

MOTHERHOOD AND GENDER DISCOURSE IN MABEL EVWIERHOMA'S *OUT OF HIDING POEMS*

Abegunde, Clement

&

Oderinde Adedayo Obafemi

Abstract

Feminism was invented to be the voice in defence of women to liberate them from their major enemy – male. The objective of this study was to examine gender concerns in the poetry of selected African feminist poet, Mabel Ewrierhoma. This was based on the premise that much gender scholarship tend towards thematic examination and the influence of the various cultures of the continent. This study was thus aimed at explicating the gender issues in the selected texts alongside the techniques the poets employ. The theoretical framework was womanism, a theory that emphasises complementary rather than antagonistic roles of the African woman. The theory is also based on women's self-assertion, self-retrieval, and self-expression encouraging younger women's audibility and consciousness. The poems analysed in the study are from Ewrierhoma's *Out of Hiding poems*. The study revealed that women of today are not in completion with their male counterparts. The selected poet aims at obliterating some oppressive or negative structures which implicate women; employ images drawn from her culture as techniques to depict her gender concerns. The study concluded that female poets are still engaged in the struggle to positively depict women in their contemporary roles.

Key Words: Feminism, Gender Discourse, Womanism, Africa, and Culture.

Introduction

Traditional African women have been known to play prominent role in oral poetry. As individuals and groups, they were major participants in oral poetic performances. Wherever a number of

women were gathered, they were bound to express this creativity in different ways. Bearing this in mind, Ojaide (1996) asserts that women's poetry "include lullabies, work songs, praise songs, abuse songs, dirges and chants to gods and goddesses" (p. 95). Which they used while busy at their household duties, amongst friends, during gatherings or celebrations and when they are with their children. Finnegan (2011) also posits that "Certain kinds of poetry are typically delivered or sung by women (particularly dirges lullabies, mocking verses and songs to accompany women's ceremonies or work), and each culture is likely to have certain genres considered specially suitable for women." (p. 98) Ojaide and Finnegan's postulations attest to African women's versatility in poetic compositions. Despite this central role which women played in traditional African poetry, some critics do not attribute much importance to African women's poetic creativity. These critics confer less value to the performances of such African women. This is why Kolawole (1997) notes that: Critics who contend that African women are no artists but ululators or parroters are either only partially informed or else wholly misinformed about the dynamic, complex and varied scope of this region's orature. These oral genres are manifestations of collective women's voices, dynamic group consciousness and tool of eliciting positive influence on the society. They are not passive texts. From Akan dirges to Nzema satirical songs, the women are not simply parroting communal texts. Among the Yorubas, dirges, wedding chants, *rara*, satirical songs and story-telling are areas in which women excel in creativity, adaptation and manipulation of existing or new texts into contemporaneous situations. (p. 76)

While the female poets have been central to traditional African oral poetic performance, the advent of colonialism and writing in the continent reinforced by the patriarchal system displaced them from their preeminent position in poetic composition and performance. The privileging of the boy-child education over the girl-child, also empowered the emergence of African male writers who dominated the written creative scene in the early years of the development of African

literature. Muhammad and Muhammad (2016) asserts: “The males have usually dominated the literary field over the years, as writers and critics present the women as dormant, docile, and un-intelligent members of their various societies.” (p. 341)

Despite the circumstances that hindered the emergence and prominence of African women in literary scholarship, more female poets are now emerging, they are claiming the agency to express themselves through the creative arts. This increasing number of female poets are taking up their places in the heritage of African poetry and they are writing about their experiences. Alkali (2012) affirms that the writings of male colonial masters “downplayed the African woman’s intelligence, her hard work and independence of spirit” (p. 16). The emergence of younger African female writers paved way to redeem the images of the women characters in their works. This female writers have improved the identity and position of the woman characters by creating them to be more intelligent, strong and less economically dependent.

