

WOMEN STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL AND THE CRISES OF CHANGE IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *DESTINATION BIAFRA*

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Abstract

Feminist scholars agitate for gender equality, equity and fairness within the socio-political space of the world. The movement started as a white middle class women association in Europe and America growing to include scholars who developed sister theories peculiar to other cultures and regions of the world including Black America and Africa. This paper examines Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* and adopts Womanism to study the author's characterisation of women. The paper also employs Afolabi's perception of this theory to examine women portrayed in the struggle of the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 in the text. The paper discovers that the author, a product of colonialism, empowers women against the humiliation, oppression, injustice, inequality and domination of man, and rejects the separation of human qualities on the basis of gender. The author examines women who defy the stereotype of tradition, are aggressive, radical, revolutionary, fight in wars, form militia groups, and perform duties generally done by men. Women in the text defy marriage tenets to take up leadership roles to become symbols of justice and equity. It is the submission of this work that Emecheta reverses the tendency by some male writers to depict the woman as a being to be seen and not heard. As such, she raises the consciousness of the African woman to be liberal, resilient, focused, assertive and purposeful even in the face of troubles, hardship, revolution and war.

Introduction

The relationship between art and society and the notion that every society gets the art it deserves has long been corroborated by writers and critics such as Sanchez, Ngugi, Nnolim, Palmer, Chiweizu et al., and so on. In particular, Palmer observes that, "Literature generally evolves out of a people's historical and cultural experience" (2), suggesting further that the writer, a product of a historical process, is identified with a particular class, race, and nation. What he/she does is, therefore, a reflection of the image of the society he/she is a part of.

In Africa, the twin issues of slave trade and colonialism left significant historical and cultural effects on the economic, political, and social consciousness of the people. The by-product of these significant events in the history of Africa serves as robust reservoir from which modern literary impetus has continually thrived. During the colonial onslaught in Africa, different foreign policies were adopted which served the interests of the powerful colonial authorities, in most cases at the expense of the powerless colonised natives. For example, the French policy of assimilation required Africans to reject their native identity and speak, think, dress and act like the French – in short, to be French in everything but skin colour. It was deemed necessary by the French colonialists that Africans imbibe and live colonial ideology so that they were accorded French citizenship. Lambert, who cites Senegal's Four Communes of Goree, Dakar, Rufisque and Saint-Louis as examples of the policy of assimilation in practice in the colonies substantiates further that, "the purpose of the theory of assimilation was to turn African natives into "French" men and by educating them in the language of French culture and hence become French citizens or equals" (241).

However, most of these unpopular colonial policies were counter-productive and were rejected totally by the natives. This is evidenced in some of the popular uprisings of the time including the Mau Mau revolution (1952-56) to reclaim native lands occupied by white settlers in Kenya; the struggle for emancipation by the Tanganyikan African Association which was later changed to Tanganyikan African National Union in 1953 in former Tanganyika now Tanzania; the Aba Women Uprising of 1929 against the British policy of Indirect Rule in the South of Nigeria which mandated women to pay taxes; and the Dakar-Niger Railroad Revolution of 1947 and 1948, to state just a few. In particular, the Dakar-Niger railroad revolution was symbolic for being the "struggle of a people for equality and for the right to be treated as decent human

beings” (Palmer 188). The success of the strike marked a point of change in the anti-colonial struggle against racial and right questions.

Similarly, the manner of British administration in Nigeria using the policy of indirect rule has been identified as the remote reason for the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 to 1970. The immediate reasons for the Civil War were lack of trust, and confidence, rivalry and external influence in the internal polity of Nigeria. The Civil War became the first milestone in the history of the political development of the country and provided a major point in the evolution of a national consciousness in Nigeria.

Several literary works have been produced on the Nigerian Civil War, particularly Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra* which depicts the suffering, horror, injustice, corruption, and immorality of the time. This concurs with Ker’s submission that in the crises of society, “the writer cannot separate himself from the citizens, for art is in itself a force for violence and an occasional instrument of terror, one of its functions being to combat fear by the relation of beauty” (41).

