

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN*

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Abstract

The present article enlightens the concept of "Identity Negotiation" through Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. In fact, Identity Negotiation in *Second Class Citizen* refers to the processes by which male and female characters reach a kind of agreements regarding "who is who" in their relationships. The aim of identity negotiation is to provide the interpersonal "glue" that favors their interactions in order to set up opportunities for both: men and women in a cooperative struggle that could help the both to see the "human face" of their collaboration beyond the broad stereotypic group membership identity labels.

Key words: Identity negotiation- Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) - relationship – interactions - womanism - female identity.

Résumé

Cet article explicite le concept de « négociation d'identité » à travers *Second Class Citizen* de Buchi Emecheta. En effet, la négociation d'identité fait référence aux processus par lesquels les hommes et les femmes parviennent à des accords sur « le qui fait quoi » dans leurs différentes relations. Le but de la négociation d'identité est de créer le « ciment » interpersonnel qui puisse favoriser les interactions afin de créer des opportunités pour les hommes et pour les femmes dans une lutte coopérative qui pourrait aider les deux groupes à voir le « visage humain » de leur collaboration au-delà des grandes étiquettes d'identité stéréotypées d'appartenance à un groupe.

Mots clés: Négociation d'identité ; Théorie de la négociation d'identité (INT) ; relation ; interactions ; womanism ; identité féminine.

INTRODUCTION

Buchi Emecheta is a Nigerian feminist writer whose *Second Class Citizen* (1974) denounces male chauvinism in a patriarchal society. Almost all the societies in Africa are patriarchal, which means that men play the key roles in every domain. Men act as autonomous individuals whereas women have to do according to men's will. They are only defined or recognized in relation to men and consequently act on the behalf of these men.

This fact is depicted in most African literature where male characters have had for a long period the leading roles. For instance, in novels such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*, men dominate while women often appear in the margin. As a matter of fact, the domination of women by men has become so common and normal that it has turned into something natural. Buchi Emecheta relates in this novel the struggle of Adah, the main female protagonist, to institute an Identity Negotiation between the patriarchal society where the desires and wills of men come first.

This notion of "Identity Negotiation" is borrowed from Stella Ting-Toomey (1986). The Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) was published in 1986 and was edited by William B. Gudykunst. Identity Negotiation refers to the processes through which people, in a given community, reach agreements regarding "who is who" in their relationships. Once these agreements are reached, people are expected to remain faithful to the identities they have agreed to assume. The process of identity negotiation thus establishes what people can expect of one another. Identity Negotiation thus provides the interpersonal "glue" that holds relationships together.

Thus, "Identity Negotiation" becomes a way to understand what gender means and how it operates and how it functions in a human relationship. *Second Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta highlights the identity management of Adah as a female entity in her relationship with the masculine community.

Therefore, talking about the concept of Identity Negotiation may arise from the learning of social roles through men and women personal experiences. Identity Negotiation is a process by which a person negotiates with the society at large regarding the meaning of one's identity. Identity negotiation in this paper deals with the psychological identity that relates to women's self-image, that is to say the mental representation of themselves, self-esteem and individuality that makes of women individuals with an identity neither completed in the eyes of men.

Identity Negotiation Theory in that sense is close to feminism. A primary focus for feminist works is on analyzing issues of power in an effort to break down inequitable structures and build up and strengthen equitable ones. This theory examines how this Identity Negotiation is managed through the character of Adah in her relation to the masculine community.

To better analyze this issue, the present paper will be developed around three main points; in a first point: Adah's commitments for Identity Negotiation, in a second: the interaction effects between male and female characters in an Identity Negotiation and in a third point: womanism as a solution for identity negotiation.

1. Adah's Commitments for Identity Negotiation

Adah is the main female character of *Second Class Citizen* through whom Buchi Emecheta leads her combat for the recognition of women's viable identities. In many traditional milieu as in the modern one, women should cook, give birth, take care of the children, do the housework, be submitted to their husbands and never contradict them. In the workplaces women are generally considered as feeble; it is said that they cannot do hard and long-lasting jobs; they are not intelligent and courageous enough to lead a company and the consequence is that women lose confidence in themselves and very few of them are at the head of companies (Sheryl Sandberg, 2013). Besides, Adah is not able to act freely because all she does is controlled by men. As an example, when she obtains the scholarship that enables her to go to London, the final decision is to be taken by her uncle and her husband's parents. Adah's parents are reluctant when it is about to go to London to continue her studies. Adah suffers a lot of their attitude as she is not totally free to take the decision of going to London by her own self.

