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Diploma Thesis

The Nature of Motherhood in the Works of Buchi Emecheta

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely the result of my own work except where otherwise indicated. I have only used the resources given in the list of references.

Prague, 08.12.2017

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Abstract

The purpose of this diploma thesis is to analyze the experience of motherhood in the selected works of the female Nigerian author, Buchi Emecheta. The books chosen for the analysis include “Second-Class Citizen” and “The Joys of Motherhood”.

The theoretical part introduces the writer and gives an insight to the history, culture, and the position of women in Nigeria. This is followed by a discussion of universal topics reflecting the issues of motherhood: the influence of patriarchy on the institution of motherhood, the pressure to be a perfect mother, the preference for boys, and the parent-child relationship. The practical analysis reveals that the chosen topics appear problematic in the motherhood experience of the main protagonists from the selected books. By discussing the mentioned topics, the writer intends to improve the position of women in Nigeria through the strong moral teachings in her works.

Keywords: Nigerian literature, Buchi Emecheta, motherhood, patriarchy, parent-child relationship, motherhood in Africa

Abstrakt

Účelem této diplomové práce je analyzovat mateřské zkušenosti z vybraných děl nigerijské autorky Buchi Emecheta. Knihy určené pro analýzu zahrnují "Second-Class Citizen" (Občané Druhé Kategorie) a "The Joys of Motherhood" (Radosti Mateřství).

Teoretická část představuje spisovatelku a dává nahlédnout do historie, kultury a do pozice žen v Nigérii. Poté následují všeobecné náměty, jenž odrážejí problematiku mateřství: vliv patriarchátu na instituci mateřství, tlak na to být perfektní matkou, upřednostňování dětí mužského pohlaví, vztah mezi rodičem a dítětem. Z praktické analýzy vyplývá, že všechny z uvedených témat vycházejí ze zkušeností hlavních protagonistek vybraných knih. Diskuzí nad výše uvedenou problematikou se autorka snaží docílit zlepšení pozice žen v Nigérii, a proto tato její díla předkládají materiál se silnou morální naukou.

Klíčová slova: Nigerijská literatura, Buchi Emecheta, mateřství, patriarchát, vztah rodič-dítě, mateřství v Africe

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Introduction

Buchi Emecheta's work is one of the finest examples of African feminist literature. In Nigeria, she has been considered "the most sustained and vigorous voice of direct feminist protest" (Brown 35). She wrote about her personal experiences both in Nigeria, her homeland, and in England, her second home. Her realistic presentation of women in her books revealed current problems connected with motherhood and femininity and raised questions of their possible solution. Under the veil of African traditions, the struggles of Nigerian mothers might seem distant from those experienced by women in Western cultures. However, when further examined, the mutual ground of patriarchy is visible regardless of the physical location. In essence, due to the spread of patriarchy throughout the globe, women might have been subjugated and might have been given certain roles. The role of the mother became the primary one for many women, but for a long period of time, society ignored how many constraints it placed in a woman's life. In order to grant women the power of making their own choices, the discussion of the problems of motherhood had to surface. In her lifetime, Buchi Emecheta was one of the artistic voices who raised questions about the unfair state of mothers and left a legacy of strength for future generations of women fighting to defend their rights. Emecheta did not consider herself a feminist, partly due to the negative connotation of that word at the time in Nigeria, but she admitted to having stood firmly for the equality of the sexes. Additionally, the main themes of her works could be marked as the question of male-female equality, a woman's self-confidence, and pride in being a woman. Her novels are influential in the feminist movement, especially in the area of motherhood.

Another characteristic of the author is her immense pride in her Nigerian heritage and African culture. Her native country occupies a significant part of her narration and serves as a setting for the lives of the main protagonists. Emecheta's writing is intertwined with the depiction of Nigerian and, in particular, Igbo traditions. For that reason, this diploma thesis begins with the author's background and the profile of her birth country, followed by aspects of African culture to better understand the nature of motherhood in Nigeria. The study of the problematic nature of motherhood closes the theoretical part. It needs to be added that along with other sources, the thesis heavily draws upon three ground-breaking books written from the female perspective: *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* by Karen Horney, *Of Woman Born* by Adrienne Rich, and *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir (specifically, the chapter "The Mother"). Those books have been a great inspiration and laid the foundation for the

theoretical part of this work. Later in the practical analysis, two books are utilized for the research: *Second-Class Citizen* (1974) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) by Buchi Emecheta. The novels are distinct from each other in many ways. Both, however, portray a quest through which the female protagonists endeavor upon to disclose the progressive thoughts on the position of women and the role of motherhood in a woman's life. In this, the novels acquire a strong didactic element which may reveal how eager Buchi Emecheta is to warn women of possible mistakes or to inspire females for independence.

Primary findings of this diploma thesis concern the depiction of main characters as mothers who have found themselves in turmoil. The nature of their troublesome position is analyzed by portraying its causes. Patriarchy may be seen as a general cause for the characters' distress, since it has influenced various aspects of female psychology and behavior. Arguably, patriarchy has also been responsible for the nature of parent-child relationship, and even in this sphere, women feel inferior to men due to their gender. With the help of the theoretical ground, the practical analysis focuses on instances in which female protagonists may or may not constantly battle with the societal pressure in order to find a balance of being a woman, a mother, and a wife. Due to the worldwide nature of the patriarchal institution, the destiny of the protagonists from the novel serves as an example to a multitude of women, which again, proves the universality of the theme of motherhood.