Womanism

Over the years, much research work has been done on feminism both as a theory and as a tool of literary analysis. In most works produced by proponents of feminism, however, one notes a projection of women constantly struggling to escape from the claws of patriarchy to be able to assert their rights and freedom. In addition to this, there is the sarcastic depiction in some of the works, scenes where the woman undergoes series of psychological, emotional, and physical tortures in the hands of men in order to bring to the fore the wickedness of the latter. A symbiotic portrayal of the relationship between the two genders, or a portrayal of the woman as an integral part of the community whose objective voice should be heard and obeyed is important. In

addition to this is the observation that most feminist writers dwell on the traditional conception of feminism as a tool to 'fight' men. By this, we mean that most feminist writers fail to objectify the need for, or recognise any form of collaborative effort by the two genders for mutual coexistence where it can exist. Sarki observes that although Womanism – Black American and African adaptation of feminism – tilts towards this direction, that is, the striving for a harmonious relationship where the two genders are not only recognised in the society, but also mutually accorded their rightful places, there is still a limit to which this is done and achieved in texts to which the brand of feminism is applied (Sarki 4).

This paper, therefore, argues that Emecheta is an exception to the general projection of women as her portrayal of female characters in *Destination Biafra* show. The author focuses on the Nigerian Civil War which pitched Nigeria against the secessionist Biafra between 1967 and 1970. This article focuses on the author's projection of female characters in the portrayal of the historical event. By this process, the study intends to extend the discussion on the role of women in society beyond the kitchen or purely the home front to the revolution and war front. One would equally argue that in the circumstances of revolution and war such as this, the contributions of individuals (men, women, and children) in the society are important. As exemplified in this text, women do not only complement men, but play leading and more daring roles in order to collectively deal with, and if possible, defeat the common 'enemy.'

The article argues further that the woman, other than engaging in the 'war' of keeping the home front by providing food for the family while the man is engaged in the revolution or fight in war front, also takes up arms, but not to fight the man in order to liberate or assert her rights and privileges, but to collaborate with him to keep intact the sanctity and ideals of society which ought to be beneficial to both of them. Therefore, the woman, by so doing, does not seek equality

with the man but sees herself as already an equal of the man in terms of what both of them can contribute to the welfare of the society. Besides, she sees both herself and the man as potential casualties in the circumstances of any form of uprising such as this.

For the above to be achieved, Womanism is employed because it is associated with the interest of black women in the struggle for liberation, and in fact at its inception was tagged Black Feminism (Emmagunde n.pg.). This does not imply that black feminists in Africa and the world over do not adhere to other types of feminism, but culturally speaking, Womanism accommodates the interests of black women better. The model derives from Walker, a spokesperson for Black feminism, who refuses to be associated with traditional feminist criticism and with the term 'feminism' itself. She prefers to be called a "womanist" (Bressler 152-153). For her, to be a 'womanist' implies "having or expressing a belief in or respect for women and their talents and abilities beyond the boundaries of race and class; exhibiting a feminism that is inclusive especially of Black [American] culture" (Emmagunde n.pg.). A womanist to Walker

is a woman who loves women and appreciates women's culture and power as something that is incorporated into the world as a whole. Womanism addresses the racist and classist aspects of white feminism and actively opposes separatist ideologies. It includes the word "man", recognizing that Black men are an integral part of Black women's lives as their children, lovers and family members. Womanism accounts for the ways in which black women support and empower black men, and serves as a tool for understanding the Black woman's relationship to men as different from the white woman's. It seeks to acknowledge and praise the sexual power of Black women while recognizing a history of sexual violence (qtd in. Emmagunde n.pg.).

In Africa, proponents of Womanism such as Okoye, Alkali, Ovbiagele, Ogunyemi and Afolabi upheld its view within the notion that African societies do not accept lesbianism, homosexuality and other aspects of Western cultures which White feminists and feminism accommodate. As succinctly espoused by Ogunyemi,

Womanism is black-centered, it is accommodationist. It believes in the freedom and independence of woman, like feminism [but] unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black men and black women and black children, and will see that men will change from their sexist stand.... This ideological position explains why women writers do not end their plots with feminist victories (60-67).

This view adds to Umeh's that in a womanist novel, "whereas feminist plots end with the separation of man and woman... womanist novels are committed to the survival and unity of males and females" (qtd. in Nnolim 117).

