

Intra-Gender Oppression: Examining the Girl-Child's Exploitation in Ted Elemeforo's *Child of Destiny*

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Abstract

Fictionalisation of women's oppression shows writers' commitment at different times to keep readers abreast with trending issues which are seemingly despicable to the society. This paper draws attention away from representations on the overburdened issue of inter-gender oppression; of men and women, to intra-gender oppression among women. It aims to examine the latter, with particular focus on how it is enabled in a relationship between adults and children. It considers this topic as an important literary theme that is yet to be given significant scholarship attention. Its significance rests on the fresh perspectives it offers and helps to expand on the overall issue of oppression that has continued to plague the society. It uses Ted Elemeforo's *Child of Destiny* to provide credible evidence. The qualitative analysis procedure is employed, with the support of the intersectionality theory relating to feminism, and Marxism, to explain how oppression thrives in the society despite consistent opposition. The findings affirm that women oppress and exploit members of their sex. This happens mostly in unequal social relations like, between adults and underprivileged children as demonstrated in the meeting between the text's female characters: Madam Lizzy and Ebika. It shows that this practice is aided by salient social factors like class, age, sex among others, which inevitably stand in the way of eradicating oppression. The paper, thus, concludes that oppression has to be seen as a complex phenomenon requiring multifaced approach to be eliminated.

Keywords: Fictionalisation, Oppression, Intragender, Literary Theme, Social-Relations, Intersectionality.

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INTRODUCTION

As much as literature continues to draw its fictional materials from the human society, the issue of women's oppression will continue to be attractive, and remain an unending topic for literary representations and critical discussion. Countless debates have often centred on the social system of patriarchy where society vested "supreme authority" on men at the expense of women, who have come to be identified, ideologically as "second sex". This imbalanced structuring among the sexes is the reason for societal degeneration and mistrust, evoking outcry about "oppression of women", more so, gaining widespread debate, consisting mostly of efforts aimed at bringing both sexes to a balance. It has however been impressed on the cycle of scholarship that the oppression clearly began with the masculine view of women, leading to the stereotyping of women as "passive" and "weak and the "other". This gave the ground for men to subject women to their whims and caprices. Hence, it is in this way patriarchy came to be seen as the originator of the social conflict and tension between the two sexes in societies which till date, remain insurmountable. This

is in support of Johnson's view that "society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centred...organized around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women" (2005, p. 5).

Simone de Beauvoir, among other writers, have earlier hammered on the tendency of patriarchy to undermine women in her popular book, *The Second Sex*, written in 1949. In this book, which has been called the "feminist bible" (Thurman, 2011, p. 11), she particularly draws attention to how women have been reduced to the level of slaves by the design of men through the process of "mystification and stereotyping". This is further explained in her opinion that "man defines woman not in herself but a relative to himself" (Beauvoir, 1949/2011, p. 26). It is quite understandable that her aim in this statement was to expose patriarchy; not only with the courage to challenge its biased labeling of women, but to also give impetus to further interrogation on the oppression of women, which will purposely bring about

a just social relations between both sexes, for the advancement of society. The remark by Ayidinalp (2020) that *The Second Sex* has not only impacted on the feminist theory that shows concern for women, but has also been the focus of modern feminist critics and the interest of feminist philosophers, points in the direction that the French writer has so far succeeded in sowing a seed that has yielded positive results. This can be explained, looking at the surge in the application of the feminist critical lens to all fields of human endeavour, where patriarchy has been frequently put out for criticism.

Literature, which is at the centre of this paper, has benefited maximally from the feminist criticism. In acceptance of this view, Xuan (2021) avers that feminist literature has gained popularity with critical works tending to explain how writers have made it a practice to record images of women as well as defending and fighting for their rightful place in modern society. For this reason, literature has been identified as a useful tool to propagate and counter the notions of patriarchy that placed women in the position of the oppressed sex, and men their unrepentant oppressors. By this, literary writers, whether male or female, have become advocates for the elimination of patriarchy with the hope that it will free women from oppression. This is in recognition of the potentials of women, which from the onset, were devalued, but that if given the opportunity and the space to put them to use, will make the society better. But while it makes sense to yield to this feminist line of thought, the reality of the human society has shown that oppression is not exclusive to men. It is fair to say that the oppression of women which men have been strongly condemned, has been consciously or unconsciously carried out by women as well. Quite upsetting is that such oppression is often targeted at members of their sex. This is a reality confronting modern society. As such, it has formed the basis for critical discussions and debates, especially as it undermines the foundation and motivations of feminism.