Theoretical Part

1 Life and work of Buchi Emecheta

Florence Onyebuchi Emecheta, better known as Buchi Emecheta, was born in 1944 in Lagos, Nigeria. At the age of eight, she lost her father, which interrupted her studies as her mother was unable to support the family on her own. Later, a generous benefactor paid for the girl's studies and she returned to school. Her success as a student was transparent; she won a scholarship to the Methodist girls' high school, where she excelled as one of the brightest students. Due to financial and family problems, Emecheta's mother arranged for her eleven-year daughter's engagement; at the age of 16, Emecheta married Sylvester Onwordi, a fellow student. The couple had two children together in Nigeria and later moved to England, where Sylvester intended to get a university degree. However, this new life brought about many hardships for the young Nigerian family, resulting in regular fights and, emotional and physical abuse, primarily directed at the wife. Despite the problems in her marriage, Emecheta found a job at the library, where she was first inspired to write novels. Unfortunately, when she did finish her first novel, her enraged husband burned the entire manuscript. This pushed Emecheta to leave Sylvester and move, along with their five children, to a small room in the outskirts of London. Later, Emecheta worked as a teacher, simultaneously sending her literary works to publishing houses.

Buchi Emecheta began writing out of the necessity to express her dreams and idyllic imaginary life on paper. Her first novel, which was burned, was called *The Bride Price*; it was a romantic novel set in rural Nigeria. Later, however, Emecheta felt the need to transfer her life into stories, rather than imagining the perfect world for her characters. That way, she assumed, her problems seemed less threatening and it brought her some piece and relief. She began by describing her life as a single parent of five children in a foreign country, which was how the novel *In the Ditch* was conceived. This novel was followed by *Second-Class Citizen*, where the life before "the ditch" was depicted. In total, the author published 21 works, including novels, children's stories and television plays. She became a visiting lecturer at American and British universities and a resident fellow at the Calabar University in Nigeria. She received several awards in her lifetime, among which was the Officer of the British Empire in 2005 (OBE). She suffered a stroke in 2010 and died in 2017 (Encyclopedia Britannica), (Prono), (Busby).

According to Kirsten Holst Peterson, the core of Emecheta's interest lies in the liberation of African women. To Peterson, the author consciously features the traditional standing of African women in society by emphasizing the inequalities between males and females. Emecheta was not afraid of being unpopular or losing male readership; she considered candid and honest writing as the only way to change the situation for women. At her time, people in Nigeria were more opposed to gender equality as it was thought to challenge the leading position of men. Emecheta did not fear the judgment of her Nigerian audience by discussing old and contemporary problems of her country. With that, she aimed to release women from the "dubious pedestal of silent upholders of the wisdom of traditional ways" (Peterson 43). Emecheta's words illustrate her support of female independence. "Whatever they [men] think, would not deter me from writing about what I see, and how I feel – that marriage should not be the only career left to women, it should be one of the careers; and that if it fails, the woman should not be labeled a social failure and be rejected by her people and his people". ("A Nigerian writer living London" 117)

2 Nigeria

2.1 Characteristics of the country

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is the seventh most populous country in the world¹ with approximately 192 million residents. The official language is English and the president is Muhammadu Buhari (bbc.com). Nigeria is unique in its ability to accommodate more than 250 ethnic groups; of these, the four largest ethnic groups hold a majority of the political influence. Hausa and Fulani, which are predominantly Islamic, together comprise 29% of the population; the Yoruba, who practice indigenous beliefs, but also Islam and Christianity, constitute 21% of the population; finally, the Igbo people, who practice the Igbo religion or Christianity, account for 18% of the total population.

In total, Nigerians speak 380 languages, including dialects. Different religions are found in each specific region. Muslims principally occupy the northern regions, whereas the southern regions are mostly Christian. Each area employs distinct laws and policies, which creates the impression of two states within one country. Regarding the financial situation, "the South is more economically advanced than the North" (A. Bankole, et al.). The capital Abuja, which is situated in the center of the country, is far less known and populated than Lagos, the

¹ According to the United Nations calculation of 2 July 2017 (worldometers.info)

financial conglomerate of more than 13 million² Nigerians. The average life expectancy of a Nigerian is 53 years (cia.gov), (Encyclopedia.com).

The British colonized Nigeria in 1851 and continued to govern it for the next seventy years. In 1967, the country found itself in a devastated condition due to civil war and aimed to create a separate state. It was named the Republic of Biafra, which consisted mainly of Igbo people. The secessionist state lasted for three years, finally surrendering to military pressure in 1970 (bbc.com).

Due to the large number of ethnic groups and religions, Nigeria has experienced numerous social and political imbalances. For instance, Nigeria houses Boko Haram, one of the most infamous terrorist groups, next to the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda. Founded in 2002, Nigerian radicals became known across the globe for kidnapping more than 200 female students from a school in the Borno State in 2014. To the present day, only 82 of the girls have been returned; others allegedly remain tormented in a forest, where the group's base is situated. It is estimated that Boko Haram is responsible for more than 12,000 deaths within Nigerian borders from 2002 until 2016, however, the real number of victims is concealed by the government (bbc.com), (K. Uhrmacher, M. Beth Sheridan).

Despite immense oil and natural gas reserves located in Nigeria, over 62 percent of the total population lives in poverty. This can be attributed to the ineffective leadership which is notorious for unprecedented levels of corruption (cia.gov).

2.2 Women in Nigeria

On average, women in Nigeria give birth for the first time when they are 20 years old; the average fertility rate is approximately five children per woman³ (cia.gov). Along with this high rate, compared to European standards, Nigerian women also experience one of the biggest maternal mortality rates in the world: 1,100 to 100,000 live births (A. Bankole, et al.). Only forty percent of women receive prenatal care, and, since many women live in rural areas without access to a hospital, the place of delivery cannot be guaranteed, especially if they are travelling long distances for medical help. Additionally, only 14% of all women use contraception; this low percentage is one of the driving causes behind the high number of adults with HIV/AIDS (savingmothersgivinglife.org). As the population continues to grow

² 2016 EST.