Afolabi adds his voice in explaining the attitudes of feminists (womanists) in Africa. According to him, "By the time the doctrine became popular in Africa, it had undergone a lot of metamorphosis and assumed variegated forms and nomenclatures – Feminism, Womanism, Motherism, Sexism, battle of sexes¹etc.". He, therefore, hypothesised three sub-groups of African womanists or feminists based on their attitudes: the 'Womb-Menists' - those who, according to him, are conservatives; the 'We-Menists' - those that are enthusiastic; and the 'Woe-Menists' - those that are aggressive. We consider the second category, the 'We-Menists' to be fitting for our analysis in this work.

The women that constitute this group in Africa, according to Afolabi, are those who believe that each sex has its own strengths and weaknesses but that in the final analysis, "women are equal to men and usually better... they try to assume manly attitudes (forcefulness, assertiveness, hiding of emotional weakness, etc.) with dignity to prove that what a man can do, a woman can do better" (127). He, therefore, bequeaths the future glory of Nigerian, or rather, African women to the We-Menists.

Revolutionary Women in search of Survival in *Destination Biafra*: Examples of Debbie,

Uzoma and Babara

Emecheta presents many revolutionary women in *Destination Biafra*. Debbie, Uzoma and Babara are good examples of such women.

Debbie is presented as a violent, agitative, daring and confrontational character in the face of daunting injustice. Also, she is not deterred in her quest to fight for the cause of justice even when it involves hunger, rape and harassment by soldiers. Furthermore, Debbie is neither in the mood to be associated with the idea of marriage nor child breeding. And for her, being weak as a woman is unacceptable. These qualities of Debbie easily lend credence to Chukwuma's views of Emecheta on the projection of women in her writings. The critic draws a distinction between what Emecheta does and what Achebe, Ekwensi and Amadi do with women in their texts. According to the critic, whereas these male writers project the woman as "...rural, back-house, timid, subservient, lackluster"..., Emecheta has replaced these with a modern counterpart who is a "...full-rounded human being, rotational, individualistic and assertive, fighting for, claiming and keeping her own" (2).

Debbie, as the heroine of *Destination Biafra*, is an elite who appears to be the writer of the war story she participates in. Machiko recognises this much about Debbie in his words:

The novel is composed of two parts. The first part describes the dirty state politics leading to the war, which Debbie takes part in, first in the 'masculine' role of the soldier for Federal Nigeria, and then in the 'feminine' role of a secret peacemaker dispatched to Biafra. The second part narrates the clandestine journey Debbie risks to Biafra disguised as a fugitive (63).

Debbie becomes determined to help rebuild the nation as "a woman of Africa" (Emecheta 258) after experiencing 'life and death with fellow refugee women' and having learned 'their philosophy of survival'. An Oxford educated woman, Debbie feels the urge to represent and find out the position of the African woman in a male-centred political power game after

independence in Nigeria. Thus, while many among the men, including her father, see her as fitting for a parliamentarian, a secretary, or 'a lady Prime Minister' (45), little do they know what Debbie holds dear to her heart. With her academic and elitist family history and her determination to redefine her position as a woman, Debbie joins the army to fight and kill like any other citizen of the land. Her quest to join the army is not to play the traditional role a woman would play in such circumstances, that is, as a cook, a nurse or any other secondary role, but to be like the men, to give commands, have authority, and if possible torture others and respect all rules of war as a man would do. In a conversation with Alan, Debbie tells of her role in the army:

When soldiers were needed to go and make surprise arrest of all Igbo soldiers at Ikeja barracks...I jumped at the opportunity....Oh, Alan, you should have seen the eyes of those men, whose only crime was that they were Igbos. No one told me they were going to be killed, though I admit that I did enjoy making those men obey me, Alan. Now ... they are all dead, and I was the one who arrested them. I put them in a position where they could not lift a finger to defend themselves (87).

However, when Debbie realises that her quest for gender equality may not find fulfilment in her imitation of men in the politics of the war, she decides to sue for peace. In this role, she embarks on a secret journey to Biafra to dissuade Abosi from seceding. Although Debbie recognises the importance of this mission to Biafra, she is sceptical about her safety, bearing in mind her role in the killings of the Igbo soldiers. She betrays this in her statement: "I would like to stay in the army and go to the East, but I'd be a wanted person for the part I played in the deaths of those men" (88).

