

THE MONSTER IN PATRIARCHY-A THEMATIC REVIEW OF NOVELS OF THREE FEMALE AFRICAN WRITERS

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ABSTRACT: *For the most of history the female has been largely disadvantaged in terms of social standing or status as well as fundamental legal rights, compared to their male counterparts. The continuity of this trend of the female being a second class human, is fuelled by traditional, cultural, and religious beliefs of mostly patriarchal societies. The theory under application in this write-up is the radical feminist approach. The paper seeks to explore how patriarchy, being an aspect of culture, helps to paint or make the woman inferior in the light of their male counterparts. This theoretical approach has been sufficiently explored in the work of Nawal El Sadaawi entitled, "A woman at point Zero" (1983), Buchi Emecheta's "The joys of motherhood" (1979) and Amma Darko's "Beyond the Horizon" (1995), among other literary works. The efforts made by the female towards becoming independent from men, have also been closely looked into. Sexual abuse, polygamy, female genital mutilation, widowhood rites and the "trokosi" tradition (Ghana) are among several other socio-cultural factors that set the tone for the oppression, under-rating, malhandling and general discrimination against women in the stories selected in this study. The theories of feminism and literary criticisms have been implied in this study.*

KEYWORDS: Patriarchy, Culture, Oppression, Feminist Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Thematic Review of Novels

Women have generally been discriminated against in terms of place in society and fundamental human rights in the history of man. This can be said to be true, comparing them to their male colleagues. The traditions of wifhood and womanhood are accepted widely in Africa particularly as the preserves of the female sex. This in itself may be the lesser evil. The greater evil is the fact that men determine what women's rights and their general social statuses are in society. The defining virtues of a standard African woman have unfortunately been reduced to subordination or total submission to her man and maintaining silence even in the face of clear subversion of their basic human rights and privileges. Lately, both male and female authors have provided light through their writings on some issues concerning women.

Due to patriarchy (male dominance) Africa, women face gross subordination and suppression, and this is the reality, on the ground today. Patriarchy aside, culture, tradition and religion also have their telling impact on this gender discrimination agenda. To demand what is right by law is not seen as normal on the part of a woman in the African society. Such a demand would be greeted with unanimous condemnation from the majority male in the society. Vice versa, the unfair treatments by men "must" be tolerated by women. The claim here is that these acts of injustice and subordination with impunity executed by men have been in existence from Adam and so must be continued. Standing up against this unfairness is standing up against tradition, culture and religion. Tolerating this unfairness means also that the African woman is voiceless

in decisions about her very survival, talk less of the larger society in which she lives. The African woman is meant to be seen and not heard, used but not regarded, do before complain, etc. Not exhibiting these inferiority traits tantamounts to immorality on her part. What then would one term womanhood in the African context? Quintessential total submission to men.

In recent times, women have attempted in non-acrimonious ways to fight this inequality through authorship. Feminist issues are laid bare to society so that fair-minded people would help women in this battle, with the ultimate goal of triggering social change towards women positively.

Applying the radical feminist approach, this work tries to explore patriarchy (male dominance) as a cultural attribute which gives cause to female subordination as depicted in the books of Nawal El Sadaawi, Amma Darko and Buchi Emecheta earlier mentioned. The paper highlights the fact that discrimination against women is invariably discrimination against society in general as women form the cream of society itself. Needless to say therefore, the canker must be stopped as immediately as possible. A cursory look at the voices of the female writers in this study will help point out the harm of patriarchy as a cultural ingredient which perpetuates female suppression.

Nawal El Sadaawi is an Egyptian psychiatrist who doubles as a renowned writer. Writing in Arabic, she has over forty books, fiction non-fiction. These books are generally feminist inclined and they have impacted society, especially the Egyptian society greatly. Born in 1931 to peasant parent who lived in a village called Kafr Tahla in Egypt she had the rare opportunity of education which was an exception rather than the rule at that time. She gained popularity for being the voice of the voiceless Arab women in particular and women in patriarchal societies in general. "A woman at point Zero" and "The Hidden Face of Eve" are some of her notable writings. She also wrote "women and sex" (1969), although it was considered unacceptable to discuss sexuality in the Arab world. This book was banned by religious and political leadership at the time for its attack on the inhumane practice of Female General Mutilation (FGM). Her "A woman at Point Zero", talks of how an extremely patriarchal society can force a woman (Firdaus) into prostitution because the society does not provide for a place where women can work other than the kitchen. Despite the fact that Firdaus had some education which could earn her some white-colour job (high school certificate) she had to jump into prostitution since there was no job for women.