In the light of the above, literature has gotten its way through to provide an insight into this evolving problem besetting humanity. By a wider implication, writers who give shape to literature through their imaginative and artistic vision, will always demonstrate vigilance aimed at, not only feeding the public on issues of this nature, but also an obligation to suggest ways of addressing them as they arise. Literature, thus, becomes encompassing, with writers' reactions and responses to diverse issues affecting society (Shankrappa, 2023). This is the motivation behind the fictional scripting of *Child of Destiny* by the Nigerian author, Ted Elemeforo. But what has been put in the domain of literary scholarship is that the text yet focuses on the exploration of the dominant issue of patriarchal oppression of women. But what is yet to be demonstrated which this paper considers to be weighty, is the text's space that encompasses a concentration on this originating conflict among women.

This aspect is as important as past and ongoing deliberations on the shortcoming of patriarchy because of the more serious ethical questions it raises about modern society. This paper proposes to concentrate on discussing this issue as reflected in the text. The aim is to find out how women's oppression tends to be a complex phenomenon, which needs to be proven that it does not only encompass inter-gender relations, but intra-gender, with the interaction of susceptible social factors that give oppression a lifeline.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The method used is the qualitative content analysis, which according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278), "is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns". In explaining how the themes or patterns in the text relate to an intra-gender conflict arising from the social relations among women, the theoretical framework of intersectionality is relied on to provide a clearer insight to the issue. The reliability of this approach, which was the coinage by the American critical legal race scholar, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, rests on the attention it pays to the examination of how the numerous forms of oppression—such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability interconnect and relate with one another to give shape to human experiences, either individual or collective (Rahman, 2023; Hankivsky, 2014).

Intersectionality, whose root is traced to Black feminism (Ernst & Lif, 2017), favours the belief that the human life is multifaceted, based on the fact that it consists of diverse social and changing factors brought together to make it function as one single system. In this way, a single individual can experience manifold forms of oppression at the same time. As a result, issues of women's oppression that have been an enigma of the human society, cannot be addressed successfully in isolation from another, or from a single perspective. Instead, intersectionality proposes a multi-level approach to demonstrate how an individual life and experience is intersected with possibly, a larger system or structure. Thus, the oppression women face, as this paper intends to argue, is not limited to patriarchy alone, and that even among women, there are other factors, like their sex, age, economic, class that come together to give life to the oppression they experience. In literature, this theory provides a framework for examining complex representations, exploring multifaceted themes, and critiquing power dynamic ("Intersectionality", 2024, para 2). Its application will focus on looking at the experiences of character(s) portrayed in the text that are shown to suffer oppression and exploitation due to their intersecting identities.

For considerations of class, this paper also receives support from some of the ideas of Marxism propounded by Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich

Engels (1820-1895), a philosopher and a socialist, respectively (Bibi, 2015; Ahmed, 2021). As thinkers, both acknowledge the dominance of class in every society that builds up into social relations between the classes of the capitalist (owners of the means of production) and the proletariat (working class), where the latter is enslaved and oppressed by the former through the mechanism of economic control and goods' creation. In other words, the oppression manifests in the exploitation of the labour of the working class, and that it is carried out on economic grounds that benefits only the capitalists whose interest is to accumulate wealth (Tariq, 2015). In giving privilege to the class of the oppressors, a capitalist arrangement widens the gap of inequality so that the status of the oppressed is lowered to the maximum. By this way, the oppressed class, according to Awan *et al.*, (2019), becomes the voiceless and marginalized of society as they experience economic challenge. But Marxism, being sympathetic to the oppressed class, encourages that they rise up against their oppressors. Although oppression has been somewhat linked to the actions of men, Marxism is not clear in terms of the sex involved. Thus, it becomes rational to believe that women are part of the broad structure of capitalist oppression sanctioned by patriarchy. The use of this theory is, therefore, limited to explaining how women contribute to strengthening oppression as they find themselves located in the class of the capitalists.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unfolding the Nature of Oppression and Possible Dimensions in the Text

