty-first century, it is mainly through informal learning that

knowledge and skills are acquired. In today's interconnected and technology driven-world, learning can be virtual, online, and remote, meaning that it is not restricted to a place. Mahajan (2017: 152) maintains that "learning must take place in contexts that promote interaction and a sense of community that enable formal and informal learning."

Informal learning does not correspond to an organized and systematic view of education and does not usually have objectives and subjects that are normal with traditional curricula. It is open to both students and the public alike. It does not provide degrees, certificates, or diplomas but supplements formal and non-formal education. Melnic and Botez (2014: 115) enumerate some components of informal education which include: "visits to museums or to scientific and other fairs and exhibitions, etc; listening to radio broadcasting or watching TV programmes on educational or scientific themes; reading texts on sciences, education, technology, in journals and magazines; participating in scientific contests; attending lectures and conferences". This shows that informal learning has a lot of multidisciplinary information. Knowledge can be spontaneously acquired, especially the knowledge obtained through media such as newspapers, magazines, posters, and CDs and in this technologically driven era through social media such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Since knowledge can be spontaneously acquired even at home in a relaxed environment, the purpose of informal learning is "to complement and supplement the formal system and help youngsters reach spiritual, religious and political maturity as well as to instill them with suitable behaviours for leisure time activities" (Zamir 2018: 406). Therefore, informal learning should not be seen as an inferior form of learning but as fundamental and valuable in its own dimension (Latchem 2014: 1). Informal learning intends also as its purpose to develop the individual sense of empowerment and self-esteem.

Informal education differentiates itself from formal education in its pedagogical approach. It has neither a fixed curriculum nor a time-table.

There is no examination as seen in formal education and the lessons are not taught by professional teachers. It is therefore considered lifelong learning where teaching is seen as a negotiation between the teacher and the learner. Zamir (2018: 409) opines that the aim of the teaching method is “to create a subjective, emotional learning experience that may be bound to cognitive content”.

There are three forms of informal learning which Latchem (2014: 3) describes as “incidental and implicit, in which new facts, ideas and behaviours are learned without any conscious attempts or explicit knowledge of what is being learned; reactive, in which learning is explicit but virtually spontaneous; and deliberate, wherein there is clear intention to acquire new knowledge or skills”. These three forms of learning take place in day-to-day living. They are not easily recognized and seen as learning but they form the basis through which learning takes place.

### ***7.2.3.1 Incidental and Implicit Learning***

Self-directed informal learning plays a vital role in development. It helps individuals and groups to withstand changes in the economy, technology, and social life and improves their health and life expectancy. It helps them to attain greater self-efficacy, have a positive self-image, and establish shared norms and values. Eraut (2000: 114) defines implicit learning as “the acquisition of knowledge independently of conscious attempts to learn and in the absence of explicit knowledge about what was learned, there is no intention to learn and no awareness of learning at the time it takes place”.

Some factors affect how individuals learn and these factors are the beliefs, ideas, and behaviours which are transmitted from one individual learner to the other. Latchem (2014: 3) enumerates some factors that make adults learn better. Adult learners are “internally motivated and self-directed, bring life experiences and knowledge to their learning experiences; are goal oriented; are relevancy oriented, are practical and

like to be respected.” Many adult learners including children learn a lot with educational technology. Knowledge is nowadays acquired through computers and the Internet. Mass media is another means of incidental and implicit learning. Watching television can help pre-school children acquire skills in “basic numeracy, literacy, social and motor skills development” (Latchem 2014: 5). Some programmes such as geographical channels can help older children learn more about animals and can enhance visits to zoos and museums. Many TV programs enhance learning, providing information about society such as documentaries, news, and current affairs, as well as teaching integration and social interaction or learning about different cultures which is usually shown through novels, films, and TV drama.

#### ***7.2.3.2 Reactive Learning***

Reactive learning is achieved using role models such as TV soap operas or series, music, or poetry to bring people together, present some points which lead to a discussion to educate the masses.

#### ***7.2.3.3 Deliberate Learning***

Deliberate learning is a form of learning which the masses acquire through listening to radio or watching a series on television. Since most people can afford a radio, it is used as a deliberate means of disseminating information. In many developing countries, radios are used to transmit information such as maternal and child health programmes, which is usually followed by deliberations. Many women listen to such broadcasts and learn from the discussions. There are other sources through which knowledge is acquired. These include search engines such as Google, by which learners can access information or read up on a particular topic. There are also other aspects of deliberate learning such as learning a foreign language in a country where the language is spoken. The learner interacts or engages in a conversation with the native speak-

er with the intention of learning the language well. All these methods constitute various ways of informal learning.