For the increase in female participation in literary art part of the motivation has been the misrepresentations of women characters and issues in male-authored works. Othman and Mohammed (2017) for instance aver that in Northern Nigeria, a survey of early writings which was dominated by male writers created stereotypes of women which include depictions of the woman as home-maker, “weak, subordinate to men and incapable of independent action and initiative”(198). Thus they see a need to recreate the African woman’s image (Alkali p. 16) and to challenge the works of the male writers.

The earliest set of women to emerge as writers in Nigeria includes; Mabel Segun and the late Flora Nwapa. Their first books were published in 1965 (*My Father’s Daughter*) and 1966 (*Efuru*) respectively. Later there was the emergence of more women writers across in Nigeria. These writers of autobiography, prose, poetry and drama have been writing in order for their works to be viewed alongside those of the male writers and to satisfy their female audience. Ewrierhoma (2013) writes that “Female writers, therefore, recognize the need for liberation of women from the forces of socio-economic and political marginalisation

as reflected in literature through their creative efforts” (p. 25). In order to bring about transformation in literary works, the women writers decided to contribute more in all genres of literature; they dramatise on stage in order to awaken the consciousness of other African women. They also express their emotions and experiences in poetry as their fictional works expose the lives of victimised and subjugated women.

African women, by virtue of living in a patriarchal culture and society, are marginalised and dominated by men. The reality of gender segregation and discrimination is reflected in modern African literature and this can be traced from traditional through colonial to modern and contemporary times. It is significant to know that African patriarchy was reinforced by Western and Islamic traditions which are also based on patriarchy. It is not surprising that for a long time the female voice remains unheard and ignored in Africa.

Despite the barriers that have been placed against women from being able to get the western education, more female poets are now emerging in the contemporary African world and these women have become more literate and educated. These female poets have incredibly increased in number as they have been faced with the reality that exists in the literary scholarly world largely dominated by patriarchs. Their works have tilted towards the efforts to change the society's perception of women and their roles. In acknowledging the increased women's participation in literary discourse, this paper traces the development of feminist content and techniques deployed by Mabel Ekwierhoma's *out of hiding poems*.

Gender Content of *Out of Hiding Poems*

Out of Hiding Poems is a feminist poem which content is basically to encourage women empowerment, matriarchy, and advocacy for gender equality. The poem “Matriarchy” represents motherhood, mothers in the home and the African society. These mothers have values and are full of wisdom and knowledge. Matriarchs are very powerful in a social system because they help empower women and give them the life that they deserve. They also help procreate and breed their

children, among which are the sons who will later take over the legacy of their fathers by becoming patriarchs. As the head of the family, the matriarchs uphold some virtues in the society and they pass this down to their daughters and continue to other generations.

The matriarchs are portrayed in the poem in three stages. The first stage is the mourning stage where the matriarchs mourn the unpleasant behaviours in the society. They despise moral decadence because they do not want the society to become decay during their lifetime and after they are gone. The second stage describes the reason why they mourn. They mourn because of the influence of patriarchy in the African society. The last stage is the stage that portrays how the patriarchy operates in the society. The poet says "Our matriarchs have refused to smile". They refuse to smile because of the patriarchal system taken over in the African society. This system gives fewer values to womanhood, so matriarchs find it disturbing because patriarchy disorganises the age long existing organised system by fighting over the legacies of their fathers after their demise. The selfish act of these patriarchs put their mothers in sorrow.

they mourn the legacies of a dented patriarchy and a
primogeniture of mothers who mouthed more - than
they could bite and more than they could
swallow... (p. 1)

"Dreams" expresses the state of the poet-persona's disappointment and determination. It is an emotional piece that describes how the victimised woman have been exploited, cheated and lied to by husband. The poet exposes the emotional state of the writer, making us have a deep insight into the speaker's dreams and the controlling influence of the man. She was left in pain and tears. The poet exposes us to the deceit in the nature of men, dominating women and trying to sweet talk the women in order to get what they want. Just as the speaker expresses; "you dominate my dreams"/ "make me float in seas of salty tears" / "reaching" / "no shore" / "no part" / "trembling at thresh-holds unavailing" (p. 2)