Buchi Emecheta was born in 1944 in Lagos, Nigeria. At seventeen, when her father died she was compelled to marry although her manifest brilliance won her a scholarship into the Methodist High School at the tender age of ten. She joined her husband in London in 1960 who was there for further studies. In London, Emecheta's husband battered her so much so that the bond of total submission to her husband broke and she stepped out of the matrimony. In London, she worked as a Social worker after working hard to earn a degree in sociology. She took care of the five children whom she had with her husband. Writing was later adopted by Emecheta as a complementary job to enable her cater for herself and family of five children. A large part of her early writing depicted her experiences in life. Among others she wrote "In the Ditch" (1972), "Second Class" "Citizen" (1974), "The Bride Price (1976)", "The Slave Girl (1997)" and "The Joys of Motherhood (1979)" which talks about the life of a young mother who tries her very best to dance to the tunes of a patriarchal society which finds the worth of a virtuous woman only in her ability to produce male children particularly.

Then comes the third feminist voice in this piece – Amma Darko. She was born in Tamale in the Northern region of Ghana in 1956 and graduated from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology with a Diploma Certificate in 1980 and later worked at the science and technology Centre of that university. She wrote, among other works, “beyond the Horizon (1995)”, “House maid (1997)”, “Faceless (2003)” and “Not without flowers (2007)”.

“Beyond the Horizon” talks about the life of a young lady called Mara, who is the protagonist in that story. Mara suffers severe abuse whilst married. This was orchestrated by the husband to satisfy his selfish personal interests. The husband lured her into even becoming a sex worker in a foreign land- Germany. She mostly writes on the themes of prostitution, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, wife battering, etcetera.

These selected three African female writers basically share opinion on feminism in their works as they all strive to lay bare the fact of gross discrimination against women in the African society. A myriad of considerations come together to embroil the subordination of women. As mentioned earlier, femininity, patriarchy and culture are the headers in this regard.

Culture as a phenomenon is what creates the subtle platform for the thriving of this canker of inequality. The term culture has failed to be pinned to a simple clear-cut definition just as many other sociological constructs due to its broad and intricate nature. People are thus left with the option of tuning its definition in the light of their socio-cultural inclinations as well as their individual academic disciplines. Margaret Mead (1953 :13) defines culture as, “the whole complex of traditions behaviour which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation”. Hofstede (1980:21-23) shares strongly with this view by Margaret Mead, he opines that, “culture is a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another passed on from generation to generation”. From the explanations above, it is obvious that man is the total product of his culture.

Spencer-Oatey (2008:3) defines culture as “... a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but does not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of “meaning” of other people’s behaviour “. This view is also held by Brown (2008). Brown equally postulates that culture refers to the language, beliefs, values and norms, customs, dress, diet, roles, knowledge and skills, and all the other things that people learn that make up the “way of life” of any society. The physical (tangible) and non-physical (intangible) aspects of life are both constructed in culture, therefore, culture reflects human life and identity. Culture is inherited through socialization and aspects of it favour one gender against another in some cases. Sometimes, people message culture in their favour to the disadvantage of a particular segment of society. Both negative and positive effects of culture are passed down to upcoming generations and whilst the positive effects ensure development of society, the negative effects stagnate societal development.

Culture portrays itself at various levels of society. Like marriage, family, occupation, education, religion, etcetera. These levels of society dwell on negative social constructs such as femininity, sexuality and patriarchal practices to place the women second to man in terms of status and humanness in general.

According to Burke, Stets and Pirog –Good (1988) as well as Spence (1985), femininity and masculinity or one’s gender is the degree to which members of a society see themselves as

masculine or feminine given the standard set for them by societal identity. This means culture spells out the definition of male and female and both sexes will naturally adopt these definitions even if they are inimical to their humanness. Since these definitions are social constructs, both sexes can always alter them where a male may rather see himself as feminine and vice versa. The concept of femininity is not bad in itself, only the African understanding of it is what paints it devilish. Some parts of the world, Asia and North America particularly, also hold such negative notion about this concept. They see feminism as synonymous with subordination, making these societies purely patriarchal.

