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**A Comparative Reading of Dialogism and Monologism  
in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) and  
Wanner's *London, Cape Town, Jorburg* (2014)**

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**Andrew Nyongesa**

*Department of Humanities*

*Murang'a University of Technology*

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**Abstract**

Many literary scholars have demonstrated the merits of divergent arguments within the novel. According to these conversations, the authorial voice becomes a witness of the diverse arguments raised by characters without being judgemental. Subsequently, great writers may not resolve major arguments but leave them for the reader to reflect and make their own judgements. This use of multiple voices is contrary to homophony in which the authorial voice dominates the conversation in the novel and characters that raise divergent views to this dominant voice are punished. Characters under this monologic mode are mere authorial mouthpieces to inculcate particular conversations and attitudes in the reader. Whereas, literary scholars focus on dialogism in prose fiction, this study is a comparative reading of dialogism and monologism in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) and Wanner's *London, Cape Town, Jorburg* (2014) to investigate traditional and current modes of expression in the African novel. While pioneer African novelists basically controlled the story through omniscient narration and authorial intrusion, modern novelists (including feminists) employ limited omniscient narrators that embrace divergent voices within the texts. The major finding of the study is that homophonic narratives are subjective, predictable, preachy and boring while dialogic narratives are objective, unpredictable, conversational and interesting. Furthermore, it was found that omniscient narration is characteristic of monologic desire to control

the dominant voice in a novel while first person and limited omniscient narration are pointers to dialogism. The ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin will form the theoretical basis of interpretation.

**Keywords:** *African Literature, Dialogism, Feminist Narratives, Homophony, Polyphony,*

## **Background and Literature Review**

The writer no doubt plays an essential role of giving voice to progressive ideas that challenge endemic vices in their societies. The autocracy, patriarchy, corruption and obsolete cultural practices that affect communities compel some writers to control the narrative to achieve their objectives. The writer, particularly in the **global south** is tasked with the responsibility to confront the ills that affect society, and this is possibly why pioneer artists such as Chinua Achebe cannot fathom a situation where an African writer writes art for its own sake. This is why Lucero cited in Sabanpan (2010) associates post independent African writers with embodiment of the liberation struggle, which accentuates the propensity to hand down their philosophy of belief through their works. Lucero writes, “[i]n the Third World where despair intensifies... writers become participants and interpreters embodying in their works their passionate commitment and people’s anguish and anger, their rebellion against an unjust system (4). In this quote, Lucero suggests that writers in the **global south** use their creative pieces to passionately present reality to inspire positive change in their societies. Although such literary writers desire to participate in the political liberation through their works, their narrative voices are far from participants. Lucero’s mention of “passionate commitment of people’s anguish” suggests that such novels embody activism through which the author used his voice to control the conversation. The characters in these novels are authors’ mouth pieces and those who express divergent views contrary to the authorial voice are punished. Robinson (2011) refers to this control of conversation as monologism, and defines it as a “single thought discourse where one transcendental perspective or consciousness integrates the entire field, ideologies, values and desires that are deemed significant. Anything irrelevant to this perspective is deemed superfluous or irrelevant in general” (n.p). In other words, the literary writer will establish what they consider worthwhile by choosing a certain perspective or what Robinson describes as “ideologies” and install symbolic mouthpieces through characterization. Those characters that

establish contrary standpoints are rendered irrelevant. In his critique of monologism, Bakhtin, observes:

Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou). With a monologic approach (in its extreme or pure form) another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness. No response is expected from it that could change everything in the world of my consciousness. Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world, represented person. (Bakhtin, 1984, 292-293).

In other words, all characters in a monologic novel conform to the dominant ideology and those opposed to it are mere targets (object consciousness) of which vices are described to the reader without being given a chance to account for their behaviour. If certain characters are perceived by the authorial voice as villains, they are condemned with finality as the “monologue is finalized and deaf to the other response” within the novel. It is only the literary critic that can provide the “other response” from without because the author imposes their ideological belief within. Barani and Yahya (2013) expound Bakhtin's assertion by contending that “in a monologic work, authorial ideology dominates and illuminates all the worlds presented in the novel, thereby leading to a ‘single-toned’ quality that subordinates the monologic work and consequently renders it a lifeless ‘philosophical monologue...’” (3). With their aim being to inculcate their ideologies in the reader, some African writers have adopted the monologic mode in which characters uniformly resonate to the ideology for the purpose of literary activism. It is not surprising that some literary critics have intervened to speak for objectified characters from without the novel. Migudi (2019), for instance, contends that the Kenyan literary writer, Ole Kulet elevates the voice of the civil society and donor agents in his fiction. From Migudi's perspective, Kulet lacks an original (African) voice in his attempt to dissuade African audiences with regard to gender disparities, female circumcision and other outdated cultural practices. The writer therefore takes Western radical feminism, which stifles all other voices such that male characters like Oloisudori who uphold Maasai tradition are

condemned through macabre descriptions without being given a chance to speak for themselves. According to Nyachongo (2011), Amecheta, alongside other female writers such as Flora Nwapa try to correct “the one-sided presentation of the African women in African literature” (7). By this Nyachongo suggests that these feminist writers try to move away from feministic control of their narratives to present African women and men in a positive light. Other critics such as Adjei (2009), contend that most West African women writers underscore male bashing and elevation of women through control of their narrative (49). This study interrogates whether, Emecheta adopts the monologic mode that Kulet espouses in *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008).

