Abstract
Misogyny described male hatred of women. Usually, the hatred generates certain forms of oppression and marginalization of the women by the man at micro and macro levels. In many patriarchal societies, female oppression is accepted as a norm, and it is significant that the woman often unavoidably reacts to the treatment she receives from the man. This paper explores the different forms of misogyny, the causes of misogyny, women’s reactions to misogyny and the effects of these reactions as portrayed in Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen* and El-Saadawi’s *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*.


However, works by women were not given prominence until the late 29th century when women agitated for equal treatment and rights globally. In Africa, such works include Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru* (1966), Mariama Ba’s *So Long Letter* (1981), Aminala Sow Fall’s *The Beggar’s Strike* (1979), Buchi Emecheta’s *The Ditch* (1979), Zaynab Alkali’s *The Stillborn* (1984).

The domination of the literary industry manifests in male works such as Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, (1974). Soyinka’s *Deaths and King’s Horseman* (1975), Aluko’s *Chief the Honourable Minister* (1975), to mention but a few. In these works, women play secondary roles and in some they are portrayed as sex objects, wives, mothers, and as those whose roles revolve around their homes and the market square.

However, since the second half of the 20th century, women arose to fill the gender gap between female and male characterization in literature. In their works, they replaced the traditional African women known to be timid, voiceless, helpless and vulnerable with her modern counterpart that is assertive, ambitious, innovative and resolute.

Women in the modern world are usually confronted by misogyny in their natal and matrimonial homes, in their religious practices, at their work places as well as within their communities mainly because they were born female.

Misogyny comes from the Greek word ‘Misogunia’ meaning hatred of women. It was evolved in about the second-century by Antipater of Tarsus in a moral tract entitled “On Marriage”. In the article, Antipater considers marriage as an institution which has its basic on divine principle (polytheistic) as a foundation of the state. Based on the above, Antipater conceives of an ideal marriage as that institution which gives birth to an ideal state fit for mankind.

Since then various scholars have viewed misogyny differently. Euripedes is a misogynist and poet. His writings show an attack on the women but mutually, he does not hate women. The mood of Euripedes courses Hieronymus in his “Historical Commentaries” to state of the un-doubtful fact of the dual behaviour of Euripedes as contained in his tragedies. The logic in the above view is that Euripedes is a misogynist. Chrysippus in his book entitled: *On Affections* classifies ‘misogunia’ (hatred of women), ‘misoinia’ (hatred of wine), and ‘misanthropian’ (hatred of humanity) under one concept, that is, disaffection. Galen criticizes chrysippus’ view as being abstract as compared to
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Antipater’s view, and as an opinion that is more personal. This is so because chrysippus sees hatred of women, hatred of wine and humanity as the same, by this, he perceives the above hatreds as misogyny. Greek literature considers misogyny as a disease and an anti-social condition because it is a contrary perception of women as wives and the family as a foundation of the state.

The traditional feminist sees misogyny as one who openly hates women for being born female on the one hand and on the other as one who hates women for not fitting into one or more acceptable categories. This school of thought identifies three categories of misogynist: first as those men who hate a particular group of women for certain reasons other than being female; second as those who hate women for being born female; and third the culture for setting standards for women. The course of this study has identified the husband, immediate family and society to fit into the three classes of misogynist earlier mentioned. Based on this background, I shall examine misogyny in Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen* and El-Saadawi’s *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*.

**The Causes of Misogyny**

The first cause of misogyny is religion. The first part of it being the myth of Adam and Eve which states that “…. And the rib whom the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man”. (Gen. 2:22). By this act, ‘man’- Adam, bears Eve. The act of Adam bearing Eve denies the latter her innate ability of child bearing. The second part of religion as a cause of misogyny are the Biblical and Koranic principles of wives being submissive to their husbands and husbands being head of the wives, a source of a popular and uncouth conception that women are without brains and with less intelligence quotient than men.

The second cause of misogyny is the feudal system, a system which encourages religious monks and landlords to acquire large areas of farm land. El-saadawi’s *The Hidden Face of Eve* (2002) states that these religious monks and landlords make their subjects (male and female slaves) to work in the accrued land. In no less a time the male slaves were freed while the female remained in bondage, bound in with chains and fetters which become the norm in the society. The consequences of the feudal system resulted in a division in the society that comprised the haves and have not.

**African Realities in the Novels**

Recognizing that literature mirrors life Kure and Babajo (2009) posit that since literary materials are rooted in identifiable communities and societies they portray real persons as experience or studied from real life. Usoro (2009) adds that writers draw from the rich cultural well of their societies. The above authors’ perceptions present literature as evidence of people’s experiences in the society.

Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen*, a semi-autobiographical novel addresses issues that militate against women especially in the Igbo traditional society Umana (2010). This is so because in the Igbo society, the female child is insignificant. She is regarded as a second-class human being. Her welfare is not of concern to her parents. Such is the fate of the protagonist, Adah, in Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen*.