Child of Destiny, in the tradition of fiction, gives us an insight into the "lived experience" of a people, not just in the Nigerian society, but across the globe. The text's concentration on the issue of women's oppression shows that the phenomenon goes beyond the relationship between men and women, which is strongly rooted in patriarchy. What is implicated is that it depicts, more so, the growing oppression among women, thereby presenting another layer of social problems which hardly received heightened debate in the manner it has been done with the oppression relating to patriarchy. In other words, both cases manifest concurrently in our society. For this reason, it becomes imperative that a serious thought and consideration should be given, particularly, to the latter, considering that it has the tendency to complicate the motivation that drives the strong yearning for women's emancipation, if society must get things totally right. What is intended by this paper is to establish how the text has this as its undercurrent that pushes the story's plot to a successful artistic ending. This is illustrated in the writer's craft in navigating the dream-hunting journey of the girl-child protagonist, Ebika. She is a young woman of just fourteen years, who has the prompting to achieve her desire of becoming a medical doctor. This is a move that is not only to be seen as a shift from the patriarchal notion of women as unambitious, but strong-willed. But then, this wonderful ambition consequently drags her into tensed moments in her life,

charged with patriarchal disdain for the woman's worth and self-expression.

But with a vision to pursue, the writer evolves a protagonist that is set to wrestle, courageously, with a system that seems to be unchanging at all times. This is seen in the bold step she takes to disentangle her affinity with patriarchy, once and for all, by running away from home to pursue her dream, independently. Although this resonates with a compliance to the principles of feminism, which appears reassuring, going forward, it nonetheless does not only reinforce her underprivileged class status, but also exposes her to further oppressive and exploitative social relations as a female gender. In other words, in the process of freeing herself from men's oppression, the poor girl simultaneously and unwittingly runs into another form or dimension of oppression orchestrated by a fellow woman. This woman-to-woman social relations, the reader would have thought, will offer support to the poor girl's dream. However, it instead creates room for oppression to thrive relentlessly in the most worrisome manner ever seen. As Etim has pointed out, the oppression takes the form of child labour and exploitation which challenges the morality of contemporary society. Roaming the city of Port Harcourt as an underprivileged girl-child, Ebika opts to rest on Madam Lizzy, her employer, to keep her dream alive. Her hope is to work and save money, and go to school. Unfortunately, her contact with this woman originates specific cases of class and age/sex-based oppression and exploitation which the writer raises alarm as disturbing indices in the society.

i. Women as Orchestrators of Class-based Oppression/Exploitation

Men are not the only gender involved in class oppression but women too. This is exemplified in the text through the character of Madam Lizzy who plays the role of a villain to the protagonist. The character trait that is directly or indirectly publicized about her speaks volume of a path taken by women to place themselves in the class of the oppressors among the already endangered gender. By class considerations, Madam Lizzy is in the class of the capitalists, by virtue of being an owner of a business outfit and employer of labour. As a result, she exhibits the tendencies of not a natural woman of love and caring, but a capitalist who is oriented towards oppressing her workers, exploitative in her relationship with all the female workers, for reasons of their class. It is very clear that she is desperately driven by the motivation to make money out of the labour of her workers, from the restaurant business she owns. The story's protagonist as the most important victim in the text makes a confession that exposes Madam Lizzy's desperation driven by her class-oriented motivation. According to her:

The owner of the restaurant, Madam Lizzy gave me the job when she discovered that I hadn't any work experience. The following day, I wanted to be excused in order to go to the hospital for my belongings but

Madam Lizzy said no. That rather surprised me and I wondered why she didn't allow me. I later understood that she was afraid of losing me. Many of her workers had on pretext of going for their belongings ran away (Elemeforo, p. 40).

Madam Lizzy is depicted in the above to have lost every sense of morality in the sight of a victim she is all out to exploit. It is obvious that she has an idea of the principles and practices of social class relations which places Ebika at a disadvantaged position. In other words, she understands that Ebika is not only a weaker sex, but a hopeless job seeker, that must be exploited. It is, therefore, not surprising that she quickly swings into action, subjecting the poor girl to all possible forms of oppression. By doing so, she plays a complementary role to that of men, who always exercise the power of control that is privileged by the broader structure of patriarchy. Indirectly, Madam Lizzy is a feminine symbol of oppressor modelled after patriarchy and class distinction. Ebika's lamentation that she "works around the clock, sweeping, cleaning, washing dishes and serving guests.... sleeps between 11pm and 2am and wakes at 4am every day" (103), resonates with the unpleasant experiences of workers in a capitalist setting that form some of the talking points in Marxism.