The poet brings the speaker to the point where she becomes aware of the tricks and deceit of men. So the speaker becomes determined after her disappointment that she would never again be deceived by men and she stays focused. The speaker's awareness is an eye opener to her. Hence she expresses her thoughts sayings she has banished the man from her dream:

Hence I banish you from my dreams and hug this
chasm of self and other us, drifting sundering silently...
(p. 2)

The poem, "Tears" describes the experiences of a strong-willed woman who endures the marital pains of losing her children. The poet describes the pain inflicted on the woman by her husband. The poem also shows the misfortunes that has befallen the family, it also describes the support the woman gets by her husband she uses the expressions: "My starved sweater / got salted / and sucked them / up" (p. 4). The starved sweater represents the husband whom the woman cries upon his shoulder because he understands the reason why they could not have children and he consoles her. Womanism is about understanding between a man and a woman. Only a woman who lost a child can understand the extent of the pain, in order to live a harmonious life, she needs the support of her husband to be able to get out of the pain. So the poet has described the woman characters husband here as supporting her through the time of her difficulty, offering her a shoulder to lean on.

In the "Dumb," the poet describes a woman with the adjective 'dumb'. In Africa, a woman is expected to be silent and give her consent to all form of challenges that comes her way. Silence in Africa is golden; a woman is not expected to react to the dehumanising attitude of people towards her. Because being silent does not mean that she is foolish, but it means that she is trying to create peace in her environment. Also, her silence does not literarily mean she is receptive to the oppressions that she is subjected to, but deep down within her

she may carry fury and anger and she decides to speak with her eyes in order to avoid trouble. The poet says:

Silenced, mute yet she choruses
 Chants of fury long caged
 In a wordless mouth and
 She speaks with her gaze. (p. 6)

Some oppressed women are silent when they are oppressed. They keep mute not because they are dumb or foolish but because they know that it is the only way to have a harmonious life.

In “Preying” the poet presents the situation in our African society that supports the dehumanizing and violating of girl child. The girl child is referred to as “Prey” in the poem because she is not strong and old enough to make decisions on her own and also fight her predators. The poet says:

you the predator
 and I, the prey
 I, the girl child,
 Schooled for the slaughter
 swaddled as wares
 de-humanized and dehymenised
 by predators (p. 7)

The girl child has no right to make decisions in the family. The father makes all decisions for her daughter, as the head of the family. The father sent out his daughter to an early marriage because of what he receives in return. The girl child is not able to choose her spouse and she has to obey her father because it is the right thing to do. The poet describes the situation of the girl child in the poem:

I, girl child,
 bedded for bread
 by fathers who prey
 praying as they prey for the best to befall their own (p.

7)

Girls in an unfortunate situation like this silently follow the command of their father only because they respect their father and they would not

want the society to look down on their father as someone who cannot control his family members.

“The counsel” is an admonition to the women that suffers from men who tries to take advantage of them. The poet says: “strengthen yourself against / scavengers, whores of flesh and soul / soar high to the mountain top.” The poet advises women to be strong and bold to face challenges that confront them. The poet expresses; “stare the sun in the face / only short lived blindness results” (p. 9). The poet adds that no matter how bad the situation, things will get better because “The moon has its phases” (p. 10) and she encourages the women to be bold and accept all the difficult challenges because every difficulty that one faces will be followed by ease.

In “Call out my Name” the poet describes the kind of love relationship that exists between lovers. It explains the eagerness of the lovers meeting each other whenever it is time to meet. The intimacy of these lovers is a form of understanding that exists between them. The poet says:

Call out my name
 When the moon is pregnant in the sky
 And mating calls ring out in the night.
 Call out my name
 Call out my name
 for I swell with joy at each call of my name (p. 17)

The poem is an example of what is expected from someone who is genuinely in love. The lover is filled with joy when she hears her name in the heat of passion.