Debbie's feminine role as a peacemaker is synonymous with the thinking of the male leaders of the war that she is mobilised 'not only as peace negotiator but also as a sexual ploy'. The thinking is that Abosi would have married her if Alan were not dating her. Although Debbie is a woman and such a task could be onerous, Momoh observes that "...that should *not* be a handicap. It might help: *if she* should use *her* feminine charms to break that icy reserve of his *Abosi* (118). Alan thinks along the same line with Momoh, and implores Debbie to take advantage of the friendship between her parents and those of Abosi as well as Abosi's adoration for her to cajole him not to secede. Although Debbie knows that she could use her minor rank to her own advantage, including making love to Alan 'on the bare sand' as a way to get information from him, she only sarcastically makes the following comment: "You men make all this mess and then call on us women to clear it up" (110), in response to Alan who insists that she must go to the East to remind Abosi that "...a quarter of a nation cannot fight the other three-quarters and win..." (109).

Although Debbie embarks on this 'delicate mission' with the aim of saving her fatherland, it soon turns out the opposite as her mission is misunderstood by armed soldiers from the Federal Republic. The soldiers, who like her work for the Federal Republic, see her as a war treasure. She says, 'I am a Nigerian soldier, not a Biafran. As far as I am concerned, Nigeria is still one.' The leader waddled up to her and mimicked her voice: "I am a Nigerian soldier." "His laughter was like the roaring of many fierce lions" (125). However, her proud identity does not solve the problem as she and the women with her are threatened, raped and battered while her gun, the symbol of her participation in the war, is seized. In spite of this Debbie shows resilience and threatens to shoot the soldiers: "I will shoot, and shoot to kill, if you don't let us alone...And don't think I am not going to report this" (125).

After these incidents, Debbie comes to the realization of her status as a woman in a male-dominated war. She realises that like her torn uniform, her dream to contribute in a war dominated by men is also shattered. With the encounter with the male soldiers she is deprived of her social identities in what seems to her to be the battle of the sexes. She, however, takes consolation in the fact that, “Well, it was war, and like all wars it had no respect for anybody” (157). After all, her mother, who like her was also raped, persuades her to accept what happens to her as the fate of every woman when she says, “It’s the fate of all women, Debbie, my daughter. Think yourself lucky, that you were saved. Think what would have happened if you had died” (150). With her belief and the consolation from the mother, Debbie refuses to relent in her mission to Biafra, much to the mother’s dissatisfaction, who tries to dissuade Debbie. Adamant, Debbie leaves the mother who has no choice but to bare her mind:

I thank God I have those two boys. This child, born a girl, wants to be a man, and wants the men to know she wants to be like them, and still retain her womanhood...I don’t know, I don’t know. Most sensible men know our power, so why go to all this trouble to tell them what they know already? (154).

Debbie is not deterred by her mother’s concern about her well-being. She, therefore, sets out to continue her journey. On this new journey, Debbie and her fellow refugees encounter yet another troop of Nigerian soldiers led by Salihu Lawal, someone Debbie had met before. Lawal has a philosophy that pitches him against African women who have acquired western education as a tool to challenge men. Such women to him must be reminded of their traditional status to obey African men. One way of doing so is by raping such women. Lawal rapes Debbie. His threats before doing so, points to the complex he has about women like Debbie. He threatens her: “I am going to show you that you are nothing but a woman, an ordinary woman” (167). As Debbie

offers no resistance, Lawal does not get the satisfaction he desires; he curses, slaps and describes her as "...dry as the desert and as unappetizing as a great-great-grandmother" (167). Feeling humiliated, Debbie slaps Lawal back, "...and he fell back on the bunk bed, staring at her. He was dumfounded. He was being confronted by a new kind of woman he could not understand it" (167).

As the journey progresses, more women become widows as their husbands are killed each day on the way. These women are left with the responsibility of raising children. Debbie assists in doing this but with much difficulty since she has not "...backed a child in her life before (181)". Her difficulty in strapping a child to her back generates much attention leading to a Nigerian soldier's remark: "'What type of women is Africa producing?' " (181). Although Debbie objects to the idea of marriage, her belief in the importance of children within the African setting is made known in her statement that "...a child *in Africa* was the child of the community rather than just of the biological parents" (202). It is not surprising then, that the death of the child 'Biafra', whose mother dies as soon as it is born, and who Debbie adopts, leaves the entire refugees desolate and confused. In the midst of this confusion, Dorothy, who has been feeding him wonders if there is still hope for the survival of the state of Biafra:

Is our land Biafra going to die like this baby before it is given time to live at all?...He only lived for a few days! He only lived for a few days! I think the death of this child is symbolic. This is how our Biafra is going to fall. I feel it in my bones (202).