In the current world dispensation, informal learning is boosted by information technology whereby boundaries are broken, and one can access information otherwise unavailable years earlier. The Internet and other multimedia channels are a sea of information for anyone who cares to look. One advantage is that women in a particular region can access information about women from other regions who are better empowered. They can inform themselves about the advantages or otherwise of empowerment. This is a strong index for women concerning their empowerment. Yet it must be noted that very often accessing such information requires some basic form of formal education concerning literacy. Also, in some countries, access to this information is highly censored. Despite this obstacle, the continuous availability of information on the informal perspective remains a good boost to women empowerment. As it is said, information is power.

Finally, it must be noted that empowerment cannot occur unless women take their destinies into their hands. Women are therefore encouraged to consciously participate in these three forms of education – formal, non-formal and informal – to help in their development, sustainability, and positive contribution to their societies.

### **7.3 Ends for Women Education**

The importance of women education in society cannot be over-emphasized. Turani et al. (2015: 387) define education “as the process of effecting a desired change in the behaviours of an individual through personal experience”. Women education plays a great role in the development of any sustainable economy. Turani et al. (2015: 389) state further that “education is the pillar for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare”. It is the only tool that can be used to fight all social evils and norms meted out against women. It is also through the

education of women that some ailments prevailing in the society such as high birth rates, infant mortality, gender discrimination, domestic violence, exploitation, and early marriage can be abolished. Moreover, an educated mother tries to educate her children. When women are educated, the whole society is educated, which corresponds to the adage “if you train a man you educate an individual, however, if you train a woman, you educate a whole family” (Ibid: 389). Education plays a role in the economic development of a society. Development means advancement and improvement. Jameel (2014: 124) argues that development implies “trajectory improvement” and the term economic refers to “access to resources, health, credit and decent jobs and better income and sometimes Gross National product GDP, economic development means improvement in the aspects above and reflection on the national macroeconomics.” If women who constitute more than half of the world’s population become enlightened through education, have skills and access to resources, become gainfully employed, they will be contributing immensely to their society. Poverty will be greatly reduced. In recognition of how women can change their economy if they are gainfully employed, Obama states “if women-mothers and daughters have equal access to opportunities, the whole population would step in the advance of the economy” (Jameel 2014: 125). In analyzing the effect of women empowerment on economic development, Jameel (128) explains further that “Women’s development contributes to the eradication of poverty by empowering women to engage in the labor force and to better manage their finances. The development of women contributes to family health and healthcare as well as better family planning, which contributes to the development of the economy.” Still on the importance of women empowerment in the overall wellbeing of a nation, Jameel also notes that “Women are the most important agents of change and further maintains that developing the socioeconomics of women is a significant factor to the sustainability of the economic development” (Ibid: 130).

Therefore, the underdevelopment of women through lack of education will have a negative impact on the economic development of their countries. Development is most robust in countries where women are active participants in the economic, social, and political spheres.

The education of women gives rise to sustainable population growth. In Asian and African countries, women usually get married at a younger age due to lack of education and exposure. In many developing countries, especially Arab countries and some African countries with an Islamic culture and religion, many young girls are forced into child and early marriages, which result in high birth rates and mortality rates. Women education engenders a change in perspective in these dimensions. Literacy in women usually engenders a quality-oriented family setting, that is to say, women education is associated with the demand for fewer numbers of better-educated children. In this regard, more enlightened women have better access to contraceptives and better knowledge of their cycles. They have better health management than illiterate ones. Education helps women to adopt safe hygienic practices and medical treatment. Chaturvedi et al. (2016: 11) iterate that “women’s education leads to reduction in family size, greater attention by mothers towards health, education and character building of their children, greater participation of women in labor market and greater per capita income and better quality of human capital.”

Education is also a key instrument in empowering women in household decision-making. It helps them to understand their rights and responsibilities. It allows women to determine major household purchases as well as daily household chores. Education enables women to have access to money and the freedom to decide how it is to be spent. It accords women the independence they need to be able to make decisions on matters concerning themselves and their families without depending on their husbands for financial resources. Women’s resources are mostly devoted to children leading to better nourishment, health, and education-

al development of the children. Education improves women's life resources.