The flipside of monologism is dialogism, which Bakhtin hails as the most suitable mode for literary writers. According to Bakhtin (1984), “polyphonic novels contain a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness” and therefore characters are not wholly under control of the author’s goal. They are instead “individual consciousness that possess equal rights in expressing their worldviews”. In this kind of creative design, the characters are, “not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse” (p. 7). Indeed, the characters’ voices are just as significant as the voice of the author himself/herself, and therefore these voices cannot be perceived as merely extracted from the consciousness of the author, and thus governed by their aims and ideology. The polyphonic novel stands out as a conference of diverse voices for the reader to listen and make their own judgements. Therefore, uncritical assertions like the ones made by Kaygisiz (2020) in relation to Chikwava’s *Harare North* and Cleave’s *The Other Hand* remain tentative until a careful examination of the novels is carried out. In his opinion, “both novels explore the issue of migration and the transformation of the characters’ sense of identity and home” (1). Inasmuch as there are characters whose major purpose is express essential aspects of migration, identity and home, there is a possibility that Chikwava and Cleave choose other characters that underscore issues concerning feminism, spirit possession, protest masculinity, dissociative identity disorder, Marxism and other conversations that turn the novel into what Williams (2015) refers to as “interweaving of melodies” (2) characteristic of music. Indeed Gunning (2015) singles out Chikwava’s use of the *mambepo* in *Harare North* as a reference to *Ngozi* spirits in Zimbabwean culture. Citing Ranka Primorac, Gunning concludes that by referring to *Ngozi*, Chikwava is “[i]nserting himself into the long Zimbabwean literary tradition of operating with the trope of spirit

possession” (253). In the same way, it is imprudent to accept Ngcobo (2020)’s association of Wanner’s *London, Cape Town, Joburg* with depiction of “queer subjectivities in a developing nation” (3) as the sole voice in the novel. Contemporary African novelists do not necessarily operate with a monologic mode that curtails other conversations. In his analysis of Coetzee’s polyphonic novel, Williams observes that *Diary of a Bad Year*, is separated into three narratives that occur concurrently on the same page, in ‘three horizontal layers” (2). Williams suggests that polyphonic novels manifest multiple arguments within pages and by extension, chapters with different characters or narrators taking different standpoints on an issue. Williams’ study enriches this article as it investigates the divergent voices and their subsequent arguments in Wanner’s *London, Cape Town and Joburg*. The article seeks to find out whether Wanner uses different characters to create diversity without authorial control.

The choice of Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* and Wanner’s *London, Cape Town, Joburg* is justified because both authors are female African writers from different settings. While Emecheta represents the pioneer African female writers, Wanner represents the new generation of 21<sup>st</sup> African female writers that have adopted new modes of writing for expression. African female writers have a responsibility to combat patriarchal traditions entrenched in their cultural milieu and so the study will seek to unearth the better strategy (between polyphony and homophony) to combat patriarchy and other outdated cultural practices.

Wanner’s *London, Cape Town, Joburg* is a story of consequences of alienation arising from the cosmopolitanism characteristics of postcolonial migration in the contemporary world. The hybrid mix is enabled by colonialism and characters’ migration from London (1994-1998), Cape Town (1998-2008) and Johannesburg (2008-2011) that form the three parts of the novel. Wanner breaks away from conventional omniscient narrations of pioneer African writers by using major characters to narrate different chapters of the novel. The first part, *London* is narrated by constant exchange of roles between Martin and Germaine. The second part, *Cape Town*, Germaine takes the first turn and is followed by Martin to narrate the story. In the last part, *Joburg*, the two characters exchange roles with Martin starting the narration. Their son, Zuko is also given space to institute his individual conversation through journals. Characters such as Liam, Martin, Germaine, Zuko, Victoria, Sufyan and Priya are free to advance their points of view.

Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* is the story of Nnu Ego and her psychological fractures that stem from her position as a cultural other. Born to Agbadi and Ona, Nnu Ego has a happy childhood without any sign of insanity until she gets married. Barrenness instigates her mental instability when her husband Amatukwu realizes that she is unable to conceive and decides to marry another wife who conceives within the first month. Nnu Ego's self-loathing forces her to isolate herself and her constant fits of depression drive her toward mental instability. In prayers and tears, she asks her *chi* to give her children. Meanwhile, reassured of his manhood and potency, Amatukwu begins discriminating against her. He forces her to work on the farm as the fertile co-wife remains at home under the pretext of looking after the baby. The narrator tells of Amatukwu's high-handedness in ordering Nnu Ego "about as he would any farm help" (31) despite her position as the first wife. In Ibuse, a culture that prizes children and designates childless women as "others," Nnu Ego's childlessness meets Amatukwu's indifference and callousness and she descends into depression. One day, Amatukwu bumps into Nnu Ego pleading with her co-wife's baby to send its friends from where it came. He assaults her and accuses her of practising witchcraft. Agbadi, her father, takes her away and offers sacrifices to appease Nnu Ego's *chi*; eventually Agbadi finds another husband for Nnu Ego, Nnaife, an ugly neighbour that many girls have rejected. Nnu Ego comes to birth and is happy to bring forth a baby boy, Ngozi. Unfortunately, the baby dies. And Nnu Ego hysterically runs to the market and threatens to take her own life. As the story unfolds, Nnu Ego's fertility is restored and she begets a number of children. His sons, Oshia and Adim get educated and take up jobs in the United States and Canada respectively. Whereas her daughters send her financial assistance, her sons do not even write to her. Oshia gets married to a white woman and does not even care to tell his mother. Nnu Ego sees herself as insignificant and is so devastated by this that her mind degenerates. She wanders her way in the village in Ibuse and tells people that she has a son in "Amelika." Once, after wandering the whole night, she lies down by the roadside thinking she has arrived home. With her life thrown into disarray coupled with her own feeling of insignificance in life, Nnu Ego runs mad and then passes away a few days later.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The interpretive grid of this study is dialogism as propounded by Bakhtin. According to him dialogism refers to the process by which meaning is extracted out of interactions between the author, the work and the reader. Bakhtin (1984) observes that Dostoevsky's dialogic novel is constructed not as a whole of single consciousness, but formed by interaction of several consciousness none of which entirely becomes a target for the other. The interaction between singular characters provides no support for the viewer who would objectify an entire event according to ordinary monologic category (18). Bakhtin observes that a polyphonic novel is "dialogic through and through" (40). Clark and Holquist also see the two terms as interchangeable and writes the problem that Bakhtin calls 'polyphony' is simply another name for dialogism (242). Lodge also observes that "polyphonic" is virtually synonymous with "dialogic" (86). In polyphonic novel, dialogism is prerequisite on the part of the character, author as well as the reader. Bakhtin argues that the believe in a unified truth does is not tantamount to a single consciousness; it is possible to uphold truth that requires a plurality of consciousness —one that is by its nature interactive and accommodates various consciousness and expresses the dialogic form of Dostoevsky's artistic truth (104). In his perspective, the idea as seen by Dostoevsky is that the artist is not subjective individual with permanent resident rights in a person's head, but inter individual and subjective. The realm of its existence is not individual consciousness but dialogic meeting between two or several consciousness, in this sense the idea is similar to the word the idea wants to be heard, understood and answered by other voices from other positions.

This study employs Bakhtin's dialogism to draw a line between pioneer and contemporary African feminist writers with reference to Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Wanner's *London, Cape Town, Joburg*. The study demonstrates the effect of dialogism and monologism on the final literary product.

## **Aim and Research Questions**

The aim of the study is to analyse the effect of dialogism and monologism on literary production and single out a more appropriate mode with reference to the two African feminist narratives. Inasmuch as literature is meant for aesthetic purposes, arbitrary selection of mode of

expression can offend a section of the audience. Some works of fiction take the form of propaganda pieces, and the study seeks to unearth strategies that ward off such propensities. The study is seeks to answer three research questions: First, are there any differences between traditional and contemporary African feminist narratives? Secondly, why are some works of fiction more direct and offensive to a section of the audience than others? Finally, why do some literary works lean towards propaganda rather than objective works of art?

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study is comparative reading of dialogism and monologism in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Wanner's *London, Cape Town, Joburg*. Whereas, many scholars have tended to focus on dialogism and ignored monologism, this study is an exegesis of the two modes to demonstrate traditional and current modes of expression in the African novel. While traditional African novelists basically control the story through omniscient narration and authorial intrusion, modern novelists (including feminists) use limited omniscient and first person narration to embrace divergent voices within the texts. The ideas of Bakhtin will form the theoretical basis of interpretation.

### **Pioneer and Contemporary Narratives: Dialogic Reading of Selected African Feminist Fiction**

Literature has a reputation of finding place in existing discourses to correct social ills and speak truth to power, as Lucero points out in the background. Nevertheless, the mode of expression differs from one writer to the other, which is likely to turn a work of art into an objective source of information or mere propaganda piece. This section delves into exegesis of Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Wanner's *London, Cape Town, Joburg* to interrogate the difference between monologism and dialogism and their effect on the literary product. This subsection begins by analysis of homophony in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and then interrogate aspects of dialogism in Wanner's *London, Cape Town, Joburg*; it ends with a summary of findings of the comparison of the two modes of expression in the study.

Taking Lucero's cue, Buchi Emecheta indeed consistently contributes to the gender conversation in Africa through her prolific writing. As one of the leading pioneer women writers in Africa alongside, Mariama Ba,



Western feminism forms the bedrock of most aspects of *The Joys of Motherhood*, particularly through plot, characterization and themes. In spite of Nyachongo's contestation that Emecheta admits to have rejected Western American feminism, Barfi and Alael attest to her use of tenets of Western feminism in *The Joys of Motherhood*. They write, "*The Joys of Motherhood*, nevertheless, accommodates some aspects of Western feminism in order to highlight women's gender oppression, gender inequality and sexual difference within the Igbo patriarchal society" (14). It is apparent that Western feminism permeates through Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* to degrade patriarchy and highlight the plight of girls and women in the African society.