There are more damaging remarks that expose Madam Lizzy's oppressive and exploitative tendencies. Take for instance, in spite of the enormous work done by Ebika, which is normal of every working-class member, she is poorly attended to. She is given little or no food. Apart from not giving her food, Madam Lizzy refuses to pay her salary for the first month. Excessive working hours or days and low or no salary are part of what Nurman, Kuncara and Mujahir (2021) list as indicators of class and labour exploitation in capitalist environment which Madam Lizzy uses to frustrate and lower the status of the poor girl. In the case of salary, she continues to withhold Ebika's salary for several months and ending in a full year. Her refusal to pay the poor girl is hinged on flimsy excuses that are morally inappropriate and unjustifiable. The pains, which this particular act normally leaves with its victims, is conveyed by the protagonist when she says:

At the end of the month Madam Lizzy didn't pay me because I broke a plate. She also didn't pay me the second month because I accidentally poured water on the floor of the restaurant. On the third month, she still refused to pay me. When I asked her for it, she told me that she lost a lot of money and didn't have any money to pay workers. When I reminded her that Kpobari, her sister was paid, she snapped at me and said I was an ingrate who didn't appreciate the kindness she was showing me by accommodating and feeding me. She threatened to send me to the village if I spoke further on the salary issue. I just shut my mouth and recoiled. I regretted ever telling her my life story. I should have listened to Ekaete, I thought ruefully.... I hardly took my

bath because there was no time for such luxury. I wore the same gown at times for two consecutive weeks without washing until I inherited another one from one of my colleagues who was leaving. At times, I even avoided the stench that came from the clothes. She'd stopped me for long from using her soap to wash my two gowns, as she claimed that soap was getting too expensive. I felt within me that I was decaying and wasting away...Madam later started calling me 'dustbin' because of what she referred to as my body odour (Elemeforo, pp. 41-45).

As mentioned earlier, this wicked act is not just targeted at the protagonist only, but all the underprivileged female workers, who have not only approached the restaurant with the hope to survive the hardship of life, but also to overcome the uncomplimentary veil cast on them by patriarchy. This view is giving evidence in the reported dialogue between Ebika and Ekaete. Ekaete, who has been around in the restaurant before Ebika's arrival, shows diligence in keeping records of Madam Lizzy's oppressive and exploitative tendencies. She seems positioned in the text to forewarn an intending victim for the sake of humanity. Hence, she confides in Ebika that Madam Lizzy is an unrepentant witch who is extremely delighted to see people suffer, while she gains by exploiting them. She calls Madam Lizzy a witch not that she is actually proven to be one, but that her intentions and actions are similar, and so fits into the description. It demonstrates the level of feminine evil that can be meted out on same sex considered unequal in terms of class. In support, Ekaete gives the example of the fate of the dishwasher, whom she replaced on her arrival in the restaurant. In her words, Madam Lizzy owed the dishwasher "six months' salary arrears and she left without the money" (Elemeforo, 42).

Generally, literary writers' humanistic concern and orientation that makes them stand out becomes more apparent in the text. This is as one takes note of how the revelation made by Ekaete pushes Ebika to be apprehensive about the person of Madam Lizzy. The revelation is important in making Madam Lizzy to be further seen as a female figure that would have been harmless, or supportive to the women's quest for empowerment and self-reliance but not. Ironically, Ebika, a deprived woman's hope of finding a safe path in another woman's enclave towards achieving the ultimate desire of her life is here shown, not only to be enmeshed in frustration, but faced with insecurity. It is evident from the fact that Madam Lizzy is conscious of a role, which shows that, either she has taking it from, possibly, Ebika's stepfather, or she is complementing his patriarchal authority. In both cases, Ebika's oppression becomes an experience that has multiple intersections. For Madam Lizzy, from the onset, to maintain her role of an oppressor in the likes of men, she has readily fashioned out in place, means to keep Ebika perpetually enslaved and impotent to free herself. This becomes

perceptible to the reader in the emotional outburst made by Ebika below:

Now I just wished someone would come and rescue me. She stopped me from discussing with people. She'd even stopped me from buying things in the market and threatened me daily that if I made attempt to run, she'd insert ground pepper in my genitals. And if I succeeded in running away, her food that I had eaten would swell in my gut and burst open, and I was going to die. I was scared-stiff because I had witnessed her insert something into the genitals of one of our workers she claimed stole her money. The reaction I had seen from the girl made my head to enlarge anytime I remembered it. It was an open secret that her Calabar juju was very potent. She used it to cast spell on people that offended her. I lived in fear and its intrinsic torment (Elemeforo, 45).