Adah is considered as a second-class citizen in her homeland in the sense that being a woman is sufficient to be marginalized and considered as inferior to men. Indeed, generally in Nigerian societies, men are the chiefs and the masters of women as women are always identified in relation to men. Adah's mother for instance is a mere illiterate seamstress who is confined at home, whereas her uncle's wife is described as an old wife who is "the shadow to her autocratic husband" (SCC:13). The word "*shadow*" here tells us how marginalized women are in the Igbo society. Despite these attitudes towards women, Adah tries to initiate an Identity Negotiation through knowledge. Adah knows instruction and writing represent a powerful means in succeeding in this Identity Negotiation.

1.1. Education as a springboard for a good Identity Negotiation

All over the world, education has enabled many individuals or communities to change their initial social conditions. Education is an efficient means for women to be emancipated and to achieve freedom and social recognition in a certain way. Indeed, with education women can get degrees, get a good job and have a salary that will allow them to be independent in order to meet their needs and those of their families. It can be seen as a symbol of progress and a step toward gender equity and gender equality as well.

In the case of *Second Class Citizen*, school for women is of a paramount importance. The narrator depicts this importance in the novel through the character of Adah. Since her childhood, Adah dreams of going to school, succeeding and being a respected person; she wants to be independent and free despite the patriarchal practices of her community of not sending girls to school. Her desire is so strong that her will of attending school is realized: "...Adah went to school. She ran as fast as she could before anyone could stop her. I came to school-my parents would not send me" (SCC: 5-6).

Due to her instruction, Adah changes her social conditions and that of her relatives: "Adah's pay at work was just enough to pay the rent, pay for Francis' course, his examination fees, buy his books and pay Trudy" (SCC: 56). The narrator shows that with education, a woman can be financially independent, and even take care of her husband and her children. Indeed, it is Adah who has a job and a salary in her family. So she pays the school fees of her husband Francis who continues to attend school and those of his sisters, takes charge of all the expenses of their household.

Through the depiction of Adah's responsibilities in her household, the narrator shows a view different from the one we are accustomed to in African patriarchal societies where women are eternally dependent on their husband because of their illiteracy and social background. In patriarchal societies men are those who have a job and pay for everything in the house, give money to the children and their wives; but in *Second Class Citizen*, it is totally the contrary and this has been possible through education. Education appears in this way as a magical solution for women to compensate the age-old social gap between men and women. And this can contribute to the welfare of both men and women. Here Francis, the husband of Adah and his whole family (sisters and parents) take advantage of Adah's salary: "Adah's pay at work was just enough to pay the rent, pay for Francis' course, his examination fees, buy his books and pay Trudy" (SCC: 56).

Thanks to her degrees, Adah gets a good job and a good salary that she saves to immigrate in England with her nuclear family. She also succeeds in achieving her dream to become a successful writer. It is obvious that if she is not educated, without degrees it will have been difficult for her to become an independent woman and a famous writer. The narrator encourages through her writing, female education for the empowerment of African women who are somehow still the shadows of men.

1.2. Identity negotiation through writing

Face to problems and difficulties, people find different kinds of solutions to solve them, depending on their means. While some commit suicide, others face up to the situation worthily. This is the case of the protagonist Adah who, instead of pitying on her fate, has decided to write a book in order to evacuate the daily stress caused by her marital problems and the fact of being a woman. She loves to write and writing is her source of distraction: “Writing, to her, was like listening to good sentimental music” (SCC: 175). Adah feels good when she writes. She is happy when she writes, the same way music can appease individuals. She enjoys writing and develops a passion for, as the passage below shows:

It was in a happy mood that she went to the small branch of Woolworth’s off Crescent and bought four school exercise books, and started to scribble down *The Bride Price*. The more she wrote, the more she knew she could write and the more she enjoyed writing. She was feeling this urge: *Write, go and do it, you can write* (SCC: 174).