This subchapter adopts Barfi and Alael's trajectory that although Emecheta explores other issues such as colonialism and madness in the life of her characters, it happens within the framework of the ills committed against women. According to Tyson (2006), "women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, socially, politically and psychologically; in every domain where patriarchy reigns, the woman is the other" (83-92) and therefore the feminist writer confronts patriarchy and elevates the position of women. To achieve, this Emecheta creates the female heroine, Nnu Ego and shows how she is reduced by male dominance to madness and finally, death. The expression is effected through control and specifically omniscient narration and skewed characterisation.

The plot of the novel demonstrates the writer's emphasis on feminist ideals because the main problem that causes Nnu Ego's suffering stems from men in their constant stigmatisation of women. The first chapter, "The Mother" sets off with a deranged and hopeless Nnu Ego after losing her firstborn son. Her outfit is shabby, hair untidy and there is wildness in her eyes (2). The second chapter, "The Mother's mother" takes the reader back to Nnu Ego's Mother, Ona. Details of her dedication to the gods to have children in her father's name are clarified in this flashback. When Nwokocha Agbadi takes her, Ona's father reminds her that she will not bear children in her husband's name (15). Raised like a man, Ona is not a normal Igbo woman meant to look after a husband. Obi Ommuna's decision to parent Ona to prepare him to become a man stems from cultural elevation of masculine gender as the only one capable of perpetuating the family line. With no regard for feminine virtues, Ona makes love with Agbadi in his senior wife's courtyard where she screams saying, "Agbadi, Agbadi, you are splitting me into two!" (17). Disheartened by her husband's act, Agunwa, Agbadi's

senior wife descends into chronic depression and dies a few days later (18). During her burial, the personal slave who resists being buried with the mistress is given a “sharp blow” (20) by Agbadi’s son using a cutlass he was carrying and she collapses into the grave. Ona conceives thereafter and when she gives birth to the heroine, Nnu Ego, the *dibia* (seer) tells Agbadi: [t]his child is the slave woman who died with your senior wife Agunwa, she promised to come back as a daughter” (25). From the outset, Nnu Ego has a curse— possessed by the spirit of a slave woman— which arises from the evil acts of men.

Emecheta suggests that women’s arch enemies are men given that it is their evil acts that cause the heroine’s predicament. This is in league with the feminist voice that “man is enemy, exploiter and oppressor of woman” (Frank, 1987, p. 14). Even Ona’s immoral acts stem from her father Obi Omunna who raised her as a man. To demonstrate the author’s control, all minor characters in the first chapters make disparaging remarks about Ona. The narrator asserts, [s]he knew that people blamed her for Agunwa’s death” (19). Characters who are not mentioned allege to have said of Ona, “a woman who was troublesome and impetuous, who had the audacity to fight with her man before letting him to have her: a bad woman” (18). Ona is aggressive because of the masculinity she was raised to possess. Maleness and masculinity stand out as the true cause of women’s plight including misconduct (with regard to Ona), spirit possession and madness. Adjei (2009) observes that feminist writers present male characters as “worthless, irresponsible physically grotesque images, wicked husbands, drunkards, rapists, exploiters, predators, monsters, sexually depraved, perverse and evil” (p. 49). This is the trajectory that Emecheta takes through monologism to inculcate feminist ideas in the readers.

Apart from the plot, all the characters serve to express the feminist discourse in *The Joys of Motherhood*. The male characters fit the radical feminist frame through their relentless predatory acts and through authorial control, their sexual depravity, exploitation, callousness and perverseness are well expressed. Apart from Agbadi and Omnunwa, Amatoku, Nnu Ego’s first husband is the third male character to embody the callousness of male characters. As soon he learns that Nnu Ego is barren (because of the curse of the slave woman) he marries the second wife and she conceives the same month (30). Amatokwo exults in his fertility and the narrator asserts, “[d]uring the yam harvest, Amatokwo who only spoke to her when it was necessary, said crisply, ‘you will go and work with me on the farm today. Your young mate may be having

my child anytime now. She will stay at home with my mother” (31). Whereas a considerate husband would be sensitive about his wife’s condition, Amatokuwu transgresses maxims of humility and politeness. He treats Nnu Ego as he would a servant. In his view, an infertile wife has no other use except offering labour on his farm. In an omniscient narration, Emecheta adds, “[at] the farm, Amatokuwu kept ordering her about as he would any farm help (31). It even becomes worse when Nnu Ego complains that her barrenness is not her fault. Amatokuwu blurts, “I am a busy man, I have no time to waste my precious male seed on an infertile woman” (31). He continues with snide remarks about her skinniness which makes her no longer attractive because she is “so dry and jumpy.” Indeed he hates Nnu Ego and when he finds her pleading with the second wife’s baby to go back to the mother’s womb and invite its friends to come to Nnu Ego, he accuses her of witchcraft and assaults her. The omniscient narrator says? “[d]ouble blow from behind. She almost died of shock” (33).