Patriarchy traces its origins as far back as to the times of Jesus Christ. Aristotle argues that women evolved by default through a fall in temperature. He said then that women were the defective part of mankind (Weiz, 2003). This ideology has been upheld by past and present generations.

The definitions of the term “patriarchy” are varied. Mitchell, a feminist psychologist uses the term “patriarchy” to refer to kinship systems in which men exchange women (Mitchell, 1971). Walby (1990), also opines that patriarchy is a system of structures and practices in which men dominate, exploit, and oppress women. Hooks (1961) provides us with a definition of patriarchy as follows: “a political social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence”. (<http://laff-experiment.org> pp1).

Beavior (1974), argues that in the patriarchal society, men perceive women as entirely different from men and so treat women differently and negatively from men.

Patriarchy has become unfortunately one of the pillars of the contemporary world, especially the African world and this sets the tone for male superiority over female in today’s society. Patriarchy is the main challenge of feminists in society, therefore if it is eliminated, will facilitate the growth and development of women generally across the globe.

Males and females are different both in terms of structure and in in terms of function. The aggregation of these differences is what is noted as sexuality. Sexuality is underpinned by the following factors: psychological, genetic, social and biological factors. Sexuality may also stand for acts that are sexual, practices, behaviours, orientations or even desire, which is part of human nature. It deals with how identity, practices, desires are roped together as socially accepted or rejected but having different degrees in various societies (McDonewell & Pringle 1992).

According to Cobuild (2010), Female subordination is the practice of having the female being believe, accept and acknowledge that someone else is superior to her. The manifestation of female subordination stems from the fact that they generally lack access to resources and are unable to take part in decision making. Simply put, it may be lensed as the power or dominance relations between men and women. Female subordination takes various forms: discrimination, insult, verbal abuse, control, disregard, oppression, violence, exploitation, and misuse at various levels, e.g.: marriage, workplace and educational levels. This treatment automatically results in diminishing self-esteem on the part of women. In the three novels under study in this piece, the female subordination starts at the family level which is a reflection of the larger society.

This subordination is then birthed by the marriages the women go into. The husbands in these three novels were chosen by the fathers or guardians of the protagonists and they dare not refuse to accept their father's choices. The woman's consent is not considered and the marriages are arranged.

Emecheta in "The joys of motherhood" recounts how Agbadi, father of Nnu Ego (protagonist in the story), makes arrangements for her to marry another man after the first man, Amatokwu sends her away because she is perceived barren. Emecheta reports:

"Nnu Ego, my pet child, you know I have been
making preliminary arrangements for you to go to
another man?" (Pg. 37-38)

Ego's father decides who she marries without any consultation with her whatsoever. Again, Nnaife arranges for a man of his choice and forces the daughter to marry him. He threatens to kill the preferred man of Kehinde for marriage when Kehinde tries to choose her own husband. He placed more value on the bride price than the daughter given out in marriage. The daughter's comfort in the marriage is seen by him as a secondary consideration. As his daughter attempts defying his orders to marry a man after her own heart, he replies in fury and attacks his father-in-law to-be at his house, leaving him with cutlass injuries. Quoting him, Nnaife says:

"We don't do that in Ibuza. I will choose husbands
for my girls. They are too young to know their
own minds." (Pg. 237)

Nnaife's arguments are flawed in two clear ways: If the daughters are too young to choose their own husbands, why would he marry them off immature? And that women have low cognitive ability and so require others to reason for them. For the first argument, Nnaife and all patriarchal society men, perceive women and commodities rather than humans. For the second argument, a woman is seen as having lower social standing/status compared to men. Women are sub-human.

Sheikh Mahmoud, an elderly man, is arranged to marry the young Firdaus in El Sadaawi's "A woman at point zero". This marriage was contracted or arranged by her uncle who was her guardian. Sheikh Mahmoud is over sixty years old and one would have expected Firdaus's uncle who is a graduate of the Al-Azhar University in Egypt to give his niece the chance to make her own choice of husband. He accepts Firdaus's bride price as society demanded and Firdaus simply had to remain passive in the entire arrangements. Clearly, if given the choice, Firdaus would not choose an over sixty-year-old retired worker, widower and a miser. She tries to escape, being in captivity but that proved futile. One therefore sees how culture clearly provides the fertile grounds for suppression of the views of the woman in a patriarchal society. In the light of this, Therborn (2004:107) asserts:

"In a global perspective, one of the most powerful
expressions of patriarchy is paternal and/or parental
power over children's marriage."