³ 2016 EST.

rapidly, policies must be implemented to improve the safety and effectiveness of prenatal and delivery conditions. Insofar, a lack of government funding has delayed the improvements, driving women to depend on charity organizations and foreign budgets (A. Bankole, et al.).

Continuing with the image of a typical Nigerian mother, it needs to be mentioned that a Nigerian mother is foremost an African mother. Many African women share similar ways of rearing their children. However, religious differences influence the culture in which a child is raised. For example, Igbo women, the ethnic group of which Buchi Emecheta and her main characters belong to, combine Christian traditions together with Igbo indigenous beliefs. Most women attend church services with their families and ensure that their children pray regularly. A distinguishing feature of Igbo mothers is the high value they place on education and the pressure they put on their children to be successful students: “In their eyes, school is more important than anything else in life; the first thing you have to do is study, and the rest are details” (Ndem).

As the result of the gender equality movement, women in Nigeria have begun to change their views towards female liberation. Progress is visible as the number of feminist voices from Nigeria increases, including notable authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Not long ago, African people were indifferent to Western movements; this attitude continues to this day. Africans attempted to maintain the original culture and traditions from pre-colonial time and many people still distrust anything that has its roots in Western culture. Specifically, one problem that many African nations experience is the continual repercussions of the former colonizer’s policies combined together with Western imperialism (Peterson 35-36). Masculine leadership is considered an inherent part of African culture, and even today, some women feel conflicted about putting the gender debate ahead of other issues. To many people, feminism is seen as a threat to African identity, which people do not want to lose. Nevertheless, modern authors such as Adichie, propagate gender equality and provoke discussions on the topic among African audiences.

2.3 Spirituality in African culture

In his book *African Religions and Philosophy*, John S. Mbiti interprets the meaning of “living-dead”; this term is well-known throughout the African continent. To Mbiti, physical death does not correspond with spiritual death. When a body deteriorates, a person steps into the higher world, a state which the author calls “living-dead” (Mbiti). The human is not present, but is celebrated and reminisced by his or her family and future generations. In order

for the person's spirit to attain glory, many people must commemorate him. Hence, the more children that there are in a family, the more prosperous afterlife a human receives through their descendants' thoughts, recollections, and prayers.

In Africa, a majority of people believe in life before and after physical death. This belief is spread among many African nations, including the Beng people of the Ivory Coast and Nigerians. For example, a child is considered a newcomer from another world. A child's soul is thought to emerge from "wrugbe," or a "spirit village," and mothers respect their child even before the physical birth, as it is a human already given a spirit by higher powers of a sacred world. For a certain period of time after the birth, the mother, along with the help of female family members, provides excellent care to make a child "stay in this world" so the baby would not want to return to "wrugbe." In this, the mother and her family not only try to keep the child alive, but also do as many pleasant things for the child as possible. Overall, Africans view infants as spiritual beings reincarnated and sent as blessings to the family. The significance of the mother in some African cultures can be attributed to the general belief in her abilities to connect the present world with another world by giving birth (Boyer and Malone).

2.4 Time in African culture

The notion of time acquires a peculiar meaning in Africa. In his analysis of traditional religion, Emeka C. Ekeke explains that, in African perspective, time is simply the occurrence of events in the life of an individual. People do not consider the future to be abstract without an end. To Africans, the future represents a concrete event that is about to happen, for example, the beginning of the rainy season, a neighbor's wedding, or a friends' gathering. "According to the traditional concept, time is mainly a two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long past, a present and virtually no future. In the Western thought, time is reckoned with an indefinite past, present and infinite future" (Ekeke). He adds that events that have not occurred cannot constitute time. To Africans, life resembles a sequence of events that may repeat themselves or stay singular. The former include harvests, seasons, and holidays, whereas birth, marriage, children, and death are encompassed in the latter. A person is complete when he or she experiences every event in the sequence, such as being born, the naming ceremony, and so on. "These initiation processes are what reveals his age and by extension his time on this earth" (Ekeke). The idea that marriage and birth of children are essential steps in the life of an individual follow from this belief. It is virtually impossible to

omit the stage of reproduction given the value it is attributed. It is so improbable that this stage is skipped that the only valid explanation is a woman's infertility, in which case her husband has to "take measures" either by arranging for a second marriage or health treatments for his wife.

2.5 The sense of community in Africa

In Africa, man is indivisible from the community. Examples of this include African marriage ceremonies, festivities, and burials, all which include the whole neighborhood. (Ekeke). A human never exists by himself. The assertion by Mbiti demonstrates this: "I am because we are, and because we are, I am" (Mbiti). Omonzoleje in Udo agrees and adds to the matter: "In African Traditional Society, there is no "me" but "us"; no "my" but "ours". It is within these perspective and context of no "me" but "us" no "my" but "ours" in a given traditional African society that African ethics has been formulated" (Ekeke). Consequently, people are expected to contribute positively to society, since their actions reflect on every member; the results of an individual's undertakings belong to society as a whole. Naturally, members fear to defy acknowledged norms, as it may negatively affect their immediate and extended family. In addition, the difficulty concerning innovations lies in people's pride in their traditions and religion. Due to motherhood being an imperative step in woman's life and its close connection to spiritualism, it is easy to see why women may prefer the unwanted path for themselves to avoid bringing shame to their lineage. "Man must watch strictly his conduct so that it does not bring nor cause calamity for him or for the society at large" (Ekeke). It may be viewed that one of the standpoints in African ethics is the evasion of disgrace, even for the sacrifice of a human's life.