Education is the key to establishing respect and equal rights between men and women. It is a major catalyst for human development. Education gives women the qualifications and opportunities to participate in politics and in governance. Women have not been active participants in politics since they are home minders, taking care of children. Active participation in politics gives women the opportunity to engage with many native laws that enslave women and hinder their development and freedom. As legislators, they will enact laws that will enhance women's development and empowerment. Women who are also mothers use their maternal instincts to lead in their various parastatals bringing forth their female traits and virtues. It is only education that can give a woman the opportunity to participate in politics and decision-making. In politics, it is not only access to information and communication that is important, but also the competence to harness them to the desired end. This comes only through education. A person who can read and write and is in a position to address people has more independent voice than an illiterate person. It is only literacy that can allow one to participate in national and international gatherings.

The education of women will go a long way in closing the gender-based gap in the labour market. There is gender inequality in almost every country in the world. There is also gender disparities in the labour market which do not allow women to attain managerial positions. In some countries, women who are employed do not receive the same pay or salary as their male counterparts for the same job. In many developing economies, women cannot attain managerial positions due to a lack of access to higher education. The result is that women from the outset are at a disadvantaged position in their careers. Even when the initial hurdles have been overcome, climbing up is difficult irrespective of potential opportunities. Those who have the qualifications do not have

enough experience since lucrative positions are reserved mainly for men. It is only education that can create opportunities for women to work in firms or organizations and gain the experience needed to qualify for top managerial positions.

Since education plays a key role for women to reach managerial positions, there are also factors in many developing countries which prevent women from attaining such positions. These include cultural factors such as religion, the central planning of the economy, as well as the level of women's political empowerment. Consequently, "women in top political positions may have a positive effect on women's participation in the labor and managerial market by serving as role models for aspiring women, reducing the time spent on household duties through better provision of public goods and services that are important to women and enacting laws that favour women" (Islam and Amin 2016: 131).

Education serves as an agent for change. It enables and helps women to boost their self-esteem and self-confidence and makes them aware of their rights. It is a tool that can improve the situation of subjugated women. Women have a secondary position in most societies and cultures. Many women cannot fend for themselves if they leave their men because they have no income. They depend on their abusers for their sources of livelihood. There is always a link between poverty and violence. Statistics have shown that women who live in poverty are likely to experience intimate partner violence. Women who have no jobs or sources of income often fall prey to violence by their partners. To prevent such violence, women need to be economically solvent, i.e., they need to have financial autonomy, economic reliance, or economic self-sufficiency (Gilroy et al. 2015: 99). This does not, however, rule out the fact that those who are economically solvent could also be victims of violence by their partners.

Economic solvency is a term used to refer to a situation that is opposite of poverty. Gilroy et al. (2015: 100) opine "if poverty is dependence

upon either government welfare or an abusive partner, economic solvency is independence. If poverty is vulnerability, economic solvency is empowerment.” Economic empowerment can be either a means of protection or a means of escape from violence. Since the woman can take care of herself and her children with her resources, she can decide to leave the relationship. Education, therefore, is an important factor that exposes women to employment so they can be economically independent and self-reliant.

### **7.3.1 Participation in Leadership and Governance**

Politics has always been controlled by men in most countries of the world. There is a grossly disproportionate number of women compared to men in political positions of most countries. In some countries, there exists a quota system, in which a minimum percentage of political posts are reserved for women. Women are missing from the political scene as well as in decision-making. In some places, women have been conditioned to believe that politics is mainly for men. Men enact laws that subordinate women and keep them as second-class citizens, thereby widening the gap in gender inequality. Patriarchal cultures found in many societies have led to the marginalization of women in the economic, social, and political life of their countries.

Laws which govern the country are enacted by the legislature. Men who are active participants in politics will likely enact laws that will be favourable to them. The active participation of women in politics is envisioned to change a lot of policies which will promote gender equality and transformation, thus bringing about social and cultural changes. Moreover, sustainable and long-term change in the subordination of women which has to do with enacted policies can only be completed when women join political power and influence the policies from within.