In like manner, Amma Darko's "Beyond the Horizon" expatiates a similar picture of feminine subordination throughout the story. Mara's mother breaks the so-called "good news" to Mara concerning her marriage. Her way of delivering the news to Mara is in itself revealing:

“Your father has found a husband for you”, she gasped, “a good man”. (Pg. 4)

The husbands in all three novels are the father’s or guardians’ choices with no consultation of their daughters or wives. Their authority to do such emanates from the patriarchal nature of the society in which they operate. Paying the bride price makes some of the husbands feel they have “purchased” these women from their fathers and they consider the women as just one of the man’s properties, probably the most precious property at best. Unequivocally, Darko captures this as follows:

“So much that so I later learnt that drunk from palm wine and belching boisterously, he had proclaimed that he would gladly have given me away even for one goat. But like I said, Akobi’s father bought me off very handsomely. And while Akobi returned to the city to work, the customs and traditional rites were got over and done on a Friday evening, arriving in Naka on Saturday and left for the city on the same Saturday with me as his wife and property!” (Pg. 7)

One easily quite understands the way Akobi handles Mara, his better half, as a “bought commodity”. By the rules of a patriarchal society, she is expected to be submissive and obedient to her husband, the hallmark of a “good wife” (Weiz, 2003). She accepts the fact that she is a property to her husband since she wanted to be seen as a good wife. Her father deepens the commoditiveness of the woman as he charges the bride price for his daughter’s based on how much a prospective husband could offer. The highest bidder carries the day. This is evident in the excerpt below:

“But father, it appeared, had a different formula for choosing or accepting husbands for his daughters, which took more into consideration the number of cows coming as the bride price than the character of the man.” (Pg.4)

The situation like this leaves a picture of gloom about the woman as she is seen as commodity to be sold to the highest bidder, regardless of her personal feelings. She can only be freed from the marriage if the father or guardian agrees to pay all the dowry, which they (fathers and guardians) seldom do. In “The Joys of Motherhood”, Nnu Ego’s dowry was refunded by her father before she could break off from marrying Amatokwu. Nnu Ego’s father, Agbadi was capable and so paid his daughter’s bride price back to her husband with interest (a goat) to set his daughter free. Agbadi later gave her out to another man, Nnaife, for about the same bride price. The women are thus exchanged by men as if they were physical properties. In the case of Mara in “Beyond the Horizon”, she makes it clear that her father could not pay back the dowry and so she was left with the only bitter option of having to endure the manhandling’s of Akobi, her husband. Mara speaks:

“Not only will I not be welcomed back into the family, but father would never be able to afford to refund my dowry, much of it he’d already squandered. (Pg. 9)

Mara is hence under “captivity” as her husband treats her how he likes.

Seeing male children as superior over female ones is yet another patriarchal attribute exhibited in Emecheta’s “The Joys of Motherhood” A woman’s value and image is seen as enhanced if

she produces male children. See what a chief from Ibuza village says of Nnu Ego in compliment regarding her giving birth to only male children:

“You are a mother of men, children that made him into a man. If Adaku dies today, her people, not her husband’s will come for her body. It is not so with you.” (Pg.159)

This means that until Adaku produces sons for Nnaife, she is not seen to be part of Nnaife’s family. Adaku is thus in a desperate position as she prays to meet this daunting demand of producing male children. It is therefore no surprise that Nnu Ego attempts to commit suicide when she loses her first son. Similarly, Firdaus’s father is comfortable losing his female child is alarmed at losing a son. Firdaus fondly remembers how her father vented his anger at her mother when they lost a son. El-Saadawi writes:

“When one of his female children died, my father would eat his supper, my mother would wash his legs and then he would go to sleep, just as he did every night. When the child that died was a boy, he would beat my mother, then have his supper and lie down to sleep. (Pg.17)

It goes without say that she places more value on the male human than the female human, right from conception or birth.