3 Nature of motherhood

3.1 The institution of motherhood as constructed in patriarchy

The nature of motherhood which most modern people have an image of is intricately connected with certain rules and accompanied by certain restrictions. Adrienne Rich believes the institution of motherhood has nothing to do with raising children, just as the institution of heterosexuality does not center on affinity between partners. Rather, both set a guideline for people to follow and discourage improper choices, including homosexuality and childless women. Rich sees the unfairness of this set of rules, since they are not realistic for all humans

(100). Various authors posit patriarchy as the social setting for the establishment of motherhood.

Adrienne Rich considers an individual family unit to be the heart of patriarchy. The goal is the possession of property, from which the desire to pass property into the hands of biological family members follows. Simone de Beauvoir believes this desire is linked to the wish for immortality. A man realizes that a woman can give birth to his child who can make him immortal, both in a spiritual way by burying him, praying for him, and giving sacrifices to Gods in his honor, as well as in real life by inheriting his property. “At this crossroads of sexual possession, property ownership, and the desire to transcend death, developed the institution we know: the present-day patriarchal family with its supernaturalizing of the penis, its division of labor by gender, its emotional, physical, and material possessiveness, its ideal of monogamous marriage until death (and its severe penalties for adultery by the wife), the “illegitimacy” of a child born outside wedlock, the economic dependency of women and children to male authority, the imprinting and continuation of heterosexual roles” (Rich 130).

Because of the established domination, the dualism of powerful-powerless was produced. Women and mothers fell into the category of powerless, which resulted in turning everything they were and everything they did into a negative polarity. An example of this would be the status given to morals that were acquired at home. Before, a woman was limited to the private sphere of her home, where she was attached to the husband, looked after children, and took care of the house. “Her work was done within the confines of the family circle and therefore was based only on emotionalism, in contradistinction to more impersonal, matter of fact relations. Another aspect of the same situation [was] that love and devotion came to be regarded as specifically feminine ideals and virtues” (Horney 114). The topic of dualism will be further explored in the thesis; however, it is important to note the immediate occurrence of dualism within the establishment of patriarchy. Due to that occurrence, women have learned to see themselves as “other” (Beauvoir 630) and prescribe a negative connotation to the female gender.

3.1.1 Before patriarchy

In her essay *Equality, Asymmetry and Diversity*, Rosine J. Perelberg states that “Maine and McLennan, the founding fathers of social anthropology, argued that any suggestion that a matriarchal order had at any time prevailed was purely speculative and suggested that a patriarchy was a universal feature of human society” (ed. by Ann C. Miller,

Rosine J. Perelberg 37). Despite this claim by anthropologists, suggestions have been made that the early days of the human race experienced a situation opposite from ours today. Matriarchal societies could have been the cause behind family establishment due to natural reasons: females hold a great power of giving life, and this power alone can make women incomparably strong and dominant. Marie Langer suggests that this is the reason why historians have attempted to prove that matriarchal societies were the first of their kind in the primitive times (Langer). Robert Briffault, an influential social anthropologist of the twentieth century, believed matriarchy was intended by nature. The life of mother and a child is filled with creativity: growing, inventing, producing, and crafting. Patriarchy, in Briffault's view, happens when man takes control of this order by establishing the economic authority. Man keeps the power "through force or economic pressure, [which] could only exist with the advent of private ownership and the economic advantage of one group over another" (Briffault 433-35). Two leading theorists on women, Helen Diner and Elizabeth Gould Davis, who were greatly inspired by J.J. Bachofen and Robert Briffault's findings, argued that since a woman was the source of life and her physiology was connected with repeated cycles, she should have naturally been in charge of the family in prehistoric civilization. Her former power is the cause of her oppression today, according to Shulamith Firestone (Rich 148). The sociologist Philip Slater presented records of matriarchy in the early Greek society, which had later changed into a patriarchal society (Rich 148). Joseph Campbell, who explored prehistoric mythologies and pursued the image of Great Mother or Great Goddess, found female statuettes to be "the first objects of worship by the species *Homo sapiens*. But there [was] a shift in the magic, ritual and imagery of *Homo sapiens* from the vagina to the phallus, and from an essentially plant-oriented to a purely animal-oriented mythology" (Campbell 315).

3.1.2 The shift

Frederick Engels associated the end of matriarchy with the beginning of the male right to private ownership and slavery. He believed women married or became prostitutes due to economic dependency and argued that the equality of the sexes would only be possible when private property was abolished (Engels 73). Adrienne Rich is convinced that it is precisely because of "materialist analysis" and "masculine bias" that Engels believes an economic solution will bring sexual emancipation (213). "He [F. Engels] fails to understand that it is the mother-son and mother-daughter relationship, as much as, perhaps more than, that between man the buyer and women the bought, which creates the sexual politics of male supremacism"

(213). Other views on causes of patriarchal dominance include those of Robin Fox, who recognizes the increasing role of a protective father, “It was the men who hunted the game, fought the enemies, and made the decisions” (Fox 27-33).

The change in the dominant roles in society not only altered woman’s social status, but also brought a change to her psychological state. Karen Horney considered a woman to have been an important contributor to a family’s economy, since she had many tasks around the house and the number of children could not be limited at that time. A woman “was provided with a sound basis for self-esteem” by being a vital component of the household (Horney 117). When she gained dependency on her male partner, she “lost one foundation for feeling herself valuable” (Horney 117).

3.1.3 Dualism

Firstly, throughout the patriarchal world, dualism exists between men and women, or rather the gender that holds the power and the subjugated gender. The example of this dichotomy could be attributed as the legacy of Sigmund Freud, who in his theories tended to divide psychic factors into opposites (for example, ego/instincts and masculine/feminine) (Horney 41).