“My Body” is a poem that explains the importance of a woman and self-realisation and understanding of herself worth. The poet describes that the body of a woman solely belongs to her. The body does not belong to anyone but her, she understands how she feels and she describes her body as having the ability to “see through flesh of sand. / My body symmetrical / with organs of egress / and ingress / cavities, spaces and receptacles” (p. 20). She can die and wake as she will, she can accept so many challenges in life that ranges from patriarchal to

marital. This is because she 'receives sundry treatment'. She has been maltreated in her marriage yet she bears the burden of motherhood, she has borne children as well as nurtures them. This is because a woman is naturally created to be strong by nature and to withhold any form of challenges and still smile through her hardship. She pretend that things are fine even if they are not fine just to be able to make the people around her feel secured and happy.

The poem "Clitoridectomy" describes the age long practice and custom that involves the removal of the foreskin from the vagina of a girl child. This practice is commonly done in the African society where they believe that if a girl's foreskin is not removed she will be promiscuous. The poet portrays:

The ancient claim
they saw lasciviousness with frivolity
so they cut off the fore skin.
"Does the siled foreskin reduce
The libido?"
"No, it aids it,"
they say. (p. 41)

The poet sheds light on the pain the girl-child faces while they slice the foreskin in her vagina and the excitement in the hands of the old men while they do their craft. The men are aware that removing the foreskin does not stop promiscuity yet they put the poor girl child but the practice continues. The practice is done because of the Africa belief system of stopping promiscuity. And this slicing of the foreskin does not stop the girl from being promiscuous.

The "Gbayi Woman" is a portrayal of the suffering and hardship of the Gbayi women in their society. The women are classified as beast of burden; their mode of dressing is ancient. These Gbayi women are made to dress yet they still feel undressed. This is because they are made to expose "the black un-corsetted / breast that have suckled / many a strong stock" (p. 43). The 'Gbayi woman' is a representative of some women in Africa. These women are faced with hardship for the survival of their children and family. They work their

self out and their health deteriorate. The 'Gbayi woman' undergoes severe hardship which is unbearable to her, but she keeps going on with the hope of survival because there might be something that she hopes to achieve. The poet writes; "see the scapula calloused / by calabash – load of / burdens fit for cranes / and not a human's back". The burdens carried by these women has permanently disfigures their shoulders and has made it bend due to its heaviness of the burden that they bear. The women are subjected to hardship and this aids their aged look. They also suffered several miscarriages or abortions due to the effect of the burden they bear.

Gender Practices in *Out of Hiding Poems*

One of the aims of this paper is to explore the uniqueness in the way the poet depicts gender practices in the collection. Ekwierhoma in *Out of hiding poems* shows the problem of gender segregation and how self-empowerment and self-actualisation of women can be achieved through the weapon called change.

"Gbayi Woman" is a gender based poem which explains the ordeal of a typical woman in an African society. Nigeria has some cultural roles and belief system ascribed to both male and female. The role of motherhood is portrayed in the poem as motherhood does not make a woman expose her bare chest or go naked. The description of the Gbayi woman is very archaic as her portrayal describes her continuous struggle for survival. The Gbayi woman is portrayed because of the economic situation of the Country. The poet points at the insensitivity of the men in the 'Gbayi' society and also creates an awareness to the mind of the reader that a woman should not be left to tend to all her responsibilities because she is strong enough to bear her burden, she is expected to get help from the people around her as well as her husband.

In "The Dumb", the women are made to keep mute to every occurrence in her environment. The African society frowns at women who stand up against men. A woman is considered virtuous if she is silent and accepts all forms of oppression and subjugation. The

oppressed woman endures in pain but “she comments with her gaze” (p. 6)

In ‘Preying’, the poet explains the problems faced by a girl child who is sent out to be married at a very young age. The girl child represents the under-aged female children who are made to suffer humiliation and torture in the hands of men. She is deprived of making decisions; all decisions are made by her father. But the poet describes the patriarchs as predators, they are dishonest and they represent the fathers who raise the male and female children, they give priority to the male child over the female. Towards the end of the poem, the girl child is seen to be “de-humanised and de-hymenised” by her predators. The poet reveals the power of the feminine gender, how the girl-child stands up to get out of her cocoon to fight oppression and becomes enlightened and empowered. Her freedom is expressed;