Adah is clearly keen on writing because it brings her joy and happiness. She uses it as a therapy to cure her inner wounds provoked by the bad behavior of Francis, her husband. Adah is not happy in her marriage. Francis does not treat her with tenderness and behaves in a chauvinist way. So Adah, in lack of love and attention, writes “an over-romantic story and put everything that was lacking in her marriage into it” (SCC: 175). The story that she writes is what she wants to experience with Francis. But as it is not possible because of her phallocratic husband, she makes the characters of her story live it. “*The Bride Price*” is her first piece of writing and it is the only thing that comforts her after her children. She is so much invested in it that she asserts: “I felt so fulfilled when I finished it just as if I had made another baby” (SCC: 176). Adah considers her manuscript as one of her children, it is precious to her and very important and decisive to their future life, that’s why she wants her husband to read and give his opinion about this other birth of their union. Unfortunately Francis does not feel this in the same way. He burns it because for Francis, a woman cannot be a writer, “*he could never tolerate an intelligent woman.*” (SCC: 178)

The manuscript is so important for Adah that when Francis burns it, she feels devastated and offended because it is her “brainchild”, a child to whom she mentally gives birth. That is why she asks this emotive question to Francis: “Do you hate me so much, that you could kill my child? Because that is what you have done.” (SCC: 181). The narrator highlights the close link existing between Adah and her literary work in these terms: “She could forgive him all he had done before, but not this” (SCC: 181), just to show the importance that she gives to the fact of writing.

All in all, the narrator, through this point aims at revealing the power of writing as a solution for Identity Negotiation and the change that it can bring in the life of a woman and even in the life of the whole community. In our case, writing permits to Adah to be understood, to forget for a while her household problems and to be intellectually developed, and materially independent and also counterbalance the weight of men in the field of writing since writing was long considered as a male job: “You keep forgetting that you are a woman and ... females like you could think of nothing except how to breast-feed her baby” (SCC: 178). For her, to eradicate women oppression, one must: “challenge patriarchy in all its manifestations” (SCC: 128).

In addition, the importance of writing can be perceived in the fact that it permits to denounce a social problem or to sensitize people about a precise aspect of life. That is what Buchi Emecheta did by writing *Second Class Citizen*; in which she denounces the patriarchal system and its shortcomings, and she awakes the African women’s consciousness about the way they have to behave in a male dominated society in order to claim their existence and consequently their female identity with determination.

1.3. Commitment: an asset of Adah’s Identity Negotiation

Along with education and writing, determination is another asset that is revealed in the text for a female Identity Negotiation. The *Weber Dictionary* defines determination as “the strong will and desire to achieve a goal; the strength, the fierceness and the spite whereby one wants to achieve his goals despite the obstacles, without giving up”. From the beginning to the end of our corpus we witness the way Adah fights in her life. As she has many dreams that are almost impossible to realize in a patriarchal society, she is committed to succeed in whatever she undertakes and whatever the circumstances.

When she was a child, she purposed to attend school, have an education like her younger brother. But as she is in a patriarchal milieu, things are not easy because of the stereotypes and the preconceived ideas about the education of girls. According to the Igbo society, the role of

women is to stay at home, not at school, give birth, take care of the family and be at the service of their husband. Indeed, it is very difficult to Adah to attend class because she is a woman. Despite these obstacles, and being a girl in a male dominated society, she achieves this goal by putting up some strategies. For instance, when: “she was a child she invented lies to be able to attend school...She would lie, just for the joy of lying; she took secret joy in disobeying her mother. Because, she thought to herself: “If not for Ma, Pa would have seen to it that I started school with Boy” (SCC: 5).

All these lies testify for Adah’s determination to go to school. One day, she escapes from home and goes secretly to the Methodist School of her village. The passage below expresses how determined she is:

Thus Adah went to school. She ran as fast as she could before anyone could stop her. She did not see any of Ma’s friends, because it was past midday and very hot; most people were too tired to walk the streets at this time. She got tired running and started to trot like a lame horse; tired of trotting, she walked. She was soon at the schoolroom. (...) With her head up, in determination, she walked down the center looking for Mr. Cole’s class (SCC: 5).

Once there, the other students mock at her because she is not adequately dressed. But she overcomes this humiliation and she says to the teacher: “I came to school-my parents would not send me” (SCC: 6). For Adah, what is important here is not the way she is dressed, but her strong desire to be there. For her, school is not a matter of dressing. Knowledge has nothing to do with physical appearances or dressings.

Besides, we can perceive another proof of Adah’s abnegation when she wants to go to the United Kingdom, by crooks and by hooks, in spite of the fact that her parents-in-law do not agree. They almost oblige Adah to let her husband go first and work to come back Nigeria with many degrees. She accepts at first but after some months, she succeeds in convincing them to let her join her husband with her children. Her motto is “Be as cunning as a serpent but as harmless as a dove” (SCC: 24). And “all she had to do was to change the situation, and that she was determined to do. She pretended to be all for the plan (...) everything was going to work out well” (SCC: 25)

Adah convinces them by making many promises to reassure them:

Think of it, Ma-Francis with his big American car and I in my small one, coming to visit you and Pa when you retire. You’ll be the envy of all your friends. Mind you, in England I’ll work and still send you money. All you have to do is to ask and then you’ll get whatever you want. All the girls will go to secondary school (...) Adah won over her mother-in-law (SCC: 29).