Because many women nowadays have access to higher education and resources than was the case in the 1950s, women can participate in

politics and governance more effectively. Jardina and Burns (2016: 274) opine that “education and income are correlated with political participation. Education enables people to be more knowledgeable about politics. Education fosters interest in politics.” Education gives cognitive tools and creates opportunities for increased income. Political participation is enhanced through education and civic skill. In their explanation of the meaning of civic skill, Jardina and Burns (2016: 274) maintain that civic skills are “the practical tools people acquire on the job and in religious institutions, through the opportunities to organize meetings, give speeches, participate in meetings, and the like activities that offer skill-building opportunities.” These two factors, education and civic skill, play a significant role in political action since they help people to do political work and engage in political meetings. They help those elected to various platforms to be the voices of the people and make them active in political participation, i.e., they influence the government in the implementation of the policies made.

Women’s participation in leadership and governance is still met with stiff opposition due to some subtle but entrenched gender bias and inequality. Women are still under-represented in many government and non-governmental organizations, particularly in positions of power and leadership. Many countries have agreed on the quota system to ensure that women are included in political positions. Many politicians also campaign with the promise of more female participation in their government, yet often this remains at the level of unimplemented promises. Many factors prevent women from participating actively in politics and governance.

One of the major barriers that hinder women from being included in the political arena is the patriarchal structures that have permeated their lives. In many societies, women are still accorded a secondary position which makes it difficult for people to accept a woman as their leader. In African society, the patriarchal belief in the role and status of women is

still very strong. No matter the level of education of women, they are supposed to be seen at home, hence the response of the President of Nigeria during his visit to Germany. When reacting at the press conference to a statement made by his wife, he emphatically said: “My wife belongs to my kitchen and the other room.” (Alonge 2016: 7). If such a statement can be made in this twenty-first century, it shows how difficult it is in an African context for women to be in the higher office of governance as already witnessed in some developed countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom. Anya (2017: 8342) observes that “confining women’s identity to the domestic sphere is one of the barriers to women’s entry into politics and politics by its nature catapults one into public life. Generally, cultural attitudes are hostile to women’s involvement in politics.”

Another factor that prevents women from participating actively in politics and governance is discrimination and stereotyping. Women who opt for political positions are often criticized even by their fellow women. This attitude is based on their society’s allocation of male and female roles. Women do not receive the needed encouragement to seek leadership positions. Women leaders are often not as well accepted as their male counterparts.

Partisan structures also play a role in women’s representation and selection. Women who are interested in seeking election should be given an adequate platform that makes it possible them to be accepted. As Gilardi (2015: 959) puts it, “parties can make or break women’s efforts to run for office.” Therefore, political parties play an important role in creating opportunities for female candidates. If more women are elected to office, it boosts the morale of other women, thus encouraging them to develop political ambition. But when a woman runs for an office and fails, it demoralizes other women, reduces their interest in participating in politics and indeed reinforces the stereotypes that are barriers to women empowerment. The immediate consequence of the reinforce-

ment of such stereotypes is self-doubt. Many women doubt their abilities to run for a post, even when their qualifications are good. They have no self-confidence and are afraid that they will not be supported or receive enough votes. To be eligible for political election, women must be self-confident and be ready to compete with their male counterparts.

Yet another factor that deters women from active participation in politics is the lack of mutual support among women. Women often lack the team spirit that would help them against their common adversary. It is an attitude in which women castigate themselves and do not see anything good in what their fellow women do. Women constantly try to outdo one another instead of working together and building themselves up. In some cases, women prefer to be under a man than under their fellow women. Given this, Kamlongera (2008: 476) says “culturally, women are like that. They don’t want to facilitate another woman’s advancement. Women are jealous – they feel they would rather be under a man than another woman.” A case in point can be a consideration of the presidential election in the USA between Donald Trump and his female opponent, Hilary Clinton. While Trump was accused of many actions that depicted him as objectifying women, it was striking to note that women were at the forefront of his defence of these allegations. Many argued that these actions were in his past and did not immediately depict the man he had become. The majority of women voters voted Trump in the election and he won. While I must acknowledge that other factors besides gender should determine one’s choice of a candidate in an election, it must also be noted that if women take advantage of their numbers and vote for their fellow women on various political platforms, their empowerment would be a *fait accompli*.

Poverty is also one of the factors that hinder women from participating in politics. Entering politics and aspiring to a political position have a lot of financial implications. Politics has a lot to do with resource availability and control. As such it is not surprising that many women

who are in politics are usually from affluent homes. Politics usually requires funding. Women with lower economic resources cannot join politics. In many developing countries, “poverty is feminized” (Kamlongera 2008: 477) meaning that it is women who usually have economic constraints as compared to their male counterparts in the same social milieu. Many women do not have enough resources to sponsor themselves to political posts. They cannot sponsor political rallies because some of these rallies/campaigns are not undertaken by the party. For women to participate in politics, they should have access to adequate resources, since it plays a major role in politics. Being formally educated enables women to earn as their male counterparts do and be able to compete in all terrains, including politics where finances play a major role.