Adah’s birth is not recorded because she is born when the family and community are expecting a male child (7). The female Igbo child is deprived of education but if benevolence falls on her, she is not permitted to stay long in school. The aim of her going to school is to enable her to make a few counts and be able to write her name (9). In Adah’s case she dares tradition and improvises her writing materials as well as uniform and goes to school. In school, she walks straight into Mr. Cole’s class. Chukwuma, observes Adah’s action as a positive stance towards self emancipation (3). After the death of Pa, Adah’s father, all the family income is channeled towards Boy’s education. This fact makes Katherine Fishburn to state that the cause of Adah’s predicament is as a result of cultural ignorance and a critical bias of the society (65). That is by defining roles based on gender and the perception of the female “self” by male.
Through the narrator in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, El-Saadawi reveals the obnoxious policies and strictures that are imposed on the women by the society. Such strictures and policies are: a woman is not to leave her matrimonial home unaccompanied or without the permission of her husband (if married) or male guardian(s) (if unmarried) or her boss (if she is working). On the other hand, the same society permits a man to elope for as long as seven years (59) and then return to have his wife, but if the wife leaves, the husband is permitted to marry another wife as done to the researcher in the novel. The Arab society sees a woman who engages in extra-marital affairs as abnormal, an indication of illness or perversion (9). Following the self-will of the researcher to go on leave in order to enable her research into the archeological remains of the goddesses, the society promulgates a decree forbidding women from taking a vacation, and if any does, no man would be permitted to give shelter or any assistance (10). Lastly, if a woman does not veil, the law states that she should be shot dead for the offence (5). This fact mirrors the cannibal nature of the Arabs.

Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen* and El-Saadawi’s *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* are novels that depict the exploitation and hatred of African woman by African men. In *Second-Class Citizen*, the restrictions cause women to be passive and docile. Emecheta shows how Adah is being exploited by her parents at the detriment of Adah, and how Francis exploits her by sitting at home doing nothing while Adah goes out to work and Francis receives her salaries. This act reverses the vaunted male role. In the light of this Umeh describes the novel as that which portrays how the Igbo traditional culture exploits women through patriarchy (75).

Jennifer McBride describes El-Saadawi as a militant that wields her pen “as sharp as the scalpel” (1), while Meghan O’Rouke describes her as “bludgeon than a scalpel” against female oppression and exploitation; and very dynamic in championing the cultural, political, economic as well as religious freedom of the Arab (Egyptian) women (1).

The above suppositions are valid because El-Saadawi is always willing to write and speak up when many would remain silent. In *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, the men exploit the women by engaging the women all day in the factory in fetching the profuse oil into jars of the women while they (men) maintain their position. Despite the above they collect the wages of the women (41). When it is time to pay dividend to the workers men are given one jar of oil each while the woman are given half jar of oil and even with this, the men receive the women’s portion without negotiation.

As earlier stated, religion and patriarchy relegate women to inferior positions Francis expresses this inferiority thus:

A woman was a second-class human, to be slept with at any time, even during the day, and, if she refuses, 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 (181).

The above assertion dehumanizes a woman, makes her a subject of the object, and as sex object.

In El-Saadawi’s *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, the man with freckles sees the researcher as an inferior being who needs no gratification that is why after the day’s job, at home he orders her to give him four drops of “the oil of life” which revitalizes him but as the researcher insists for her share he gives her two drops and as she presses on he threatens to beat her (26), and at times refuses to give her. The inferiority complex makes the men in the novel to receive the wages of the women, and it also does not allow the men to treat the women with love, respect and understanding. It is pertinent to note that because the man with freckles does not love the researcher he makes love to her without her instinct and at times she would ask a rhetorical question “was that love”? (74).

The veil is a social reality in the Arab world. Jennifer McBride states that El-Saadawi, conceives of the veil as “a tool of oppression of women”, sees the use of make-up as veiling the self and she preaches against revealing clothes worn by women (1). El-Saadawi is of the view that the veil has some psychological effects which prevent the Arab women from thinking critically for
themselves. She therefore preaches that veiling of the mind is important. This could be so because the mind is the part of a being that houses all evil and she deems it fit for one to perfect the mind that is our inner being rather than the outer.

El-Saadawi underscores the above by using the researcher who does not veil and the village women of Alma mater who veil themselves in the novel in discourse to illustrate the effect of the veil. In the former case, she has awareness of herself. On one occasion, the awareness causes her to plan of rebelling because of her servitude. She strikes the chisel on the ground in consequence an object, a bronze statue which happens to be the image of the goddess, Harthur emerges (49). [Again when there is a fire outbreak in the kingdom of Satan and fight ensues between the man with freckles and his contemporaries over the game of chess.] The researcher initiates action to escape unfortunately for her, her feet stamp on the “black liquid” (60), which impedes her movement and action.