Nnaife, Nnu Ego’s second husband is presented as ugly, predatory, sexually perverse and brutal. Emecheta ensures that Nnaife suits the radical feminist frame in which the novel is based. This reiterates Bakhtin’s assertion that “monologue is finalized and deaf to the other’s response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality” (292-293). In other words, all male characters have to be women’s enemies in this context. There can be no space for “other” voices such as postcolonial feminism to question the dominant radical feminist voice. This is why right from the first day of their meeting, Nnu Ego dislikes Nnaife. The narrator says:

She fought back tears of frustration. She was used to tall wiry, farmers with rough blackened hands...this one (Nnaife) was short, the flesh of his upper arm danced as he moved about jubilantly among his friends, and that protruding belly! Why did he not cover it? She despised him on that first night. (44)

Besides Bakhtin’s observation, this excerpt also resonates with Barani and Yahya’s assertion that authorial ideology dominates in a monologic work (3) by the sense in which male characters are deliberately stereotyped as an attempt to elevate the position of women. In spite of Nnaife’s willingness to love Nnu Ego, she does not appreciate it, instead, she misses Amatokuwu’s handsomeness and utterly looks down on him.

His virility, which later results in her conception is described as “animal passion” (44), because he had possibly “never seen a woman before” (44). Nnu Ego sums up Nnaife’s appearance as a “horrible looking man” whose inadequacy turned him to a near rapist. The narrator gives Nnaife a predatory description claiming, “[t]his man’s appetite was insatiable and by morning she was so weary that she cried with relief” (44). As Tyson contends, this episode depicts women as innocent victims that suffer social oppression instigated by men (54). Above all is Adjei’s assertion that radical feminists portray male characters as sexually depraved (49). Indeed after the demise of his elder brother, Nnaife who has imbibed Western culture confounds the reader when he enthusiastically takes to polygamy. He takes his elder brother’s youngest wife, Adaku. Nnaife’s decision to take her in is guided by neither reason nor ability to look after her, but her sexy looks that the narrator describes as “comfortably plump with the kind of roundness that really suits a woman” (131). Nnaife’s possessions are scanty and demonstrate his inability to marry the second wife. The narrator singles out the “four-poster-iron bed and large wall mirrors” (136) as the only items of value. But the desire for a new sex partner clouds Nnaife’s judgment; soon after supper, he takes Adaku into Nnu Ego’s matrimonial bed and had her. To show Nnaife’s sexual depravity, the narrator says:

It was a good thing she had prepared herself, because Adaku turned out to be one of those shameless modern women whom Nnu Ego did not like. What did she think she was doing? Did she think Nnaife was her lover and not her husband, to show her enjoyment so? She tried to block her ears yet she could still hear exaggerated crying on. Nnu Ego tossed in agony and anger all night, going through in imagination, what was taking place behind the curtained bed. (139)

As much as the narrator levels criticism at Adaku, the real object of the blame is Nnaife who brings the second wife in the same room that Nnu Ego sleeps. Like her father Agbadi, Nnu Ego has sex with another woman in the senior wife’s presence. Male characters are not just presented as immoral, but also insensitive to the feelings of women. Nnaife’s depravity, does not stop here; he ventures out of Nigeria to fight on the side of the British in the Second World War and when he returns, he squanders his hard earned cash in the most foolish manner. After spending a fortune on the homecoming ceremony, he returns to Ibuza and starts arranging to inherit Adankwo, his brother’s other wife. After many nights with her, she conceives but refuses to accompany him

to Lagos. To demonstrate Nnaife's sexual depravity, the narrator describes how Nnaife turns to the neighbourhood and picks Okpo, a sixteen year old girl as his new bride. Her parents charge very high bride price—thirty pounds saying “had not Nnaife brought home all the white man's money?” (206). The reader is confounded to see Nnaife returning to Lagos with the girl to share Nnu Ego's single room with all their children. She asks Nnaife:

Have you gone mad or something? ...we only have one room to share with my five children, and I am expecting another two, yet you have brought another person. Have you been commissioned by the white man to replace all those that died during the war? Why don't you let other men do part of the job? Even Adonkwo whom we regard as our mother is pregnant for you, just for you....i don't want that girl sleeping in my bed. I am not giving it up this time. (207)

This episode portrays Nnaife as foolish because his reason is utterly limited by desire for sexual pleasure at the expense of his family. His children, particularly Oshia the firstborn endured abjection when Nnaife was away, but now he has to endure the humiliation of sharing a single room with his father's second wife.