A leadership position is not only restricted to politics. Other sectors of the economy such as education, banking, commerce, judiciary, and health are influenced by politics. Women are still under-represented in positions of leadership and policymaking in these sectors which is not only a sign of inequality but also a situation that poses an ethical challenge to the society. In many organizations, it is believed that a woman seeking to attain a leadership position should possess some traits attributed to men which include ambition, competitiveness, aggression, and control. “She should possess fewer of the attributes designated as feminine, such as empathy, kindness or concern for the needs of others” (Moor et al. 2014: 1). A woman should work as a woman and be herself and should not allow herself to be seen as a man in order to advance her career. Though people often believe that management positions are reserved for men, and so women who are in such positions are sometimes thus exhorted to “think manager-think male” (Ibid: 2). This captures people’s perception of leadership positions. Such comments make women think that they must think like men and also possess masculine qualities such as competitiveness, aggression, rationalism, and inde-

pendence to attain managerial positions. It also creates a negative impact on women's ability to see themselves as capable and competent in leading an organization.

Though many women have not attained leadership positions, a few have. This is based on their "exceptional training, credentials, and non-typical forms of cultural capital. These women invest more time and energy in human capital accumulation compared to their male peers and are less likely than other women to be married or have children" (Cook and Glass 2014: 92). The few women who have attained leadership positions have managed to overcome barriers that hinder women's growth and advancement.

Some factors can promote the advancement of women to a key position. These factors are divided into three sections: societal, familial, and individual. On the societal level, the enactment of some laws that make it possible for a woman to combine family and work have made it possible for some women to progress in the ranks in their various organizations. Some women who have been trained in leadership positions have contributed positively to their various fields, thus helping society to see the need for women to be part of the decision-making body.

The familial context has proven to be a key barrier to women's ascent to leadership roles. This is rooted in people's traditional belief that women should be responsible for household duties, therefore "a meaningful shift in the traditional division of labour within the family is imperative to overcoming this hurdle" (Moor et al. 2014: 2). Women who have been encouraged by their partners and family members have recorded success more in their career than those who have no support and source of encouragement either from family members or from their partners.

On the individual level, people who grow up in a gender-neutral environment develop character traits that help to facilitate their advancement in leadership positions. These people with "androgynous personali-

ty traits” (Moor et al. 2014: 3) exhibit a high sense of self-confidence and are achievement-oriented. Levels of ambition also play a part on the path of progress within an organization. When one aspires higher, one strives to reach the top.

Finally, for women empowerment to occur, women in their various organizations should strive to aspire to leadership positions. Leadership and governance are not made for men only. Women who aspire to leadership positions should be confident in themselves and strive for excellence. Women also possess leadership qualities which when efficiently used will bring a lot of change in policy, enhance equality, and serve as a source of development to the society and humanity.

### **7.3.2 Identity Affirmation and Equality**

In many countries of the world, women have been discriminated against in terms of equal treatment with their male counterparts. Society has subjugated women using tradition, culture, religion, and economy. Women struggle to identify and affirm themselves in the patriarchal milieu created by men to keep women under control. Gender is a structural element of all relationships in societies. Gender roles are socially given roles divided between men and women. For ages, women have been allotted the traditional role of being wives and mothers, that is to say, bearing and caring for children as well as their husbands. They have no identity since their identity is subsumed under the identity of their husbands or partners. This is based on some cultural belief that boys are more important than girls. This results in gender inequality since many cultures prefer boys to girls. Boys are likely to attend schools while girls stay at home. Many girls in sub-Saharan Africa lack basic primary education. The society’s socialization process creates gender inequality, so much so that, “boys are socialized to believe that they are superior, decision-makers, protectors, brave, heads of household, independent and assertive, with girls being taught and conditioned to be submissive, to

nurture, be soft and sensitive, be passive, dependent, obedient and to be generally submissive beings.” (Modipa 2017: 10408).