But in the case of the village women, due to their unawareness they turn against the researcher thereby constituting a problem to her by refusing to give her assistance in her research. In another occasion she requested from one of the women some drinking water to quench her thirst, but the woman merely looks at her through the slit of her veil without complying. In return the village woman addresses the researcher as a shameless being because the researcher is not veiled. From the juxtaposition of the above two groups of persons it is obvious that the researcher is assertive and dynamic, qualities which are at variance with the village women’s. This may be because the researcher is not veiled while the other women’s unassertiveness and resolute is because they are veiled.

Women’s Reactions to Misogyny and the Effects of these Reactions

This work shows how women suffer from the hatred of men, family and societies. Based on the aforementioned views, I declare that misogyny exist in Emecheta’s Second-Class Citizen and El-Saadawi’s Love in the Kingdom of Oil. Women react to misogyny in divers ways based on the society they find themselves. Writers also depict their protagonist based on the writers’ societies and backgrounds. Adah’s reaction to the situation she finds herself reveals Emecheta’s feminist vision. Adah’s parents intend giving Adah out in marriage to a man the age of her father. In this case she reacts positively by marrying Francis whom she loves against the wish of her parents. As earlier stated, she also reacts positively when she is denied education by improvising her writing materials and she also deploys her capabilities and talents to her advantage when it is time to pay for the common entrance examination fee. Lastly, when she cannot cope with her husband, she breaks out of her matrimonial home. The above shows Adah’s positive stance rather than one that would attract people’s patronage and sympathy, this positive reaction is an individual one.

In El-Saadawi’s love in the kingdom of oil, the researcher starts off positively by daring tradition and sets out unaccompanied, when she realized that she is under servitude, she strikes the chisel on the ground, as a means of reacting toward the men, the researcher tries to coordinate the village women for a revolt against the men. It is pertinent to note that her efforts to overcome misogyny failed because the efforts are individual ones.

El-Saadawi’s feminist vision is that the oppressive structure can only be surmounted through a revolution and this can only be achieved through collective efforts in the Arab society which is cannibalistic, adamant and very resistant to change. The idea of an individual action agrees with that of group action in the sense that for women under enslavement by men to be liberated the women must react positively towards the situation rather than cry over their situation.

The effect of Adah’s reaction to misogyny is that out of her determination she becomes educated, her parents’ choice causes her to marry a man who does not love her. As Adah realizes that Francis does not love her but her money, hates her for being a writer who writes in the English Language and in the white man’s country above all “kills her brain child”, she reacts by filling a divorce suit against him and in court, she won the case. In the case of the researcher her act of going
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on leave results in her loss of her matrimonial home. Her vehement opposition to some societal norms including veiling, going out unaccompanied and others cause her not to be appreciated by the men.

The effects of the novelists’ reactions to misogyny cause them to revalidate female attributes through the use of goddesses of their societies. Through the narrator of Second-Class Citizen, Emecheta reveals that goddess Oboshi (17) blesses and protects the people of Ibuza. And in love in the Kingdom of Oil, El-Saadawi, through her narrator reveals the importance of the goddesses thus: goddess Numa as the first goddess of water (49), Inana goddess of nature and fertility, goddess … of life and death, who is usurped by the men. Her breasts are removed from the statue; beards added to her chin and named Ezra’el (god) (93). The above portrayals show the goddesses as the essence of mankind.

The implication of female essence is to show that despite the fact that Sehkmet is replaced with Ezra’el the function it performs does not change. The outcome of the archeological study strengthens the cultural feminist view that the differences between men and women are psychological and cultural and not biological and the innate (74). Based on the above El-saadawi presents women as being equal with men because both perform the same role.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The two novels in discourse establish that misogyny is a reality in Africa, a significant trait found in most men. The reason is caused by religion and feudalism-patriarchy. The religious factor makes misogyny more severe especially in the Arab society than in the Nigerian society. This study shows that women constitute the greater proportion of the work-force than men. Women are made to undertake the most tedious aspects of the work. This view shows that if women are excluded from the work-force the economy of such a nation is likely to crash. This therefore means that women are often more significant than men in the economy of a nation. The questions therefore are, if women can contribute so much to the economy of the nation, the welfare of the family, and above all the satisfaction of the men’s urges and desires, why should they hate women? Based on the above views, the paper proposes that since marriage is the foundation of the state, proper care and nurture be given to it. Young girls below the age of twenty-five should not be encouraged going into marriage because they are not yet physically and psychologically mature to face the challenges of marriage. Within the marriage institution, a man should be involved in his wife’s affairs and vice versa. Roles should be complementary based on love, affection and understanding.

References


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