Debbie, in her usual manner, pacifies this woman and reassures her that, "It's always like this in great wars. Today victory is on one side, tomorrow on the other side" (202).

The experience of Debbie is built on her journey to Biafra. She becomes wiser by the events and demands of the moment. She finds solutions to whatever problems she or the other women encounter. For instance, her encounter with the canoe man whom she gives out her 'gold-stud earrings' to have her way confirms to her that both Biafra and Nigeria are the same. She says of this to Mrs. Madako:

'To think that all this ballyhoo started because people thought our politicians were corrupt and accused of taking bribes. An ideal place where righteousness would rule, where there would be no bribery, was to be created, and that place would be Biafra...And now even the canoe man asks for a dash...When you see things like this, you don't know what to believe anymore' (223).

Debbie keeps a diary where she scribbles events of the war, especially the daily experiences of her journey to Biafra. Through the diary she reveals that her mission to Biafra is taken for granted basically because she is a woman. This is affirmed in her reaction to Abosi who appears to dismiss her mission to Biafra in even more derogatory terms. Reacting to his reference of her as "little you", Debbie says:

"I am me. Debbi, the daughter of Ogedengbe. Tell me, if I were a man, a man born almost thirty years ago, a graduate of politics, sociology and philosophy from Oxford, England, would you have dismissed my mission?" (227).

Her statement sharpens the point she makes on the relationship between her gender and her mission to Biafra. This statement comes after Debbie has ignored the earlier comment by the soldiers on guard to the apartment of Abosi who simply feel "...she's only a woman. *And* what harm can she do...?" (226).

Abosi soon becomes convinced of her (Debbie) mission and she takes advantage of this to seek permission to go to London on yet another mission but this time to represent the interest of Biafra. She wants to go to Britain "...and stir the consciences of people over there...show them pictures of dying children, mutilated bodies and bloated corpses..." as well as tell the world that Abosi was not "...fighting only over oil, but...*also for the right to live*" (228, My emphases). Such observations about Debbie are wrong considering what she has passed through for the Federal Republic and what she would do for Biafra. In London, Debbie addresses journalists, confesses to her been raped without remorse, and tells the stories of the gory nature of the war and so on.

Back at home, she discovers the insincerity of Abosi whom she feels has betrayed her and the people of Biafra and is attempting to escape. She fumes at this, remembering "...the pitiful baby Biafra who stretched and died on her back" (224) as well as all the incidents the refugees passed through as much as the deaths recorded. Debbie laments the development; "To be so betrayed, by the very symbol of Biafra" (223-4) is unacceptable to her:

Abosi must not escape! He must not be allowed to escape and leave all the believers of his dream to face Lawal...Like a good captain, Abosi should die honourably defending his ship...No man, not even Abosi, was going to make a fool of her, a fool of all those unfortunate mothers who had lost their sons, the hopes of their families (244).

With this conviction in mind, Debbie dares to confront Abosi and stops him from escaping. She attempts to do so with the use of explosives, a situation that could have claimed her own life. At the end she blames all the sorrows of Africa on Alan, a symbol of Western dominance and

whom she simply regards as her male concubine. She feels ashamed not of having been raped but of Abosi betraying Biafra and its hopes.

Uzoma Madako is yet another character among the firebrand women in *Destination Biafra*. Unlike Penda and Debbie, Uzoma is married just like Mame Sofi but she loses her husband in the course of the war, an incident that teaches her to resist injustice and to protect children and women. Uzoma is not educated like Debbie. She wonders why Debbie chooses the difficult path in spite of her privileged class. She says to Debbie, ““You over-educated people...I don’t understand...why you chose to be with us’” (182).

With this attitude, Uzoma counsels other women in the course of their journey from Benin to Biafra. She becomes an embodiment of philosophy and wisdom, especially at trying moments. For instance, after the death of baby Biafra and following Dorothy’s lamentations, Uzoma rebuffs her almost in an angry tone saying, ““Shame on you, woman. Shaaaame!’... ‘What type of Igbo woman are you? Which bush community did you come from? What unlucky woman raised you as a daughter?’” (203). She reminds Dorothy of the limited role men have in raising children: ““Since when have men helped us look after children?’” (203) For Uzoma, raising children is an activity done by the older generation in the home.