Through this discourse, we see that she plays on what her parents-in-law like. She knows that all they want is money so she promises to bring them money regularly from London and they finally accept.

Adah's determination, is also perceived throughout her will to realize her dream to become a writer. As she works in a library in the United Kingdom, she reads much and she begins to have the taste for writing and starts to write a novel: "*The Bride Price*". She, therefore, wants to share this passion with Francis by expecting him to read her manuscript but he refuses and calls it rubbish. He holds a phallogocentric speech to convince Adah to abandon this dream: "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" (SCC: 178).

Through this quotation we note that Francis does not agree with the fact that Adah starts a career as a writer. The patriarchal ideology is so engrained in his mind that he cannot conceive the fact that a woman can have access to a higher profession. He is very jealous of that and burns the manuscript. Consequently, Adah is frustrated and unhappy. But being determined to achieve her goal, she does not pity her fate; she revolts and she writes it again. The book was published in 1976.

Through these goals that Adah has decided to achieve, we see how determined she is, and that she is not dejected by the difficult situations encountered. We therefore notice that if the women living under dominated systems, want to be free and make their dreams come true, they have to be determined and firm in whatever they undertake. That is to say; determination is another asset of women in their interactions with their counterparts: men.

2. Male and female characters interaction effects on Identity negotiation

Interactions of men and women constitute a key element of learning inside and outside the relationship they entertain. These interactions involve complex, ever-evolving social dynamics characterized by ongoing decision-making and disagreement; and the negotiation of authority, roles, expertise, and group norms. Interaction effects are therefore common to Identity Negotiation. Indeed, in some works written by men, the male characters have the leading roles, they are the heroes and they dominate over all. That is the case of Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Djibril Tamsir Niane's *Sundjata*, etc.

With the advent of Feminism that denounces the male chauvinist attitude and valorizes women, some female writers give the important roles to female characters and write novels in

which men are devalued like in Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus*, Ifeoma Chinwumba's *African Romance* and *Waiting for Maria*. In *Second Class Citizen*, Emecheta fights the patriarchal ideology not only by denouncing the male chauvinist attitude, but also by depicting the male characters in pejorative terms. When analyzing these interactions in Buchi's *Second Class Citizen*, we notice that all along the novel, the author portrays most of the male characters' attitude in a negative way.

2.1. The disgraceful Lawyer Nweze, Mr. Babalola and Pa Noble

The name-based text analysis or onomastics will be used in the depiction of these male characters. By its means, we can define the mechanisms to comprehend Emecheta's allusion to these Nigerian proper names in their entire variety. The first male character that she describes is Lawyer Nweze, an elite who is back home from the United Kingdom. Nweze or Nze is an Igbo name that means "revival". This lawyer, before falling in disgrace has known a certain prosperity due to hard working. But how the revival has turned into a downfall? He becomes a Minister and instead of working, he grows rich and does not keep his promises. The author describes him as a dishonest person:

That lawyer was a funny man, Adah thought. He did not come to the south, to Ibuza, to give the people of the town electricity, nor did he come to worship the river Oboshi. He just stayed put in the North, making barrels and barrels of money (SCC: 22).

Instead of just telling the readers that he was a man who immigrated to the United Kingdom to have an English education and has come back as a Lawyer that made everybody proud, the narrator goes far by revealing the wrong things that he does such as embezzlement through fake judicial decisions. We notice clearly that the intention of the narrator is to downgrade this male character. Besides, there is another character called Mr. Babalola. Babalola is a Nigerian name of Yoruba origin meaning "Father of Wealth." That may refer to his former social status of rich student. He was Janet's husband, a friend of Adah that she met in the UK. But he has wasted all his money and he is now a poor man:

For some reason, however, the money for Mr. Babalola stopped coming, no one knew why. One thing was sure, he was not doing any studying, though he had come originally to read journalism. Word went round that he was getting poor. He could not maintain his old level of entertainment, so his friends of the happier days took their heels. They stopped coming, and Babalola moved to a much more modest area- Ashdown Street in Kentish Town (SCC: 47).

The author shows here the fecklessness of the character unable to manage his property as a man. The narrator goes further in denouncing the fact that Babalola exploits his wife Janet sexually:

Babalola started to entertain his few remaining friends with her (...) 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 (SCC: 48).