To achieve a better and sustainable future for all, gender equality is the fifth among the seventeen sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations. “Gender equality means that males and females have equal opportunities to realize their full human rights and contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political development” (Ajasa and Salako 2015: 150). Gender relations play an important role in the management of human and natural resources. Women tend to be disadvantaged in terms of access to resources, land ownership, decision-making, and ultimately power relations. To achieve gender equality, Molden et al. (2014:298) unequivocally recommend:

We need to pursue different strategies to achieve gender equality. We need to work toward shifting power relations that disadvantage women and toward eliminating gender discrimination against women and girls both in policy formulation and in practice. We need to ensure that all research initiatives and policy interventions respond to women’s needs and priorities first and foremost. Securing women’s access to and control over political, economic, sociocultural, and natural resources and improving their meaningful participation in decision-making are equally vital to achieving gender equality and empowerment.

Most of the steps to enhance equality with men can only be achieved through education, signifying that women who should be co-actors should be trained to assist in effecting the change. Education enables women to effect the change they want to see from within.

Education raises the self-confidence of an individual, giving the individual an identity. Education increases autonomy and creates a sense of independence. The attainment of higher education gives women the opportunity to enter the workforce which in turn reduces poverty and dependence. It brings along a sense of fulfilment and reduces the feeling of inferiority. The education of women increases their cognitive devel-

opment, which brings about equality with their male counterparts. It increases their productivity on entering the workforce. It lowers fertility, which liberates and enables them to occupy positions of leadership at all levels in the society. Women contribute immensely to the economic and social development of their societies. This is only possible when women have been trained in one occupation or another. The problem of gender disparities can only be solved when girls are enrolled in school and thereafter gainfully employed. Though the problem of gender inequality is culturally and religiously based, especially in patriarchal societies, it can only be solved permanently when women, who are the victims, are educated and become legislators/. By so doing, they can assist in enacting laws that will free women from the cultural strangleholds that make them second-class citizens.

As education enhances gender equality between men and women, there is a shift in most developed countries from traditional gender ideology (which emphasizes the distinctive roles for women and men, whereby men are seen as breadwinners while women are homemakers) to egalitarian ideologies. In an egalitarian ideology, there is a division of household duties among dual-career couples. This development has not yet materialized in most African and Asian societies where housework and childcare fall exclusively on the shoulders of women.

Though many women in developed countries have access to higher education and labour market opportunities, there is still a gender gap in these industrialized countries as well as in the developing countries. In some countries, women do not receive the same wage as their male counterparts for the same work done. In many developing countries, the number of seats allocated to women in parliament is relatively low, thereby entrusting power and policy-making to men. Women should not just fold their hands and watch. They are called to form activist movements that will speak on their behalf till certain changes are made. Gender mainstreaming should be incorporated by governments. The Beijing

Conference of 1995 commended gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality. Webster (2006: 106) postulates that the Beijing document called upon government “to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects of women and men, respectively.” The ultimate purpose of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality. Webster (2006: 105) gives an elaborate definition of gender mainstreaming. “Gender mainstreaming requires more than a quantitative change in numbers of women and men participating in, or benefitting from, policies and programmes. It requires a transformation of all sectoral policies at all levels, and of institutions, organizational practices, attitudes and systems that shape them so that they fully take into account the realities, needs and views of women.”

A critical look at some of the policies made by some governments shows that the views of women in particular are not taken into account. A comparative analysis of structures such as gender and violence shows that many women are still victims of domestic violence. In gender, power and decision-making, women are usually under-represented. In gender and trade, women are assigned the lowest-paid jobs. In education, many girls, especially in developing countries, are deprived of basic education.

The course for gender equality is a lifelong battle which women should undertake. Women should speak out about their exclusion in many sectors of the economy. They should prepare themselves by getting the necessary qualifications through education or acquire skills that make them relevant in their societies, skills that qualify them to enter the various sectors of the economy currently occupied by men. The greater inclusion of women in all sectors of the economy in various societies can only be realized when the number of women in decision-making bodies is increased.