Uzoma serves as a link between the old and new generations and plays this role much to the satisfaction of the women around her. She believes in the traditional philosophy that, ““We have children to look after. Just like our grandmothers. They looked after our parents who had us” (203). And with this attitude, Uzoma, together with Debbie, leads and encourages other women on the journey. In fact, Debbie recognises the role of this woman and others in her rhetorical

question: “When the history of Biafra will be written, would the part played by me and women like Babs, Uzoma and the nuns in Biafra be mentioned at all?” (185).

Uzoma did not give up in the face of hardship. She demonstrates this public good by making sure that other than her own children, the children of other women are well attended to in times of need. For instance during incidents of shooting or pandemonium, Uzoma shows bravery. In one, she grabs the baby nearest to her. In another, she wakes everybody, then grabs her “...youngest and pulled the youngest boy of the parentless family towards her” (199) and leads the way into the bush.

In addition to the above, the text portrays Uzoma as inspiring. She encourages Debbie on her expeditions on behalf of the women, believing she will never be killed because of her good intentions. She, like Debbie, represents the true woman of Africa who holds dear the ethics of family bonding and communal traditions. Her disposition to children and frail women in the course of the thorny journey from Benin to the heart of Biafra endears her to Debbie. For this, Debbie is convinced that Uzoma, though not educated in the Western standard, is schooled in the African tradition and communal spirit.

Another interesting character in this category is Babara Teteku. Though relatively passive in the course of the narration; her contributions to the development of the plot of the novel are vital. Babara and Debbie have some things in common. In the first instance, the duo are childhood friends; second, they both come from Itsekiri (a people and their language in the South of Nigeria) implying they are not from the three major languages of Nigeria; third, they both went to Oxford and are therefore vastly educated; fourth, they come from very wealthy homes, and finally, they opt out of their marriages for the army to advance the cause of justice.

Babara's sterling qualities, her bravery and education endear her easily to the rank and file of the army and they appoint her to supervise female recruits at Abeokuta. However, Babara's decision to join the army does not go well with her parents. Her mother makes this clear when she says, "I wish that girl hadn't gone to England to learn all this talk of women behaving like men' " (117).

But Babara, like Debbie, does not feel that, "...the expensive education they had been given was just to prepare them for life with the first dull rich Nigerian man who came along" (117). For her, one only gets to breed and bleed till menopause once one is married. Besides, marriage is not a necessity at the moment since "...their country was in trouble and they should help" (117).

Conclusion

The concerns of feminism are many. Some of these concerns are feminism is the rejection of the separation of human qualities into two categories.– one for men and one for women. Another concern is placing value on the autonomy of women as individuals and as a group who are developing their own political, social, economic and personal destinies. Valuing the act of being women, as much as being strong, capable, intelligent and successful ethical human beings, is also a concern of feminism. Also, a realisation that attitudes in regarding women in many cultures are false and wrongheaded, based on myths, ignorance and fear is important to feminism. The establishment of the fact that the rights of women as humans such as voting, earning a substantive living commensurate with their work, freedom to determine whether to bear children etc. and how these have been denied for centuries is an issue for feminism; along with the realisation of the strength of women in the face of oppression and the optimism of the possibilities of a change. These concerns have been approached in various ways which have led

to the growth of continental as well as various types of feminisms such as Womanism among others.

The author studied in this work describes the role of women in society and shows that it goes beyond the kitchen or purely home front to the war and revolution fronts. The contributions of individuals in keeping the ethos of society are to this writer beyond gender barrier. As exemplified in this text, women complement men and also play leading and daring roles in defeating the ‘enemy’ of society and also defending the same society.

Emecheta in *Destination Biafra* demonstrates the need to conquer oppression through persistence, collective will and solidarity. The author depicts women who are violent, confrontational, agitative, educated (formally and informally) and who provide defence and means of livelihood for others in difficult times. The author has been able to make “men” of women who successfully take over the feeding of their families and as well as confront difficult situations including rape and massacre in the course of their metamorphosis. Through her work, Emecheta projects fearless, enthusiastic, dignified, assertive and aggressive women who believe that each sex has its strengths and weaknesses. Particularly, the work is informed by the theory of Womanism which suggests the need for collaboration between men and women rather than one usurping the rights of the other. The author is firm in the belief that “if the times were bringing forth a new breed of men, they were also bringing forth a new breed of women” (Ousmane 34).

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