I shall stand
Against the hails
Of power and lies
I, too,
Shall predate
Against all that has kept me as
prey
I shall fight O yes
I will... (p. 8)

“The Counsel” is gender based because the poet encourages and admonishes women to be bold and challenge whatever issues that they face. The poet gives strength to the weak women and focuses on the realities of life. In this poem, the poet uses some gender based words like “yourself... Scavengers, whores of flesh” (p. 9). This means both gender suffers the evil of this life. “The Search” focuses on the quest for the self-actualization of women. The character in the poem is portrayed to have done hard work without reaping its fruits. The gender based words used here are; “and sought voices to lead; voices to say to me” (p. 28)

In "My Body", the poet portrays women to specifically understand their nature as a woman. The challenges of accepting womanhood / motherhood, the problems of long suffering and how the women still accept the love of the men, the strength of a woman when the seed is planted into her and the cyclic nature of carrying pregnancy, giving birth and nurturing the baby till adulthood, the woman endures the hardship of womanhood just to satisfy the men and have a harmonious life because that what womanist does. But some of these men does not appreciate the efforts of women, the poet says: "And they say my body / is / weak" (p. 20) They forget that it is these same women who is affected by the challenges of being a woman; by helping to procreate and making the society a better place.

In "Clitoridectomy", the girl child is the victims of pain because they are affected in the act of cutting their genitals. The girl child is an example of women in our society who are said to be adulterous because their foreskins are not cut off. To the men who practice the age long cultural practice, they think that they are protecting the society from been saturated by promiscuous people. The poet describes the instrument used to perform this evil act;

when blades, furbished
and whetted metals sliced skin protrusions.
This hour witnesses
thigh held down
with excited hands
by men grey with age
but old in their craft. (p. 41)

Ewrierhoma tries to make people understand the fact that clitoridectomy has nothing to do with making a girl child or woman promiscuous. The continuity of the act is simply as a result of the satisfaction derived by the men inflicting pain on the girl child. The Poem "Dreams" is a gender poem. The poet describes the story of the barren woman in the poem explains it all; "be sure of making nightmares into dreams / and turn falsehood into truth" (p. 12). The poem helps to re-assure hopelessness and also helps to make people

understand that whatever the circumstance a person finds himself in life there can still be hope of been successful.

“Prayers” is a gender based poem because of the non-sex language is used; a pronoun “You”. This is also because the theme of the poem is self-accomplishment and fruitfulness. In Africa and Nigeria as a whole, motherhood is seen as very important because if a woman does not have children of her own, she is considered as living a wasted life. The importance of procreation reflects in the poem where a prayer is made for an expectant mother for fruitfulness: “May you witness truth / and your fingers / sift it from falsehood / and with a grip tighter than vice / May you lay claim to yourself” (p. 29). Also the poem clamours for fertility and restoration of the land and to help their economy grow better and for the people to enjoy and have a better life.

“Matriarchy” portrays the gender inequality amongst the African society and this is caused by the patriarchs. The people in this society were destroyed by the evil consequences of the patriarchs. The poet uses pronouns like “our”, “they” and “their” to show the difference between the male and female gender.

In “Child”, the speaker uses some pronouns like “my”, “you”, “your” and “mine” to show the child that is within her, and she uses the words ‘foes’ and ‘friends’ to demarcate the evil perpetrators. In the poem, the woman character depicts the importance of carrying a baby in pregnancy and this experience can only be enjoyed by a woman who has once been pregnant.