Through these lines, we perceive that this character is not only an irresponsible person but also a pimp who does not know the value of a woman and always uses women as sexual toys. This justifies the disgraceful behavior of Mr. Babalola towards his own wife. The author also makes the portrayal of an old Nigerian man named Pa Noble, pa shortened form of papa, thus father-noble: deriding a man who fails to be a good father. He is presented as a second-rate person in England, as an ugly and talkative man who has deserted his family in Africa and immigrated to the UK first to study law but fails his examinations and becomes a dropout.

In addition, Mr. Noble loses his dignity and his honor just to please his supposed English friends by behaving as a jester or a clown. In fact, his friends sometimes ask him to “perform some African tricks, just for laugh, and Mr. Noble would comply (...) he started to behave like child.” And the narrator continues by mentioning that “He stopped being a man respected in his own right and became a clown for men young enough to be his sons” (SCC: 84).

It is even related that one day Mr. Noble is asked by his European friends, in exchange for a bottle of beer, to remove his clothes for them to verify if the myth according to which Africans have tail is true, and in spite of his old age he does it without being ashamed. It was at that time that he was called ‘Noble’; because “he was such a noble man that he would do anything for his mates, even taking his trousers off!” (SCC: 84). This extract is a kind of derision. One of the main function of derision is to ridicule in order to operate a change. Here, males who are supposed to be superior are scoffed at by the narrator. And the stronger sex-derision is a counter-discourse in many postcolonial novels like that of Buchi Emecheta. We notice a depreciation of men by the narrator who pretend to be superior to women. And the example of Francis, the main male character, can justify this pretention of superiority.

2.2. Francis: the lazy and wicked profiteer

Francis is the main male character of *Second-Class Citizen*. He is Adah's husband. He is the prototype of laziness and the awkward profiteer. Adah meets him in an untoward circumstance at a moment when she needs to get married in order to have access to a scholarship

to study in London. Indeed, Adah marries Francis only because she needs a home; and because the immigration authorities could not allow a single woman to go and live alone, without husband or parents in England. So she is, in a certain way, obliged to marry him because he is like her “passport” to her dreamland.

Adah thinks that she is going to live a peaceful life with her husband and her children once in London but it is a total disillusion. Indeed, Adah has a well-paid job of librarian in an American library. She pays the study of her husband and met the needs of her entire family-in-law. The idea is that Francis depends on his wife for everything: the household expenditure, the school fees, etc. It is a role reversal in our African societies where men are those who bring money home and financially take care of their wives and their family.

Francis is unable to pay the bride price of his wife. In some ways Adah can be considered as what we call *femme-capable*. *Femme-capable* is a French expression that refers to self-made women who rely on themselves and fend for themselves, instead of relying on men. She does not expect anything from her husband Francis, “the looser and profiteer”.

Francis is said to be also sexually greedy and irresponsible. Indeed, he really loves sex and uses Adah, his wife, as a sexual object. Francis is very lustful of sex and he makes it brutally: “They made it up that night (...) the whole process was an attack, as savage as that of any animal” (SCC: 38). The narrator uses this comparison to show the animosity of Francis who lacks tenderness and therefore humanity. Francis was an adept of sex through and through, and for him marriage cannot exist without sex, because as he says, “... no marriage succeeds without a good sex life? (...) marriage was sex and a lot of it” (SCC: 39).

The narrator reveals that Francis is ready to have sex but it is the contrary when he has to assume one of the consequences of having sex which is pregnancy. In fact, when Adah gets pregnant she is afraid to inform Francis because she fears his reaction vis-à-vis the situation. Francis does not appreciate when Adah becomes pregnant because it impedes her to work and therefore to have money to pay his studies:

Then she remembered that first night. Oh, God help her, what was she going to do? Tell Francis in her present mood (her pregnancy)? He would kill her. He had started accusing her of all sorts of things. He had told her that he married her in the first place because she could work harder than most girls of her age... (Not because she could “lay” babies) (SCC: 39).

As a matter of fact, he blames his wife for the babies and seems to reject them as in the following: “Who is going to look after your children for you? (...) I can’t go on looking after

your children for you” (SCC: 43). After having make love with his wife all days and all nights long, he gives up his responsibilities of father. The narrator also reveals that Francis is like a child, an immature man who has never learned how to be responsible and who has never taken his own decisions:

Francis told her that he was not going to look after her children for her any more (...) he had never in all his life been allowed to make his own mistakes because he had never made his own decisions. He had always consulted his mother, his father and his brothers. In England he had to make do with his Nigerian neighbors (SCC: P45).