Secondly, dualism is present in the image of a woman versus the image of a mother. The former is a well-depicted myth: a woman’s body on its own is impure due to bleedings; it is dishonorable and constantly provokes sin. On the other hand, a mother is asexual, pristine, and respectable. Karen Horney affirms that puritanical beliefs have made a woman’s sexuality low and sinful. Later, “in a patriarchal society, this attitude was bound to make woman into the symbol of sin; many such illusions may be found in early Christian literature. This is one of the great cultural reasons why woman, even today, considers herself debased and soiled by sexuality and thus lowered in her own self-esteem” (Horney 41). A woman with the same body experiences a change in society’s perception of her after having a child. The rise of social status may strengthen the desire to become a mother. In order to maintain two distinct images of females, “the masculine imagination has had to divide women, to see us, and force us to see ourselves, as polarized into good or evil, fertile or barren, pure or impure” (Rich 87). Simone de Beauvoir also sees the injustice in such division: the contempt shown for women and the high regard applied to mothers. The French author comments on the lack of free choice, including of career, to women, but the readiness with which “the most serious of all undertakings: the formation of a human being” is given to her [a woman] (Beauvoir 644).

Thirdly, on the opposite end of the spectrum lies the notion of mothers and childless women. Apart from a few specific exceptions, such as nuns or temple virgins, a woman is not considered righteous until she bears a child. Motherhood is seen to justify a woman's life, whereas a childless woman does not follow the religious and cultural standards. Madonna is idealized as a mother in Christian tradition; the Goddess-Mother in Hinduism bears heads of individual queens who represent force, wealth, and knowledge. For West Africans, Yamaya is the goddess of creation who is normally depicted as a mermaid and is associated with fertility and rearing. Yoruba people in Nigeria credit Yamaya for the emergence of the oceans and the birth of the first mortals. Influenced by religion, European, African and Asian literature often contained depictions of mother-martyrs who fully protected their offspring despite casualties. The image of a fierce mother was so powerful that it was later used as the emblem of the anti-colonial wars in India⁴ in the 1940s and in South Africa in the 1980s-1990s (science.jrank.org). Patriotism was invoked by connecting motherhood with the image of the native land.

Adrienne Rich argues that all of the above-mentioned dichotomies have been used to manipulate women into rejecting childless lives. Again, no generality should be applied to women, as each case is individual. Rich argues it is necessary to abandon these polarities by reintegrating the thinking process itself. What is considered logical, emotionless, and rational should not stand for supreme, powerful, and intellectual. On the other hand, intuitive, spiritual, and loving should not be attributed a negative connotation. Furthermore, rejecting dualism in a woman's question may affect other known polarities, such as the "untouchable," the "unmanly," the "nonwhite," the "illiterate," and the "invisible" (Rich 135).

3.1.4 Denying maternal instinct

Motherhood is defined as being a mother, or a female parent (Cambridge Dictionary), but a maternal role is marked by biological characteristics inherent to females. In particular, a maternal role is interpreted as "the behavioral responses to what is expected of the new mother and what the mother sees as responsive mothering" (Elizabeth N. Emmanuel et al. 266). Not everyone, however, agrees that woman possesses innate psychological abilities to be a mother, since the diversity of the female gender is too massive to impose the role of mother on the gender as a whole.

⁴ Bharat-Mata – Mother India

In the twentieth century, there was a significant discussion on maternal instinct. Previously, it was considered that women were naturally predisposed to loving their offspring. It was thought that women raised children well because they had an inherent instinct for it, and therefore parenting came easier to women than to men. As a contrasting argument, Simone de Beauvoir proposed instances of healthy women who became deeply depressed and neurotic after having a child (641). Helen Deutsch, a psychiatrist who studied motherhood, claimed the maternal role was enough to fulfill a woman. However, to have a child must be a woman's choice and she must possess a deep desire to become a mother. "The young woman must be in a psychological, moral, and material situation that allows her to bear the responsibility; if not, the consequences will be disastrous. ... Only a balanced, healthy woman, conscious of her responsibilities, is capable of becoming a "good mother" (Beauvoir 642-643).

Adrienne Rich believes that nurturing a newborn is not instinctual to woman. The author calls pregnancy and childbirth "the rite of passage" occurring with heavy psychological changes, after which a woman learns to rear a child on her own (52). Learning involves mistakes and errors and receiving advice and following directions, none of which comes by instinct.

Elisabeth Badinter, a French author, discussed motherhood in *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical Overview of the Maternal Instinct*. The writer provided details of the research in which she summarized 300 years of mothering practices in France in a graph, where motherly love peaked before the seventeenth centuries and then again in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The seventeenth, the eighteenth centuries, and the 1960s were characterized by an increase in fatherly involvement in their children's lives, and therefore their love and attention exceeded that of the mother. From this, Badinter derived that maternal love was a social myth. The author denied maternal instinct in general, saying there were many factors contributing to maternal love, such as a woman's character, the behavior of her children, and cultural and traditional values. The author also illustrated cases of maternal detachment, such as sending a child to a nursery, camp or boarding school. If mother did love her child, Badinter considered it to be privilege and luck. "It is an additional advantage, an extra" (Badinter 327). Despite the author's claims, her empirical study was highly controversial and attracted much criticism. Her research lacked scientific credibility and numerous women found her arguments inconclusive (Macintyre 237).

Due to various authors' opinions and disputable scientific research, maternal instinct may one day be proven a socially selected phenomenon, at which point, attaching maternal instinct to women may be regarded as manipulation imposed by patriarchy. Imposing responsibility for a child's upbringing on women, simply because women are "built" by nature for the job of parenting is a potential result of such manipulation.