Techniques in *Out of Hiding Poems*

The poem “Matriarchy” is a free verse this is because the poem runs into one another. The use of enjambment is seen in the poem, the message that the poet wishes to pass across to the reader runs through the first to the second line in the poem. The reader intends to capture the interest of the reader by choosing those dictions because with this, the reader will be in suspense and willing to know the reason why “Our matriarchs / Have refused to smile”. (p. 1)

The use of alliteration is predominant in the poem. The poet expresses; “who mouthed more” /m/ and “than they ...” /ð/ images of the mouth is used, the poet uses the figurative language relating to dentitions or dentures, the poem begins with the matriarchs who “have refused to smile” which expresses their unhappiness about an unknown issue. Other images of dentitions used are “gaping cavities”, the patriarchy passed to the first sons of the matriarch shows that they have passed the legacy to those that will ruin it. This is expressed thus; “who mouthed more- / than they could bite / and more than they could swallow” (p. 1). The greed of these first sons of the matriarchs has made them “suffered oral misfortune” / “and dubbed it an” / “aura of mouthwash”. (p. 1)

“Dreams” is also a free verse poem. The use of enjambment is seen in line 1 and 2; “You approach my dreams” / “to steal unoccupied moments” (p. 2) the poet brings a simple idea into two lines. Using alliteration, the poet says; “cost a life of weary waiting” the repetitive use of consonant sound; /w/, “you dominate my dreams” (p. 2) /d/, “make me float in seas off salty tears” (p. 2) /m/ and /s/. The use of hyperbole to describe the extent to which the lover has disappointed the speaker as expressed; “make me float in seas off salty tears” (p. 2). Using repetition in lines 1 and 8, the poet says; “You approach my dreams” (p. 2) this shows emphasis and shows how often the lover appears in her dreams. The language of the poet is that of the oppressed and the emotional torture faced by the lover.

The poem “Visions II” is written in free verse, the poem is an encouragement to the people to rise up and challenge their betrayals. The use of synecdoche is seen in the poem; “where captured lips / tune silently in / un-singing throats.” another use of synecdoche is seen in poem; “of your eyes and” / “betray the visions”. In line 13; “my eyes envision”. (p. 2) The oral imagery, eyes and visions are used to represent the people.

The poem “Tears” is a free verse. The tone of the poem expresses sorrow and this is foregrounded through the use of personification: “Parallel droplets” / of tears escaped / from their jail

ducts". "Tears" is given the attributes of human. Using personification the poet says; "My starved sweater / got salted / and sucked them / up". The sweater is expected to be non-human and it is personified by saying that it is starved. This explains the extent of which the man has shown the woman care and support, how much he has offered his shoulder for her to lean on and how well he has stood by her during their trying times. Using Enjambment, the poet says; "This sweater has / seen tears, yet / I wear it". This indicates how the idea in the final part of the poem is expressed in the three last part of the poem.

In "The Dumb", the poet chooses to write in free verse. Repetition is sparingly used. In lines: 1 and 13. The poet says; "Silenced" is used to describe the state the woman is expected to be. Also 'cycles' is repeated. In lines: 19 and 21-24. Also line 19 and 20 'unending' is repeated. All these show the state of the woman and the permanent challenges she faces as a woman. Imagery of mouth is also used by the poet in lines 3; "in a wordless mouth" and lines 14-16 "her tongue tucked away / parched to the palate of her mouth / she is denied word to be spoken" (p. 6). Imagery of sight is seen in line 4 and 5 respectively; "she speaks with her gaze / her eyes tell loudly" also line 17 "because the eyeless sockets" and line 26 "she comments with her gaze" (p. 6). All the imagery used in the poem explains the helpless situation of the woman, as well as in the African society dominated by patriarchy. The use of alliteration is used in line 14; "her tongue tucked away". This shows the repetitive use of the consonant sound /t/.

The poem "Preying" is in three stanzas. The use of simile in line 12 "swaddled as wares" this explains how the girl child is tied up when the evil doers perpetrate the evil of raping them. The use of alliteration is predominant in lines 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 21 and 25. The expression is written respectively; "schooled for slaughter /s/, de-humanized and de-hymenized" /d/, /h/, "bedded for bread" /b/, /d/, "praying as they prey" /p/, "for the best to befall their own" /b/, "shall stand up" /s/. This explains the use of non-sexist language; "I" and "we" for the prey and the girl child. The poet uses "you" and "their" to represent the

predator. The use of these pronouns shows the segregation in the gender.