## CHAPTER 8.

### CONCLUSION

The two novels studied, *Second Class Citizen* and *Das verborgene Wort*, have shown that their female protagonists struggled to succeed in life and empowered themselves through education. In writing about their life experiences, both authors use their protagonists to portray the plight of women and what they go through in their bid to create their own identity. They also show that women can obtain freedom, economic independence, and self-actualization through education. Adah, the protagonist in *Second Class Citizen*, has to divorce her abusive husband to achieve her aim of getting an education. Education gives Buchi Emecheta an identity as a writer, increases her self-confidence, and makes her relevant in London and Nigeria. Hilla, the protagonist in *Das verborgene Wort*, has to endure a lot of beating and name-calling from her family members because of her quest to have an identity and be educated. Education gives Ulla Hahn, the author of *Das verborgene Wort*, an identity, making her a renowned writer and one of the greatest female poets in Germany. These authors are empowered through education. They have to surmount a lot of difficulties to achieve their goals. Both struggled to be educated at a time when higher education was believed to be for men alone. They are sources of encouragement to other women. They have shown through their novels that women can have their own identities, develop their talents, and reach their goals in life. Such developments are made possible through education. "Education is

one of the most effective development investment countries and their donor partners can make” (Ajasa and Salako 2015: 151).

Education benefits individuals and promotes national development. Educating girls brings about socio-economic gains that benefit the entire society. Some of these benefits are increased economic productivity, higher family incomes, delayed marriages which leads to lower fertility, improved health, and higher survival rates for children. (Ajasa and Salako 2015: 152). When women are empowered, it benefits their families and society in general. “Women empowerment is a process of encouraging participation of females in developmental activities, giving them freedom of mobility and power of speech” (Khan et al. 2017: 217). According to Noureen (2015: 15), the Beijing Declaration presents women empowerment as a key for development: “Women’s empowerment and their participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and power.” It is a process that enables women to develop their potential to the fullest. Women empowerment means making women independent and giving them access to economic opportunities. When women have access to economic opportunities, they can support themselves and their families financially. Women empowerment is seen as “a participatory process through which women achieve equity and equality” (Ibid: 16). Women empowerment is the quickest means of poverty reduction. Besides other indices, Khan et al. (2017: 220) identify a “lack of basic capacities to participate effectively in society and enjoying decent living, violation of human dignity ... not being able to access education, powerlessness, insecurity and exclusion,” as some of the pertinent indices for poverty. These all border on education and empowerment. Women can only have access to good jobs when they have acquired some level of education. Access to education leads to greater opportunities for better jobs and earnings in the future.

Women who are not empowered through education automatically become poor and become redundant in their societies. Education is seen as a catalyst for women empowerment. Noureen (2015: 3) states that “access to higher education can bring about changes in cognitive ability, which is essential to women’s capacity to question, to reflect on and to act on the conditions of their lives and to gain access to knowledge, information and new ideas that will help them to do so.” Education plays a significant role in women empowerment. Good, quality education can transform lives. “Literacy is one of the basic rights that empower people to have a better quality of life by having access to better jobs, income or choosing their own life paths” (Todorova 2017: 367). Though the right to education is seen as one of the basic human rights, many girls are deprived of this basic right. Many girls in Africa and Asia have no access to basic primary education. The majority of these girls are forced into child and early marriage, which not only causes health hazards but increases fertility and high mortality. “Worldwide more than 700 million women alive today were married as children (before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday). Of those women, more than one in three (about 250 million) were married before age 15” (Todorova 2017: 368). This practice is mainly found in South Asia, Islamic countries, and sub-Saharan Africa. Many of these women that are pushed into child marriage have little control over decisions that affect their lives. They have limited access to education, health care, and technology. There are other practices that degrade womanhood, such as female genital mutilation and rites of widowhood. All these can be eliminated when gender equality through women empowerment by education is engendered in such societies.

To obtain a positive and lasting result from gender imbalance and inequality, men need to be enlightened through education. They need to learn that men and women are equal. They need to be aware of the dangers involved in all these practices. To achieve this, Todorova (2017: 366) proposes a change of perspective noting that, “Gender equality

must be defined as a goal that involves both men and women.” This joint effort of both men and women “requires the development of integrated gender-equal policies. Engaging men and boys in work on gender equality involves not only working with individuals to change their personal life, but also working to support structural changes in the institutions that express and practice male power over women, including in the socio-cultural, economic and political arenas” (Todorova (2017: 367). When men participate fully in the cause of gender equality, it will lead to a balanced society and some of the discriminatory norms and violence perpetrated against women will be reduced. Moreover, it will help to give a voice to countless women whose voices have been hushed and silenced through cultural factors. These voiceless women can be given back their voices through education.

Education creates psychological empowerment which makes it possible for women to boost their self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-reliance and makes them aware of their rights. Women need to be courageous and self-confident to feel competent enough to enter public space. Many women do not know their basic rights due to lack of knowledge. Illiteracy lowers self-image and creates a sense of inferiority. Due to a lack of self-reliance, many women are at the mercy of their partners. These women often fall prey to violence.