3.1.5 Feminine psychology

3.1.5.1 Penis-envy

One of the most well-known phrases by Sigmund Freud states that anatomy is destiny. He says that a woman's wish to be a man translates into her wish to possess a penis, while a man fears demonstrating his feminine features due to his dread of castration. The repression of these biologically determined properties result in neuroses. Women, in particular, experience a turning point when they realize they do not have a penis. Freud calls this "the discovery of her [woman's] castration" (Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*). In a standard development penis-envy evolves into a wish for a child, which "is meant as a compensation for her bodily defect" (Abraham).

According to Freud, any potential desire, drive, or ambition that woman may have comes from a wish to have a penis. If a woman has resentment towards her gender, it stems from the same source. To Freud, even the desire to dress modestly comes from the wish to "hide the "deficiency" of her genitals" (Horney 104). Traits of abnormal jealousy in woman are explained as a wish for a penis as well.

Karen Horney, a German psychoanalyst who used Freud's theories in her practice with clients, doubted the theory of penis-envy mainly because of the three following reasons:

1) Little girls frequently talk about wanting to have a penis or hoping it will appear. However, they also often express a desire to have breasts.

2) Before puberty, some girls desire to be a boy and act accordingly (for example, by wearing men's clothing or, using specific perfumes). Horney adds that such tomboyish behavior may not indicate penis-envy, but rather reveals a girl's opposition or inner discontent with her appearance.

3) Adult women who express a wish to be a man, who dream of having a penis, and who negatively react to the inferior position that female gender brings, typically have neurotic tendencies, since wanting to be a male is not a characteristic of a healthy woman. (105)

3.1.5.2 The “lack of truth”

In his *Three Essays* of 1915, Sigmund Freud indicated that the biological self did not correspond to the psychological self. The process of gender attribution (when a man learns he is a male, and a woman learns she is a female) happens in social groups⁵; hence, gender is a role that is acquired and not inherently given. Freud’s discussion of sexuality refers to his concept of the System Unconscious.

In terms of differences between biological and psychological realities, Freud contrasted penis with phallus: “Penis designates the anatomical and physiological reality” (J. Laplanche, J.- B. Pontalis 56). Phallus represents a concept. The thought of Jacques Lacan is that the phallus signifies the mother’s desire. Karen Horney cites Alfred Adler, who suggests that the wish to be a man may simply indicate the desire to possess all of the privileges that are considered masculine in our society, “such as strength, courage, independence, success, sexual freedom, right to choose a partner” (108), hence Adler agrees with Lacan. Karen Horney believes it is the nature of the circumstances surrounding a person that have the most significant impact on him or her. In particular, Horney attributes the most importance to the environment in which a child is raised (108).

Simone de Beauvoir strongly disagrees with the theory that a woman replaces her desire for a penis with a wish for a child. The French intellectual argues that in a child, woman may find pleasure in domination, and that she sees a child exactly as a man sees a woman: “an other” (630).

Elizabeth Janeway, along with Clara Thompson and Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, proposed that Freud intended the castration of females to be a metaphor, since he had an idea of what kind of stance women took in a society, but chose not to examine it further. The penis vs. phallus theory was not applied to women and Freud did not stress the environmental and cultural factors which influenced feminine psychology. Due to these factors, Janeway called this “lack of truth” political and A. Rich called it poetic and scientific (Strouse 58), (Rich

⁵ This thought was later reflected in Simone de Beauvoir’s phrase “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”

353,359). It could be stated that such “lack of truth” remarkably influenced the perception of women and motherhood in society.

3.2 Pressure on mothers

The notion of a perfect mother has become a societal norm. In the twentieth century, media strongly propelled the image of a heroic mother, who was entirely responsible for the well-being of her children. In May 1977, the British magazine “*Women’s Weekly*” printed an advertisement for a vitamin drink, declaring “keeping a family fit and well is what being a mum is all about” (group@circ.org). Thirty years later, an advertisement campaign for Mr. Clean products featured the words “This Mother’s Day, Get Back to the Job That Really Matters” alongside an image of a mother and a daughter admiring cleaning products (Bedros). Numerous examples exist that depict the characteristics of the ideal mother. It seems that certain rules have been set in place to ensure a child is raised properly, and the responsibility for the successful “outcome,” as has been already mentioned, falls on the mother.

3.2.1 Pressure to be a perfect mother

According to the British Social Issues Research Center in 2011, the pressure for females to become perfect mothers originated from women’s magazines and media advertisements, which depicted mothers as flawless, almost inhuman, creatures. First in the 1920s and 1930s, a child’s psychological health, as well as his or her sanitation and diet, was regarded with the utmost importance. This coincided with the increased use of vitamins. Due to the high infant mortality rate of the time, medical experts, such as Truby King in 1927, advocated for strict regimes consisting of timely feedings, a strict sleep schedule, and avoiding too much direct contact between a mother and her child. In 1950s and 1960s, Dr. Benjamin Spock advised listening to instincts when rearing a child, rather than following precise rules. Medical professionals also could not overlook the question of breastfeeding. In 1929, breastfeeding was popularized due to its hygienic nature: compared to other sources of milk for a child, it was a safer and healthier alternative. Today, breastfeeding is propagated for its brain enhancing qualities that can increase a child’s IQ (group@circ.org).

In 1951, the psychologist John Bowlby spoke at the World Health Organization about the necessity for mothers to attend to their children’s psychological needs. He believed in establishing an exclusive relationship between a mother and her child, and emphasized its positive effect on the child’s development: “What is believed to be essential for mental health

is that the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment ... A state of affairs in which the mother does not have this is termed “maternal deprivation“ (Bowlby). Bowlby stated that mothers who failed to bond with their offspring robbed their child of an important experience. As a result, society was no longer satisfied with mothers simply providing basic needs, such as feeding, dressing, training and teaching, and instead asked each mother to become a “protector of [her] child’s innocence, perpetuator of all social activities, pediatrician, therapist and consumer protection expert” (S.J. Douglas, M. W. Michaels).