The poem "Counsel" is divided into two stanzas. Alliteration is predominantly used in lines 6, 10 and 12 respectively. The poet expresses; "stare the sun in the face" /s/, "The moon you must" /m/, "Be bold, drink" /b/. Also hyperbolic expressions are seen in lines 10-11 "The moon you must" / "cup in your hands." P. (9) This hyperbolic expression is to give courage to the oppressed in the poem. Rhetorical question is also used in line 14; "what's in the sun anyway?" the poet has used this to persuade the oppressed, making them know that no matter how hot it gets, it will definitely get cold.

"The Way of All Men" is a free verse. The poem is a portrayal of the suffering of the indigene of the society where oil has polluted their land and water. The poet's use of enjambment in the first five lines of the poem describes the plight of the men in the society. It shows their poor state after having a hard day's work, toiling hard and they still come home to nothing. The poet writes;

They returned home
after the toil
bathed in sweats
bearing burdens
with calloused hands and hides. (p. 34)

Using hyperbole in line 3, the poet says; 'bathed in sweats'. This depicts the hard work the men have subjected themselves to, the sweats seem to have drowned them after the whole day's work yet they didn't come home with nothing to their family. Alliteration is predominantly used in lines 4, 5, 9, and 16 respectively. This is expressed thus; "bearing burden" /b/, "with calloused hands and hides" /h/, "devoid of warm welcomes" /w/, "wondering whether" /w/. (p. 10). These expressions describe the poor economic situation of the families that resides in that settlement. It also describes how it affects the young, old, men and women in the community.

Conclusion

Women were originally known as orators in precolonial Africa. They are good in telling stories and singing, qualities that help them in raising good children. Their roles that were snatched by the men as a result of the boy-child education privilege during the post-colonial times should not stop women from speaking and writing. It is important to stand up today and start writing. Nigerian women also lack the motivation to write. Although there are few scholars who still write, the male scholars and writers have outnumbered the female ones. The women tend to shy away from writing probably because the African tradition and culture has confined women to being the house keepers and child rearers/ bearers, issues of ethnicity which Akachi also confirmed as reasons why career opportunities and the growth in scholarship and creative writing in women is minimal. The time which a woman should have devoted into writing would have been spent doing domestic chores.

Works Cited

- Acholono, C. (1995) *Motherism: The afrocentric alternative to feminism*. Owerri: Afa Publications.
- Alkali, Zaynab. (2012) *Gender Politics and Sexual Dynamics, Imaging Men in African Women's writing: The Quest for Identity and Integrity*. In Ed. A. Yerima and S. Aliyu. *Gender Politics Women's writings and Film in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Kraft Books limited.
- Evwierhoma, M. (2001) *Out Of Hiding Poems*. Ibadan: Future Publishing.
- Evwierhoma, M. (2013) *Female Empowerment and Dramatic Creativity in Nigeria*. Lagos, Nigeria: Concept Publications.
- Finnegan, R. (2011) *Oral literature in Africa*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Kolawole, M. (1997) *Womanism and African Consciousness*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press.
- Muhammed A. U. and Muhammed A. (2016) *Contemporary Northern Female Writings and the Question of Blame: A Reading of Bilikisu*

Abubakar's To Live Again and The Woman in Me. In Ed. I.A. Tsiga and M.O. Bhadmus *Literature, History and Identity in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Safari Books Ltd Ibadan.

Othman, A. and Mohammed, R. (2017) *Re-Thinking the Woman in Northern Nigerian Literature*. In Ed. H.I Abdulraheem et al. *Literature, Integration and Harmony in Northern Nigeria*. Ilorin: Kwara State University Press.

Showalter, E. (1986). *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*. New York: Pantheon Books.