The narrator describes a situation which gives the impression that she wants to reduce Francis to sex making. In fact, one day Adah wants to ask something important to her husband and fears that he will not accept. So when they are ready to make love, while Francis is very excited and ready to possess her, she asks him the question in a low and hushed voice: “Are we going to see the Nobles or not?” (SCC: 89), because she “knew how vulnerable Francis could be at that time” (SCC: 88). And we can notice that he is in trouble and that he does not have other choice apart from saying yes:

‘Yes, yes, we will,’ answered Francis quickly rushing to her. She dodged, and this annoyed her husband and he demanded: ‘What the bloody hell do you want? I’ve said that we will go and talk to them, what else do you want?’ (SCC: 89).

When she wants to ask more he “went on pleading like a fool, ‘Oh, yes, we’ll go tomorrow. Is that all you wanted? Have I ever refused anything you said? Are you like my mother to me in this country? Have I ever refused your command?’ (SCC: 89). This shows how ridiculous and awkward Francis could be when he is pressed with sexual desires.

With the intention of downgrading the male characters, the narrator reveals another aspect of Francis which is laziness and school failure. Indeed, Adah’s husband is an “enemy” of working, he is not brilliant at school and he has taken an exam four times in Lagos before going to the UK. In the UK, he also fails his examination many times: “A few weeks later, Francis had his examination result, and it was another failure. Of course the fault was Adah’s, especially as she managed to scrape through a part of her library examination” (SCC: 155-156).

Moreover, Francis is someone who is not proud of the fact of being African so that he orders severely to his children to speak English instead of their mother tongue, thus rejecting his own culture: “Then Titi the poor thing, snaps back in Yoruba: “Don’t talk to me. My dad will lash me with the belt if I speak in Yoruba. And I don’t know how to start speaking only in English” (SCC: 53). Francis traumatizes his daughter only because he prefers the culture of the others to his own culture.

Francis is not romantic, he does not know how to treat his wife with tenderness. He has never known how to be a tender and a respectful husband. He has a chauvinist behavior and makes Adah suffer a lot. In fact, for him, as he is the man, he has the right to decide for Adah, to tell her what to do or not. He is the prototype of African men who think that men are to be served by their wives not the contrary; that women are their properties and therefore they have to be obedient and submissive:

No husband would have time to ask his pregnant wife how she was feeling so early in the morning. That only happened in True Stories and True Romances, not in real life, particularly not with Francis, for that matter. But despite the hard talking to herself, she still yearned to be loved, to feel really married, and to be cared for (...) Francis was only good at giving her children, nothing else (SCC: 55).

He has never, in his life, given Adah a present, for him she does not need it. When she is hospitalized after having a difficult labor, Francis does not give her flowers and does not have any tender words either to appease her sorrows:

Francis did not kiss her in public, he could hardly ask her how she was feeling, because to him Adah was always his and no illness, no good could take Adah from him, so why bother to ask how she was feeling, when she was sure she would get better anyway?(SCC: 123).

And whereas the parents and the husbands of the other women in the hospital bring them flowers and cards, Francis is not interested in it; flowers are not important to him.

Francis is very wicked and violent not only with Adah but also with the others. Francis is also wicked with his surroundings; he is extremely selfish. In fact, one day he kills the monkey of his neighbor by empoisoning it just for pleasure. And another day, he beats for a long time a goat because he wants it to speak, evidence of Francis's immaturity and lack of good sense:

The friend had kept this monkey as a pet, to the annoyance of everybody. Francis had bought rat poison, smeared it on a piece of bread and given it to the monkey. The monkey has died, but the agony it went through, twisting in pain, the mournful cry of the unfortunate animal, had ever ceased to delight Francis (...) It was the story of a goat which his father had bought for Christmas (...) Francis had got the strongest horsewhip and started to lash this goat, telling him to tell what two times two was (SCC: 180).

He is so naughty that she considers him as a "Lucifer husband with the horns fire", the devil in himself. According to him, Adah just gets married to him for "bearing his children, working for him, taking his beatings, listening to his sermons" (SCC: 110). He oppresses her so that she often has nightmare in which Francis is the incarnated evil:

Francis had now turned into Lucifer. His wicked eyes were glazed as if he wore badly fixed contact-lenses, he was wearing a robe of fire, he had horns bigger and more complicated than those of a stag, and his swords were emitting flames. He was telling her that she was being punished for not waiting to read *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (...) Francis's voice kept on and on, counting down like the persistent bells of death (SCC: 111).