In 1942, Philip Wylie introduced the concept of “Momism”. In his description of the meaning, he outlined all of the typical characteristics of a mother in the twentieth century. In his view, mothers were so determined to become who the media advised them to be that they were “smothering” their children with attention, and, as a result, were raising dysfunctional, dependent offspring (Wylie).

Furtermore, in her book *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, Sharon Hays provided an explanation to what she called the problem of “anxious parenting”. According to her, the “intensive mothering” propagated in the twentieth century placed unrealistic expectations on mothers. Such high standards for a child’s upbringing stemmed from the fact that mothers alone were bestowed the responsibility of performing all activities with the child, as well as for caring for the child’s mental and psychological health (Hays). Pressure on mothers became too severe, however, improvements have since appeared.

Firstly, scientists and psychologists avoided the term “perfect mother”. In 1953, the pediatrician and psychoanalyst David Winnicott came up with a definition of a “good-enough mother,” referring to the universally acknowledged level of mothering with no extraordinary demands from a female parent. The term was meant to allow mothers not to seek impeccable societal reviews on their skills, but merely do the best they could. Moreover, Winnicott believed that a child’s independence was a beneficial characteristic for an offspring to possess. With this, a child learned self-sufficiency and did not rely heavily on his or her mother for everything; a good parent was the one who recognized that. “The good-enough mother ... starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant’s needs, and as time proceeds she adapts less and less completely, gradually, according to the infant’s growing ability to deal with her failure” (Winnicott 89-97). It was not a natural behavior for a human

to deny someone's independence, therefore, such behavior should not have been practiced (Winnicott 89-97).

Secondly, the concept of "quality time" was introduced. In her academic research, Susan Roxburgh argued that time spent with children was the main attribute of a successful parent. "A good parent is defined as one who spends as much 'quality' time with her or his children as possible, and a bad parent is one who fails to make quality time with children a priority. Thus, the dominance of the anxious parenting ideal would suggest that time with children is an increasingly important aspect of the parenting experience" (Roxburgh).

Thirdly, the aforementioned controversial author Elisabeth Badinter discussed the influence of modern culture on the concept of a perfect mother. In her book *Conflict: The Woman and the Mother*, she analyzed the construction of three branches directed at pressuring mothers. These included "ecology" as the attempt to return to basic times with no need for modern high-quality products, the study of animal behavior, and finally an "essentialist feminism" which advocated for natural birth and breast-feeding (Steven Erlanger, Maia de la Baume). Badinter presented these "trends" as dangerous practices for modern mothers since they deprived the mother of comfort. "The specter of the bad mother imposes itself on her even more cruelly insofar as she has unconsciously internalized the ideal of the good mother" (Badinter). Once again, the book was received with mixed reactions. (Steven Erlanger, Maia de la Baume).

Finally, Simone de Beauvoir discussed the strain directed at mothers. What "anxious parenting" was to Sharon Hays presented a "masochistic devotion" to Beauvoir. The French author called such behavior harmful to a child, since instead of cultivating their own development, mothers entirely focused on their offspring degrading themselves psychologically to the point of "morbid anxiety" (558). Beauvoir also called such a devout mother an "unfulfilled woman" who bore numerous inner issues: sexual discontent, social subservience to men, lack of future prospects, and a desire to offset her struggles through becoming a mother (556).

In short, psychologists, family therapists, and female writers have slowly begun to agree that mothers do not, in fact, need to seek perfection in their role as a parent, since this behavior is harmful to the child's health and the extreme attentiveness may negatively affect a child's behavior in the future.

3.2.2 Permanent observation

In 2010, Henderson, Harmon, and Houser conducted a study called “A New State of Surveillance?” which raised another debate about motherhood: blame from fellow mothers. The authors also focused on the self-blame mothers imposed upon themselves when raising children. Middle-class or upper-middle class mothers were the center of the analysis, since the era of “momism” expressed itself among females of these classes more often than, for instance, working-class women (A. C. Henderson et al. 231).

Researchers based the work on the theory of Michel Foucault, which portrayed “the social evolution of punishment between 18th and 19th century France” (A. C. Henderson et al. 234). Foucault divided punishments in two types. The first was **retributive**, described as a performance for the crowd, such as when an individual was brutally tortured or murdered publicly. The second form implied **permanent observation**, which Foucault compared to the circular panoptical prison; this type was extremely onerous due to the psychological pressure not only from the police officer (in case of prison), but also from the perpetual watch of fellow criminals. This watch brought feelings of extreme inadequacy to the convict, which evolved into delusions of continual observation by others, even when this was not the case. This chronic vigilance forced the inmates to behave at all times (A. C. Henderson et al. 235).

Authors of the project assimilated Foucault’s ideas with the New Momism notion and came to the conclusion that mothers underwent analogous pressure. Researchers distinguished between **formal** and **informal settings** in which the mothers’ behavior was observed. Medical workers and teachers were included in the formal setting. Their pressure was considered to be formal since they observed how mothers followed the established rules of raising children through regular check-ups at hospitals and school meetings. In this case, the judgment was not severe, even though parents were informed if their child did not conform with the accepted norm. This proved that parents were observed by an “external authoritative figure.” “As in Foucault’s discussion of prisoners, where they were to internalize the gaze of the supervisor, so too do parents” (A. C. Henderson et al. 235). Another evidence of formal surveillance was the media, which idealized what constituted appropriate behavior of mothers in public. No mother was encouraged to openly punish her child, otherwise she would be judged by onlookers.