Women are encouraged to attend both formal and non-formal education that will give them skills and knowledge to strive to effect a change in their societies. Education provides an opportunity for economic empowerment, i.e., access to material goods and financial resources. Stromquist (2015: 310) states categorically that “access to material goods is fundamental to enjoy economic and social rights. A strong correlation exists between economic development and women’s legal rights, such as property rights, access to bank loans, protection from violence and abortion policies.” Women’s ability to control and have access to money is very important in creating gender equality and reduc-

ing domestic violence. Economic empowerment creates some sense of independence. Economically buoyant women can easily make decisions on their own and are less dependent on their husband's decisions. Beside economic empowerment, political empowerment whereby women are elected as political representatives is required to improve gender relations in society. This will help in advancing the cause of women, especially in matters concerning household empowerment. Almost in all societies, many women perform more work in the house than men. Household chores should be shared between partners so that women can also get a job that contributes to the productivity of society rather than caring for children and staying at home. This is one of the key factors of gender inequality. "The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean concluded that the gender division of labor between women and men and the differential use of time is a fundamental factor for the economic, social and political subordination of women" (Stromquist 2015 312).

In conclusion, this thesis has seen that women are socially, economically, religiously, and educationally subjugated in various countries of the world. There is a gender inequality between men and women. Women are usually judged based on their sex, i.e., being female, and not on their abilities or what they can achieve with their God-given talents. This makes their societies see them as second-class citizens. Many societies prefer boys to girls because of the value society has placed on boys over girls. Though many developed societies have improved, there is still room for improvement; there is a lot of distance to be covered by both developing and underdeveloped countries.

This research also concludes that many girls are deprived of an education because of their gender. Many women are victims of abuse and violence due to over-dependence on their spouses and lack of access to funds. Education is the pathway to the liberation and women empowerment. The fundamental basis for women empowerment hinges on gen-

der equality. There is a need for gender equality in which men must see women as their equal partners. Men should be empowered as well through teaching and enlightenment and join in fighting the cause for gender equality and women empowerment. Empowering women without empowering men through education will not yield any result. “Gender equality is fundamental for prosperity, peace and stability in the world. Women and girls must have equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities as men and boys. Gender equality demands women’s empowerment – economic, educational and political” (Todorova 2017: 372).

Finally, this research highlights the various advantages that are associated with educating women. It reaffirms the need to educate girls in many countries, where they are deprived of basic education. In the twenty-first century, education is the key to empowerment and sustainable development. The development of any society cannot be fully attained without women. Development that excludes a greater part of human society cannot truly be called development. Development in this regard is seen as holistic development that is essentially human development and not merely economic development.

Women who are empowered through education take greater control of their lives and families because they are gainfully employed. Employment gives them access to finance and resources. They have their own identity and do not live in the shadow of their partners. They are productive in their societies, which gives them fulfilment and makes them economically independent. This allows them to participate effectively in decision-making both at home and in public life. Training and incorporating women in any society is a means of achieving an inclusive and balanced society, which taps the strength of all members in such a way that both men and women complement each other.

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# The Struggle for Women Empowerment Through Education

Women are subjected to all kinds of violence, such as rape, forced marriage, forced identity, dependence, and a lack of freedom of expression, giving rise to the status of women as second-class citizens. Despite this gloomy picture, women across cultures agree that this denigration can only be stopped and reversed if those who are victims are educated so that they can discuss the problems, proffer solutions, and see to their implementation. Many female authors write about the trauma that women undergo and the various ways in which women are marginalized in a male-dominated society. This thesis is based on novels by two female authors, *Second Class Citizen* (1974) by Buchi Emecheta from Ibadan, Nigeria, and *Das verborgene Wort* (2001) by Ulla Hahn from Kirchhundem, Sauerland, Germany. It critically discusses the subjugation of women and violence against them through the prism of the novels' main characters.



**Mary Rose-Claret Ogbuehi** submitted this book originally as doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Rheinischen Friedrich Wilhelms University in Bonn, Germany. She is a Lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria. Founder and Facilitator for Women Empowerment Through Education, a leading Human Development NGO, she is a member of the Immaculate Heart Congregation with Mother House at Onitsha and currently conducting a Fellowship and Research Program at the University of Bonn, Germany.

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