Whereas the reader expects Oshia to learn from the mistakes of his father and grow up as an exemplary man, Emecheta creates another villain out of him. When he loses the scholarship, he does not find any fault in the father, he instead blames the mother saying, “[m]ay be had I a peaceful childhood, and not had to spend my young days selling paraffin and carrying firewood...” (208). Oshia's recriminations provoke Nnu Ego to breakdown. While Nnu Ego's daughters are fairly calm and collected, the sons are portrayed in the negative light. Adim, the second son starts lamenting about the firstborn son, Oshia being favoured and says, “[e]verything in this house is Oshia's” (216). To reiterate Bakhtin's words about monologism, Adim becomes the author's mouthpiece when he complains, “I don't understand these adults. First we do not have enough, yet they keep adding to the family. May be Oshia is right” (216). The object of these comments is Nnaife whose patriarchal regime has brought untold suffering to Nnu Ego. The woman in Nnu Ego's society has no say concerning the number of children the family has; she is just an aide in the procreation enterprise. Adim's remark that “Oshia is right” is a reference to Oshia's snobbery, which is the author's deliberate scheme to turn the boys into negative characters. Later, Oshia wins a scholarship and does not tell his parents (225). When Nnaife tells him to

take up family responsibilities as Igbo custom demands of first-borns, Oshia blurts, “[y]ou mean I should feed them and you? But you are alive and well and still working?” (226). The father’s angry remarks do not make it better as the insolent son Oshia dismisses the father: “I can do without seeing your face old man” (226). When he leaves for the United States, he does not remember his parents. Adim leaves for Canada and he is no different as he closes all communication lines with his parents. As aforementioned, the monologic nature of *The Joys of Motherhood* demands that every character suits the feminist scheme of things in which no male is of no use to the family. Indeed as Nnu Ego’s health deteriorates, the narrator says “[h]er daughters sent her help once in a while, however what actually broke her heart was...expecting to hear from her son in America and from Adim too who later went to Canada” (253). As Adjei contends, Emecheta ensures that the daughters and women are presented in the positive light, but sons and men in the negative. Apart from minor characters such as the *dibia* (the seer) and Nwakusor (Nnu Ego’s neighbour in Lagos), the reader hardly finds a positive male character. Sons have to be as wicked as their fathers to abide by the prime melody in the narrative.

While Emecheta relies on one perspective that permeates through plot, characterization and themes, Wanner takes a different trajectory. Most literary critics rely on one philosophical standpoint with reference to Wanner’s *London, Cape Town and Joburg*. Milazzo (2016) for instance singles out the postcolonial voice particularly how dominant racial groups perpetuate othering and resistance staged by marginalized races (128). Indeed the contest between dominant and marginalized racial groups is evident in Wanner’s novel, but this study takes a different trajectory by unearthing other competing philosophical voices in the novel. Milazzo’s analysis is similar to Kaygisiz (in the introduction) who delimits Chikwava’s *Harare North* and Cleave’s *The Other Hand* to the issues of migration and identity politics (1). As much as some characters exhibit identity politics, contemporary writers such as Zukiswa Wanner, Brian Chikwava and Chris Cleave adopt imaginative characterization that turn their novels into a convergence of divergent voices. Unlike the previous subsection that focuses on monologism, this subsection adopts Bakhtin’s favourite mode—dialogism— to analyse divergent philosophical voices in Wanner’s *London, Cape Town and Joburg*.

The feminist voice, which is hardly noticed by most critics, stands out prominently through the relationship between Germaine and her husband, Martin. Germaine’s struggle to persuade Martin to see life through her point of view remains futile because of Martin’s patriarchal mind-set. Unlike

Emecheta who uses the omniscient narrator to impose her way of thinking on characters, Wanner creates independent characters and empowers them to narrate full chapters in which patriarchal and feminist ideas are brought out **by characters** and then cross questions **by them**. According to Bakhtin (1984), “[r]eading of Dostoevsky leaves the impression that one is dealing with a number of philosophical statements by several author thinkers—Raskolnikov, Myshkin, Stavrogin, and Ivan Karamazov” (5). The different characters in a polyphonic novel depict diverse philosophical standpoints, which is the case in Wanner’s novel.

Germaine is so devastated by Martin’s decision to ignore her and his mother, Sindiwe, to the point of losing all family savings. She says, “[t]his is another way men abuse women...this fool that I married had just financially abused me. Everything we had saved, my security, my son’s. Everything except the roof over our heads” (324). Germaine in this episode reiterates feminist assertions such as Lober (2012)’s that heterosexual relationships particularly in the family result in oppression of women (11). Martin deliberately rejects the advice of the two women in his life to nurture an intimate relationship with his unscrupulous biological father. Her mother, Sindiwe, insists that Martin does not have to “connect with some abusive person because he donated a sperm for your conception” (275). Sindiwe’s assertion confirms the patriarchal nature of Martin’s biological father, Martin Mtshali. He abuses women, particularly, Sindiwe, but she fights back through divorce. In her conversation with Germaine, Sindiwe maintains that Mtshali’s friendship with Martin has hidden motives. Anytime Germaine questions Martin, he plans to “put his foot down as a man and help her realise that it is not all about her” (290). Martin in this context echoes Lober’s claim that “patriarchy is men’s pervasive oppression and exploitation of women in private and public” (18). When Martin’s biological father dies, it gives Sindiwe an opportunity to demonstrate her resistance against oppression. “Your real father died two decades ago” (311), she blurts and hangs up. Sindiwe is talking about Martin’s foster father as having been loving. This brings in the postcolonial feminist voice (that will be discussed later) that not all men are brutal, after all. After the demise of Martin’s biological father, it dawns on Martin that the Goldstreet project that the father had persuaded Martin to invest all his family savings in is a scam (313). Martin is full of regrets, and feels that had he listened to his mother and wife, he would not have brought his family into abject poverty.