The narrator uses this surrealist scene to show how traumatized Adah is. He terrifies her in such a way that she has nightmares. In spite of the fact that they live in London, in contact with the white people, Francis still think like an African man. For 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 (SCC: 175).

Such a statement is clearly due to the patriarchal ideology inlaid in the mind of the African men through tradition, culture, religion, etc... This prejudice about women is the main cause of their constant subjugation and male domination. That is why the author aims at denouncing this ideology in order to change men's opinion about women.

Not only is Francis wicked, but he is also stupid, ridiculous, lazy and not a good Christian. Indeed, he changes his religious confession frequently: "when he started failing his examination and was feeling inferior to his fellow Nigerians, he became a Jehovah's Witness" (SCC: 117). Furthermore, he is so lazy that when he gets a job, he finds it difficult and he always complains.

Francis is above all a man who cannot keep his sex in his trousers. He cheats at Adah by having sex with Trudy, the foster-mother of his children and with other women. And one day Adah receives a letter in which the women of the neighborhood complain about the fact that Francis woos them all: "the women in the house wrote Adah an open petition begging her to control her husband, because he was chasing them all" (SCC: 162). Adah is so disgusted by his sexual conduct, his unfaithfulness that she starts appreciating other men instead of her own husband. At the hospital; she could not refrain from envying her neighbor's husband:

That husband of hers, tall, handsome, well dressed and groomed, look like the god Apollo. There must be something special about the man, because he came to see his wife at any time during the day (SCC: 117).

Adah also admires the doctor whom she praises his merits of being a good man. Through this, the narrator wants to show that Emecheta is not totally against men and that they are not all the

same. The narrator reveals clearly that she is not against men and does not encourage androgyny like some feminists do, but she rather assumes her membership to womanism.

3. Womanism as a solution for identity negotiation

Womanism is a variant of radical feminism. In Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* it is all about the black women, their experiences and difficulties in a sexist and classist society. The womanists believe, according to Mobolanle (2008: 20), that the emancipation of black women folk cannot be achieved apart from the emancipation of the whole race. Womanists therefore believe in partnership with their menfolk as suggested by the Identity Negotiation Theory.

Womanism like Identity Negotiation Theory does not encourage the separation of men from women. The womanists are for the unity of black men and women in order to fight injustice, racism and patriarchy. To put an end to female oppression, they recognize and accept the participation of men in the struggle for emancipation and justice.

3.1. Partnership between men and women

The Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) posits that human beings - men and women - in all cultures or environments desire positive identity affirmation in a variety of communication situations. However, what constitutes the proper way to show identity affirmation and consideration varies from one cultural context to the other. The INT emphasizes particular identity domains in influencing individuals' everyday interactions.

In the case of *Second-Class Citizen*, Adah tends to experience interaction with men via meaningful and determined close relationships. As an example, when Adah praises the merits of the doctor who saves her from death, the narrator mentions that he is the contrary of Francis, that he gives Adah the desire to live. And by the words she uses to describe him, we know that she likes him:

The surgeon was (...) handsome, dark man (...) He was a great man who took a particular interest in his patients he had operated on (...) this surgeon that knew how to handle his knife well, did not do any preaching and sermonizing to Adah, about why she should try to live and all that, but he kept telling to his white-coated disciples that few patients had died from his knife (SCC: 116).

Through this quotation, we notice that Adah appreciates the doctor who performs his duty correctly, proof that she is against radical feminism.

Moreover, partnership between men and women in the situation of racism is well perceived in the novel in chapter 6 entitled “*Sorry no colored*” where the landlord of Adah wants to evict her and her husband, obliging them to find another house immediately. But, nobody wants to help them because of their skin color. As an illustration, we can cite these lines:

It was so friendly, so human. But what would happen when the landlady was faced with two black faces? Adah told herself that it would be better postpone this discovery to the last minute. One could never tell, she consoled herself, the woman might not even mind their being black. Hadn't she thought she was American? Adah realized that perhaps she made little mistake there. She ought to have jumped at the woman's suggestion and claimed to be American (SCC: 74).

Emecheta decides to put both the female and male characters in the same situations, facing the same problems to show that men and women have to be united and fight together against all kinds of injustice for their individual and mutual wellbeing. Furthermore, the narrator highlights this partnership with men through the attitude of Adah when her husband gets a humiliating job:

The work was humiliating, treading the streets with the bag on your back, your nose running into your mouth, and worst of all, you were given a black band for your arm, as if you had lost your mother or something. Adah would shudder at this recital and feel awful, wishing she was well enough to go back to her library job to save her husband of all this pain (SCC: 134).