Opposed to this, is Akobi as portrayed in Darko’s “Beyond the Horizon”. He does not declare his preference for whether male or female children but rather bats the wife each time she gets pregnant as if she caused the pregnancy. Akobi’s behaviour is in sharp contrast with typical African practice. It gives room for the assertion that he married Mara with pre-determined intention of giving her out for prostitution. Akobi probably believes that giving birth may compromise the shine of Mara for the prostitution job he intends for her in the near future.

We sense female discrimination again as the novels seek assiduously to point out the fact that the woman’s place is mainly the kitchen and not any other job. Education is the preserve of the male. Females are used to supplement family in counts through menial jobs like hawking, which still persists today in some settings. Nnu Ego outlines this in her admonishing of her female offspring:

“But you are girls! They are boys. You have to sell to put them in a good position in life so that they will be able to look after the family.” (Pg. 176)

Nnu Ego teaches her female children to work hard just to support their male counterparts’ education. She spells out the career of the female child as follows to her female children:

“A girl needs to master a trade to help her in later life” (Pg. 180)

On the other hand, the boys are encouraged to learn hard to become people of substance in future as if the girls were none-humans and so needed no good “positions in life”. In the light of this, Firdaus’s case is pathetic as she has the rare opportunity of accessing secondary education. She gets distinction upon graduation and hopes to be employ or further her education but her society truncated her ambitions in life as it had no place for educated women at the time. Under the circumstances, the uncle found only one best option-marrying her off as her presence in the uncle’s home is highly unwelcomed. As a child, Firdaus hopes to attend Al-

Azhar University one day. But she realizes later that universities in her society were meant only for men. Sad indeed, in a dialogue between Firdaus and her uncle, her uncle questions her and she replies thus:

“What will you do in Cairo Firdaus? I will go to El-Azhar and study like you. Then he would laugh and explain that El-Azhar was only for men”. (Pg.14-15)

Sadly, her dream is greeted with teasing and laughter. Gender biasness is at peak play here. She reads about history and politics and realizes that women have not been part of politics at the time, yet she has the intention to crush this myth by being a politician. Regarding this feeling in her, she says:

“I knew that women did not become Heads of State, but I felt...” (Pg. 25)

This indicates how Firdaus has come to understand her society regarding who a woman is – sub-humans.

In Africa, polygamy is a matter of prestige. In polygamy, one can see the subordination of the female once more as women are seen as similar to children who can be gathered and controlled by a single man. In Buchi Emecheta’s “The Joys of motherhood,” we see Agbadi and Amatokwu the polygamists. Nnaife is one too. Agbadi has many wives but still chases after Ona as they he was yet to marry his first wife. Amatokwu tries to get more children and marries his second wife saying:

“I cannot fail my people,” he tells Nnu Ego.

Nnu Ego is manhandled as the new wife comes in. Nnaife also gets a second wife in keeping with Igbo culture and tradition. He inherits his late bothers’ wives. As the women increased in number, they naturally begin to fight for the attention of their single dictatorial “master,” their husband. This further reinforces the authority of the authority of the man to be like “a god” or “master” over them.

Will Westernization change patriarchal society of men? No, Akobi, in spite of staying overseas for some time and marrying a white lady, Gitty, still kept Mara as wife. Mara is not surprised that Akobi tells her he has married a second wife but her worry is whether he has informed her family back home about this. This they consider a sign of respect to the in-laws. Akobi, however retorts:

“Polygamy here is not like polygamy at home. Here, polygamy is a crime-they call bigamy. And I can go to prison for it, you understand? (Pg. 79)

The issue underscored is that polygamy is one of the numerous avenues by which men in Africa subordinate women and that is why the western world sees it as criminal.

Another cultural avenue by which the female in Africa is subjugated is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). As the genitals of the woman are removed, the belief is that it reduces the sexual pleasures of the woman. They do this to bring the sexuality of the woman under control.