Unlike Emecheta who uses the omniscient narrator to enforce her views, Wanner employs a limited omniscient point of view with different facets of the story narrated by different influential characters to carry the conversations

and sometimes cross questioning them. Martin for instance condemns himself after being conned. He says, "I am one of the fools who has lost all his family savings on Goldstreet" (313). The reader can only infer the feminist voice by contrasting the foolish hero with the prudent female character such as Sindiwe. Above all, Wanner's male characters, unlike Emecheta's, examine their actions and regret when they are wrong. The character Nomawethu is also used to express the feminist voice; she is the leader of other African women at the ceramic studio that Germaine starts at Cape Town. After many nasty experiences with patriarchy, Nomawethu resorts to fighting against patriarchal tendencies. When some young men want to take advantage of Germaine claiming that they had looked after her car, Nomawethu stubbornly rejects the idea. She takes the cigarettes... and "violently" tears them into small pieces. When Scarface, the unscrupulous man accosts them with a clenched fist, Nomawethu says, "...try me, I will moer you, voetsek. Me? A slut? I am your father's slut?" (172). Later, Germaine learns that Scarface's real name is Njambulo and he sustained the scar by being hit by a woman who was beating her boyfriend (172). The act of the boy being beaten demonstrates that many women are resisting patriarchal oppression. When Germaine suggests that they will hire men to put up the shelves, Nomawethu asserts, "[w]e are putting the shelves up ourselves" (173). The decision to take up roles such as carpentry, traditionally meant for men, is feministic. Nomawethu narrates to Germaine how she was sacked from the bank because her estranged partner made several disruptive appearances at her workplace. She says, "[t]he bank decided that because of business, I was dispensable" (175). Nomawethu is sacked just because the man wanted **him** back after separation. The studio provides an opportunity for women to share experiences, which resonates with Lorber's remarks on the rise of feminism that started as "small group of leaderless women who discussed housework" (18) and other mundane subjects.

To capture Bakhtin's dialogism—recognition of the other (292), some characters in *London, Cape Town, Joburg* represent postcolonial feminism. According to Mohanty (1984), the assumption that third world women are a coherent group (ignoring social factors) is problematic. She adds that the notion of men as oppressors is not a universal one (338). Gianni, Germaine's foster father represents postcolonial voice to show that not all men are oppressive. When Martin visits Germaine at the inception of their relationship, Gianni behaves in a manner contrary to men's description in radical feminism. Germaine says:

Gianni poured Martin some wine and soon they were chatting while Martin helped Gianni make dinner in the kitchen. Despite Gianni's initial



reservations, they became fast friends and they started talking about football. [...] He turned to my mother, ‘Margarita, let us go to bed now and let the children to play’.

Unlike the feminist generalisation of men as brutal, sexually depraved, foolish (as portrayed in Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* in section one) Gianni is caring, polite, friendly and even assists Margarita to serve at the table and cook in the kitchen. While Nnaife in *The Joys of Motherhood* takes a weapon to go and attack his prospective Yoruba son-in law (235), Gianni in this episode, welcomes his black son-in-law with amazing love and care. Wanner suggests that men are different and it is erroneous to generalise their character as radical feminists claim.

Similarly, the generalisation that all women are oppressed is erroneous because some female characters such as Jenny oppress and exploit their husbands instead. Jenny is the ex-wife to Liam, Martin’s elder brother. When Germaine and Martin arrive in South Africa, Liam declares that he is a sworn bachelor who is disinterested in heterosexual relationships possibly because of the “acrimonious break up with Jenny” (155). Like other feminists, Germaine had entertained the presumption that Liam broke up with the wife because he was abusive until she listens to the story. Germaine summarises Liam’s ordeal as a “sordid tale of a gold-digging woman who married a man, had children with him and then afterwards tried to get him arrested on trumped up charges because she’d found another lover—an older and richer man” (157). Through Germaine, Wanner suggests that either gender can be oppressive, scheming and exploitative. As much as Germaine has her own private wars against patriarchy (as elaborated at the beginning of this subsection), she refuses gender stereotyping of men. She sums up her observation, “I have always supported my fellow women most of the time, but over time I have also learnt that some of us are nasty pieces of work. And [...] Jenny was there on top of the pile of unpleasant women” (158). In short, women too can be brutal, violent and exploitative. In this assertion, Germaine indicts the gender stereotyping of male characters, which is postcolonial feminism. Although Germaine represents the radical feminist voice, she interrogates it in this episode hence in Bakhtin’s perspective Wanner’s novel would be the reverse of monologism as it is not “deaf to the other’s response” as it does [...] expect it and does [...] acknowledge it” (292-293). Postcolonial feminism as the “other” is recognised by a radical feminist in the form of Germaine.