From the above, as disturbing as the image painted about Madam Lizzy tends to reveal to a discerning reader, who is disposed not just towards feminism, but humanism generally, it will be baffling that this is still not the height of evil that a female oppressor is capable of unleashing on same sex. It goes to show that there is no limit to the oppressive and exploitative forms that have been evolved in society, either consciously or unconsciously. Importantly, but rather unfortunately, it exposes the depth of cruelty that resides in the heart of humans generally, which fuels oppression. Perhaps, it can be said that there is no contentment in the exercise of any form of power relations. The oppressor must be seen to be doing everything within his or her power to achieve the ultimate objective of oppression. This is the consciousness displayed by Madam Lizzy. Her keenness to exercise the powers allowed by the social relations she is into with her workers to the extreme point climaxes in her attempt to subject Ebika to sexual abuse and exploitation.

ii. Sex/age-based Oppression/Exploitation Orchestrated by Women

Oppression practiced by women can also be shaped on the consideration of age and sex. In other words, an underprivileged girl-child is likely exposed to oppression and exploitation by a female adult because of her age and sex. Madam Lizzy's actions reinforce this view in the text. Although Ebika is alerted of Madam Lizzy's extreme behaviours to manipulate every worker, the woman's evil mechanisms prove to be effective in keeping her within the shadow of oppression. It is disclosed that the reason Madam Lizzy adopts the behaviour of withholding the salary of all the workers, except her sister, is to force them to compromise on their moral integrity. This is because she is in collaboration with her male customers who are primed to take undue advantage of the vulnerability of her workers on the grounds of their sex. The method is to order them to take food to the homes of the male customers, wherein, the

evil act of forcing them into submission for sex will be performed. It is Ekaete who had disclosed this important secret to Ebika. She discloses that Madam Lizzy only pays workers that are willing to sell their bodies to make money for her. This is an experience awaiting every worker because Madam Lizzy is unrepentant and not different from men. Therefore, Ebika faces a complicated problem, as she continues to depend on the restaurant job for survival. This latest revelation proves that Madam Lizzy will not be unwilling to utilise such opportunities the power derives from her social status privileges her. Ekaete who understand this better makes it clear to her that she must leave, because with her sex, she "didn't have future there" (Elemeforo, 42). This is a prophetic projection of the worst sexual case that awaits her as a woman of a slight age.

Yet, a naïve Ebika is stationed, seemingly predestined, just as Ekaete correctly predicted, to have a taste of the ugly reality of a life intended for her by a woman, who naturally should be protective to the vulnerability of her age and sex. Rather, what is shown is how her age and sex become an avenue for exploitation. Madam Lizzy shows the true colour of an oppressor and exploiter, by orchestrating her usual plan that sets her up for sexual abuse by one of her customers. It begins with the customer, whom Ebika describes as lanky with long beard, having the audacity to hold and squeeze her buttocks while she clears the table he is sited, perhaps waiting to be served. She protests against this immoral conduct with a loud yelling, but receives disapproval from Madam Lizzy, who makes effort to whip her to register her furiousness. Here, she intends to please the man, known to be a respected customer. More so, she does this to send a strong message to Ebika that she has no authority to her body that defines her as a "second sex". As long as she is under her employ, Ebika remains a willing object in her hands and must be controlled and manipulated. This, Madam Lizzy knows well and so forces the poor girl to take food to the man's home, just to create room for him to carry out what both of them have bargained without her knowledge and consent. As a woman of a vulnerable age, it is not important whether Ebika knows about the decision and actions that have been taken against her; because she has no control of herself.

Indeed, the writer provides an insight on how she sees herself in this relationship. She seems to respect the woman's authority, and given the fact that she is at the moment not independent, she must somewhat comply to gain favour, especially getting on Madam Lizzy to pay the months owed her. This acceptance of despondency helps to facilitate the process that finally leads her into the comfort of the intended collaborator who is readily waiting to exploit her age and more importantly, her sex. At first, when she approaches the house, she declines to enter his room, insistently suggesting that he eats the dishes and returns the empty plates to her outside. But because he knows that this is

not part of the agreement he reached with his partner (Madam Lizzy), he threatens to report her. At this point, she feels how impotent she is once again, still dependent on a job she is enslaved to. Perhaps, doubtful of what he is capable of doing, she enters the room, thereby giving him the opportunity to exploit her weakness. The assurance he had earlier given her at the restaurant, that she would not be harmed, is discarded. She soon realises that she has fallen for pretense from a suspected rapist when the man attempts to unleash sexual terror on her. The eventuality she reports that as soon as she enters the room, he locks the door and put the key in his pocket. Like Madam Lizzy, he draws upon her softness permitted by her age difference, and heartlessly takes further steps to demonstrate the man oppressor emboldened by support gotten from a woman:

He suddenly pushed me to his bed and attempted to rape me. I screamed the loudest I could and struggled with him, but he wouldn't let go of me. His grip was like vice. After a while, I became weak and just laid limpy on the edge of the bed. To my amazement, I couldn't hear a single sound outside, much less there was neither noise from outside nor a knock on the door. I was trapped, I thought with apprehension. I watched him struggle with my gown and did nothing. Then my right hand that was hanging loosely on the side of the bed touched something. It felt like a bottle. I tightened my grip on it and waited, gathering some strength. As he lowered himself on me, thinking that I'd given in, I raised the bottle. It made a loud sound as it shattered. I caught a glimpse of blood welling from his head as he slumped on the floor (Elemeforo, p. 52)

In the recounted drama above, it is very clear that the mission gains maximally from the approval of Madam Lizzy, mostly in view of the confidence with which the man attempts to rape her. It can be deduced from the scenario, too, that an oppressed female sex becomes more endangered if her most unfortunate moment is orchestrated by two oppressors, of same and the opposing sex. Madam Lizzy sold Ebika out because she believes in her firm possession or grip on the poor girl.

The man-collaborator in his part is motivated by her authority which gives him the assurance that there will be no form of protest as he is inclined to play his role. The silent outside the room, despite the loudest scream she lets out, becomes symbolic of how oppression strives seamlessly in the society. Ebika's admission that she is trapped in one way echoes the sophistication of the structure of oppression that seems insurmountable. In another way, it is an indictment on her sex as the cause of her ordeal with the criminal involvement of a sex of her own. The reader at this point cannot feign ignorance of the girl's possible dislike for her sex. If she had been a boy-child, Madam Lizzy would have spared her the trouble of selling her out for sexual gratification. Conversely, if she were to be an adult, built

of a size like man, Madam Lizzy would not have gotten the privilege and boldness to undermine her sexuality. The man, too, would have been extremely careful with her choice for sex. Then, the fusing together of these two intersecting identities becomes the ground for which the structure of oppression housed in the society acts upon her. Her triumph, which emanates from her resistance notwithstanding, there is the acceptance of the danger and fear that are to be seen in a form of oppression orchestrated by women under a social relations involving female adult and a neglected girl-child. This is an eye opener to modern society.

CONCLUSION

The oppression of women is a serious and trending issue in modern society that has kept writers busy as they dedicate their works to deliberating on developing issues of great concern. This paper's mandate has been that rather than continue to dwell on the overburden discourse of patriarchal oppression in fictional representations, it shifted focus to the fictionalization of how oppressive and exploitative traits are displayed by women against themselves in continuation of oppression despite moves by women across the globe under the umbrella of feminism to tackle and end oppression by men. Ted Elemeforo's *Child of Destiny* offers an insight to how this intra-gender oppressive tendency takes form, and how it portends a serious threat to efforts aimed at eliminating oppression of any nomenclature. As such, this paper was able to identify that an instance of intra-gender oppression is birthed in social relations between adults and underprivileged children, where the adult is privileged with the role of the oppressor, while the child, the oppressed. It was discovered that this is given leeway with the prevalence of ideas of capitalism, which contributes to the creation and separation of the adult and child into classes of the capitalists and the workers, respectively. This is so that with the influence of capitalism, adults who manage to set up productive ventures will, by their strong drive for wealth and material accumulation, resort to class exploitation, in addition to sexual exploitation, thereby cutting off the humanity of the underprivileged worker.

This paper affirmed this important insight to human experience with proof from the writer's damning characterization of Madam Lizzy as a woman oppressor and Ebika, yet an oppressed female child. Hence, a pessimistic note is uncovered in the text that should be troubling to the society for the palpable irony that the girl-child who should ordinarily feel safe, is the victim of same sex oppression. As the analysis indicate, the oppression is carried out on multiple areas, such as class, age and sex, all on a single individual. This leads to the conclusion that oppression is compounded. Suggestively, in order to tackle it successfully, it requires a multifaced approach that must include elimination of class difference and respect for the human value, notwithstanding the age and sex involved. This aligns

with Marxist belief that societies should work towards establishing a classless and egalitarian society, free from capitalist individualism, egocentricity and greed (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004).

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