Just when Firdaus’s mother realized her daughter was becoming conscious of her sexuality, she quickly brings a woman to perform the mutilation of her genitalia. She says:

“Then she brought a woman who was carrying a small knife or maybe a razor blade. They cut off a piece of flesh from between by thighs. (Pg. 12)

FGM is heavily entrenched in African culture and it falls within the ambit of the duties of women. This lends credence to why Firdaus’s mother chooses to invite a woman over a man to perform this excruciating act on her beloved daughter all in the name of tradition. In Emecheta’s “The Joys of Motherhood”, it is not explicit how Female Genital Mutilation helps in the manifestation of female subordination but it is a well-established knowledge that FGM is part and parcel of the indigenous culture of the Igbo people of Nigerian. One may therefore hazard the guess that Nnu Ego is probably also a victim of FGM just like Firdaus.

Furthermore, in Africa, men have the overwhelming desire to continue to dominate women in all issues at all times. Done openly and under cover, the dominance of males has the backing of society as a whole. El-Sadaawi makes this evident as we see Firdaus’s uncle’s wife addressing her husband as “Your holiness”. Sheikh Mahmoud supervises Firdaus even as she eats. Amatokwu, after marrying his second wife begins to go after Nnu Ego lustfully even on the farm. Mara may be described as worse off in this regard un “Beyond the Horizon”. Her husband’s dominance over her greatly compromised her wifehood. Her nurturing however, taught her to behave as much as she declares:

“...after all, mother had taught me that a wife was there for a man for one thing and that was to ensure his well-being, which included...”. (Pg. 13).

She also adds: “... obey and worship your husband ...”.

We again see Sheikh Mahmoud deciding the quantity of food Firdaus should consume. She chooses between obedience and battering. Expecting to find consolation from her uncle as runs to her uncle’s house, her uncle disupports her when he says”

“A virtuous woman was not supposed to complain about her husband. Her duty is perfect obedience”. (Pg. 46-47).

Men are generally placed in higher positions over women in these instances as the women play second to them. The men get away with anything but not the women as Amma writes:

“Tradition demands that the wife respects, obeys and worships her husband...”. (Pg. 13).

Similarly, Mara recounts her childhood memories of how her father is worshipped:

“I saw my mother worship my father daily...” (Pg. 14).

Yet another worrying trend in Africa patriarchal societies is how men check and abuse the sexuality of women. Whether as wives or prostitutes, the women’s sexuality in Africa is trampled upon. She must give “it” up anytime the man demands but she dares not demand it from the man if he is not ready for it. Women are perceived as sex toys. We witness Agbadi pouncing on Ona even as she was still nursing a wound inflicted on her by Agbadi. But she dares not complain. Sheikh Mahmoud and Firdaus’s uncle dominate their wives in terms of sex. Firdaus’s uncle tells his wife:

“You woman, you...What sin and what prophet? I’m your husband and you’re my wife.” (Pg. 40).

Firdausi's uncle retorts this way when his wife shows disinterest in having a sexual affair. He finally sleeps with her against her will. Another instance of sexual abuse is how Bayoumi and his friends refuse to seek Firdausi's permission before taking her to bed. She was raped virtually, each time they felt like having sex. Can Firdausi's protector Shareefah, protect herself from the abuse of a patriarchal police officer Fawzy. No. Shareefah is equally a victim and cannot help another victim out (Firdaus). Bayoumi, who's not being responsible enough in the pledges he makes to Firdaus, ends up rather putting fear into the ignorant girl as he interrogates her amidst a slap:

"How dare you raise your voice when you're speaking to me, you walker, you low woman?" (Pg. 52).

In typical patriarchal African societies, women are not supposed to speak whilst their men were addressing them. But Firdaus interrupted in Bayoumi's talk and this was the reply. He has sex with her on the mattress but commands her to sleep on the ground after the act. He handles her sexually as if he is dealing with an animal but she dares not complain.

Akobi withdraws his manhood and discharges on his wife's body to avoid getting her pregnant. No respect for the sexuality of the wife.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, it is abundantly clear from the above discussion and analysis that subordination of the female is widely explored by female African writers. Women as sex toys, polygamy, and Female Genital Mutilation are among many other traditional tenets that champion female subordination in patriarchal societies. Feminist writers, especially, female African writers, skilfully project the voice of the voiceless in their novels by clearly portraying the female characters who are usually the protagonists, as heavily subjugated against by their male counterparts. This is made plain by all three novels under study in this work. Undoubtedly, the subordination of women does no good to women in particular and society at large. Hence, this socio-cultural construct should be kept at bay if not eradicated intoto.

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