Liam on the other hand represents a voice contrary to her brother and friend, Martin. After the end of his marriage to Jenny, Liam does not show

any interest in heterosexual relationships, but introduces a young man, Mxolisi, to Martin and Germaine as his adopted son. Germaine, the leading narrator of the chapter, describes Mxolisi as having “the sweetest and saddest face I have ever seen” (124). Although Germaine does not strive to find out the causes of the boy’s melancholic airs, Zuko reveals later in a personal journal that Mxolisi ran away because Liam used to abuse the boy sexually. While writing down his ordeal at the hands of Liam, Zuko says, “[i]s this why Mxo ran away?” (332). The reader understands that Liam has enlisted himself among subversive masculinities that transgress the tenets of hegemonic masculinities such as Martin and Mtshali in the novel. According to Kenway and Hickey-Moody, pleasure among subversive masculinities “lies in the feeling ‘like you really don’t care; it knows no bounds. Indeed, it might be that [the person] relishes the risk of self-destruction” (839), this is the very attribute that Liam espouses. He leads Zuko, his brother’s only son, by the nose and rapes him to satiate his gay appetites. Zuko writes, “[h]e got in bed with me, I tried to move away but he pinned me down [...] then he pushed my bum open and put his dick in me. I have never felt such pain” (332). After writing the ordeal in the journal, Zuko commits suicide because he feels that his uncle, Liam is a powerful politician and the father (Martin) can do nothing to protect him. Generally, Liam’s decision to rape his nephew is tantamount to the “don’t care” attitude and “self- destruction” that Kenway and Hickey-Moody refer to. When Martin and Germaine come across this revelation, they feel terribly betrayed. However, since the Wanner’s novel is a great dialogue rather than monologue, Liam is not punished—he has a right to his subversive voice.

Anil, Priya’s husband, is another subversive masculinity in Wanner’s *London, Cape Town, Joburg*. Priya is Germaine’s friend who surprises her with her insistence on marrying Anil in spite of his bisexual orientation. She tells Germaine that her relationship is a “polygamy with a difference” (92) to suggest that her husband has gay sex with a male partner before coming to have her. After marriage, Anil seems to have more desire for gay sex and loses interest in Priya. Germaine reports, “[a]nd Priya, in a marriage that had been sexless for a while (or so she said) was curious” (208) to meet a man she had been chatting with in Johannesburg.

Finally, Zuko represents the postcolonial voice to show how children are oppressed by the adult dominant group. Citing Young, Snow asserts that children are oppressed because their situation meets the criteria of the oppressed group (96). The journals that Zuko writes are symbols of an oppressed human being who can only express their discontent through writing. Besides being sexually molested by the uncle, Zuko hates the

father's migration from England to South Africa as it alienates him from friends (240), he does not like another **grand pa** that Martin introduces him to (278) and he detests being denied access to a cell phone (308). His colleagues in school have cell phones, but his parents do not allow him access. He says, "I would like to yell it out but I know if I do I will be in trouble. I walk quietly to my room and tell you, journal" (308). Zuko therefore speaks for the child who (in many African societies) lives in a binary opposition to the adult. His suicide is the only strategy of resistance at his disposal against the adult dominant group that is determined to deny the child their rights.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study set out to compare monologism and dialogism in two novels by female writers: Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Wanner's *London, Cape Town, Joburg*. From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent there are glaring differences between traditional and contemporary feminist narratives. Emecheta (who represents pioneer feminist writers in Africa) opts for monologism to directly attack patriarchal culture in African societies. Wanner on the other hand creates a dialogue of divergent voices including and not limited to radical feminism, postcolonial feminism, subversive masculinities and postcolonialism. It was found that most characters in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* such as Nnu Ego, Nnaife, Oshia, and Adim are either Emecheta's mouthpieces or remain subservient to the tenets of radical feminism. To demonstrate the demerits of patriarchy, male characters such as Oshia have to be corrupt to toe the author's ideological demands. As a result of this deliberate imposition of the feminist voice, the traditional narrative becomes superficial, predictable, preachy and boring. It also becomes offensive to the male audience through consistent male bashing and gender stereotyping. On the contrary, Wanner's characters are independent voices that represent divergent conversations and are not punished for making those choices. Liam, for instance has chosen subversive masculinity and is not punished for it to appease Wanner's ideological stance. Furthermore, although some male characters are foolish (Martin) and immoral (Ben), there are other male characters that are wise (Gianni) and strait laced (Martin's foster father). Better still, not all women are loving and caring, for example Jenny. Feminist characters such as Germaine sometimes **pose** to interrogate feminism and launch another voice. Unlike the monologic novel that upholds subjectivity and

stereotyping of characters that challenge the writer's ideology, Wanner's interweaving of voices makes the contemporary feminist novel objective, realistic, unpredictable, conversational and interesting. Monologism therefore turns works of art into propaganda pieces while dialogism enhances objectivity, hence credible sources of information. The two are divergent models that literary writers can choose for artistic expression, but this study recommends African writers to opt for the dialogic mode to express their subjects objectively. Deliberate stereotyping of characters because of gender, religion or political ideology (depending on the writer's bias) turns literature into a cause of incitement and animosity in the society. This study also recommends that studies be carried out to identify which mode between monologism and dialogism is used in the writing of memoirs and autobiographies. The writers do not use characters to express their views and hence vulnerable to ideological bias. If by any chance these types of writing are monologic then the reliability of their subjects is questionable.

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