In fact, she is pained because her husband suffers, so she wants to help him by going back to her job while Francis would stay at home to rest and study. A position that shows her total rejection of radical feminism. Throughout the novel, we notice that Emecheta's view is different from that of radical feminists. She even does not accept to be considered as a committed feminist, hence her interview with Umeh quoted by Goubali Odile Talon (2018):

I am a feminist with a small 'f'. I love men and good men are the salt of the earth. But to tell me that we should abolish marriage like the capital 'F' women who say women should live together and that, I say no. Personally I'd like to see the ideal, happy marriage. But if it doesn't work for God's sake, call it off.

3.2. Praising marriage and motherhood

Motherhood is the capacity for a woman to, not only, give birth but also to know how to take care of her children and to have the capacity to defend them in spite of the difficulties. The womanists encourage motherhood because for them, it valorizes women. And such freedom implicates not only issues of contraception and abortions; but also of creating environments that allow multiple sources in which women might ground their sense of identity,

including work or career, art and creative activities, good health and physical activity, education and continuous learning along their life; and meaningful and constructive relationships with other individuals or groups of individuals.

In Africa, a woman who cannot give birth is despised and her community labels her as a witch, or as a “dried womb”, she is martyred, even by her own husband who has the right, by virtue of tradition, to marry another woman. However, a fertile woman is praised by her family in law, her husband and by the whole community. Adah is a very fertile woman who gets pregnant at the merest sexual intercourse with her husband. She even receives the nickname “touch not” (SCC: 21), because “as soon as her husband touches her, she gets a swollen tummy (pregnancy)” (SCC: 21). The author underlines that in the Igbo tradition, the fact for a woman to be fertile in that domain is “the greatest asset a woman can have” (SCC: 21).

Besides, one of the qualities that is pointed out in the novel is the sense of sacrifice of Adah for her children. Indeed, when she arrived in the UK for the first time, she was disappointed because of the coldness of this country, also because the people there were not cordial, hearty. But she has decided to overcome this aspect, because the most important thing is to do her best to allow her children to have an English education. We can see it through this extract: “Her children must have an English education and, for that reason, she was prepared to bear the coldest welcome, even if it came from the land of her dreams” (SCC: 33).

In addition, we can notice the maternal instinct of Adah. In fact, she knows with a mere glance, what is going wrong with her children. For instance, after some weeks, when she leaves them at Trudy’s home, she notices that her daughter Titi stops talking and she feels that something is going wrong. She decides to pay a visit to Trudy and she discovers that her suspicions are therefore justified. The maternal instinct of Adah is also perceived through another situation where she feels sick at work when her baby Vicky does not feel well at home; she feels what her child feels even if she does not know exactly what he has, she has a premonition:

Yes, how had she known? How could a mother tell another woman who had never given birth to a baby that sometimes she lived in her children? How could she explain that if her son underwent an operation her own body would ache; how could Adah tell Cynthia that when she was looking at the fishcake, she had seen Vicky’s wet face, twisting in pain, reflected in the window? (...) She just felt these things (SCC: 58).

This passage shows the spiritual link that can exist between a mother and her child. It is evident that a woman without children cannot have this power. In brief, we can notice that the

celebration of motherhood can fight back the patriarchal ideology in the sense that it valorizes women by putting forward their maternal assets, by showing also that they play a huge role. Therefore, instead of being martyred and subjugated, they must be respected and praised.

CONCLUSION

By dint of conclusion, it comes out that *Second Class Citizen* is a major text in the development of the central theme of this paper. All along my argumentation, I tried to show how the concept of Identity negotiation appears as a process whereby Adah manages with the male community in particular, and the society at large a collaborative partnership between men and women by regarding "who is who" in their relationships. Identity Negotiation thus establishes what both can expect of one another.

My main postulate is that, instead of emphasizing on what can separate men and women, Identity Negotiation sets up opportunities for the two identity groups to be engaged in a cooperative struggle that could help both groups: men and women to see the "human face" beyond the broad stereotypic group membership identity labels.

By writing *Second Class Citizen*, Buchi Emecheta purports to change the view according to which women are second class citizen and encourages women to fight for their rights not in the rigorous feminist way but rather in the womanist way, that is to say by promoting positive values that reconcile men and women, in a cooperative manner, according to their original gender roles. However, womanism is proposed as a solution for Identity Negotiation, by extolling a constructive partnership between men and women.

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