Child-rearing standards, proposed by social institutions and media, raised the mother’s fear of constant observation, which resembled Foucault’s prisoners. “This is where Foucault’s

ideas become post-structuralist in nature; people begin surveilling themselves and others without the necessity of formal institutions” (A. C. Henderson et al. 235). The danger of such surveillance was that it became mechanical, with no apparent author, but ubiquitous. In the case of mothers, Henderson, Harmon, and Houser argued the biggest pressure came from fellow mothers and that it was subliminal, not intentional, in nature. This sort of surveillance was practiced in informal settings, such as at playgrounds, shopping malls, and cafes, where mothers could meet and spend time together.

The outcome of the research confirmed the authors’ hypothesis: “New Momism is most powerfully perpetuated at the interpersonal, not structural, level” (A. C. Henderson et al. 240). That is, mothers do not require social institutions to develop self-blame, disturbance, and fear while raising an offspring, but they typically cultivate the mentioned aspects while communicating with other mothers. In addition, the study revealed the high level of stress mothers put on themselves, which demonstrated Foucault’s idea once more: the observation was omnipresent with no visible source. “Over one fourth of mothers felt compelled to ... write in that their expectations come from “self” (A. C. Henderson et al. 241).

The distinctive result of findings lay in the fact that mothers blamed *themselves* for not fulfilling social and cultural norms. They did not expect the standards for child rearing depicted in the media to change, nor did they acknowledge the influence of these standards. Researchers named such behavior the “horizontal violence,” citing Freire who defined it as a scene where the accusers blamed their peers, not the repressors (Freire). Instead of changing the rules, mothers conformed to the image of a perfect parent, analyzing their slips and misses while observing the behavior of fellow moms. Authors compare such conduct to a police station without a police officer. “With intensive mothering, everyone watches us, we watch ourselves, and we watch ourselves watching ourselves. Motherhood has become a psychological police state” (S.J. Douglas, M. W. Michaels).

3.3 Mother-child relationship

Adrienne Rich believes that through the mother-child relationship, woman may improve the status of the female gender. In order for men to respect and uphold gender equality, they need to be raised in an environment where equality is enforced. In order for women not to feel subjugated, they need to have a strong role model, most commonly found in the mother, as a child. According to Freud and Horney, who agrees with Freud on this matter, it is during childhood when both conscious and unconscious developments begin.

3.3.1 Oedipus complex

In his *Interpretations of Dreams* in 1899, Sigmund Freud introduced the concept of the Oedipus complex⁶, which described the “sexual attraction to one of the parents with a concomitant jealousy toward the other parent” (Horney 79). According to Freud’s description, the sexual desire of a child caused such intense jealousy that it could only be released through repression. The most significant contribution this theory has made to the scientific world is the importance attributed to the early social ties in human’s life. It is the first relationship, typically experienced between a parent and a child, which mold a person’s character and lays the foundation for his or her future behavior (Horney 87).

In his 1925 essay, Freud discussed the pre-Oedipal phase, in which both girls and boys possessed feminine and masculine qualities. At this stage, all children prefer a mother to a father; later, girls give stronger favor to their fathers, whereas boys distance themselves from their mothers as they learn they will eventually have a woman of their own. This revelation allows boys to create their identity, which pushes them to connect more with their father. Boys also acquire the status of their fathers’ heirs. Simultaneously, girls, despite connecting with their mothers, abandon her as a role model and gravitate instead to their fathers. Freud mentions that this turning point for girls goes with an increase in enmity towards their mothers. Thus, it may be proposed that the mother experiences a “double loss.” Initially, she is the most important figure in a child’s life and both boys and girls feel a strong attachment to her. They want to prove themselves to her and be the object of her love and affection. In the beginning of a child’s life, the mother is the essential parent; only when the father appears “as the embodiment of law,” he disrupts the relationship (Langer 196).

Freud’s theoretical grounding of the OC is controversial today. What Freud portrays as being essentially jealousy between a mother and her daughter may be interpreted simply as the daughter turning to her father because he is a stronger figure in her life who can offer better protection. In this case, turning from one parent to another may be more socially and culturally conditioned (explanation is patriarchy), rather than a biologically pre-determined outcome. In a parent-child relationship, Karen Horney distinguishes between **the sexual attachment** and **the anxiety attachment**. The latter, she believes, does not require sexual desire. “In the incestuous attachment the goal is love, but in the attachment conditioned by anxiety, the main goal is security” (84). From this may follow that the anxiety attachment

⁶ Further as OC in this chapter

happens when a child gravitates toward the more powerful and authoritative parent. Using this argument, Horney, with the help of anthropological observations, challenges Freud's theory when she implies that the OC is not a biologically determined phenomenon, but the one that depends on a set of generational arrangements in a family life, such as "the role of authority of the parents, seclusion of the family, size of the family, sexual prohibitions, and the like" (84).

This is essentially why a mother may "lose" her children's adoration – because she cannot compete with father in offering security to the children, based on her inferior status in society. If the situation changes, specifically if the mother and father are granted equal societal status, a boy might turn to father as to a male figure, but a daughter might stay with her mother. In this case, the mother and daughter will have a bond that, in terms of security, is very rare today. Adrienne Rich explores this "broken bond" between many females and their mothers. She attributes its appearance mainly to patriarchy.

3.3.2 Mother-son vs. mother-daughter relationship

Today, the general desire for a male child over a female child in a family has not diminished. In an article dedicated to this topic, Susan Brink notes that in 1995, there were only six countries with male dominance in gender, but today, there are 21 countries (Brink). According to the United Nations World Population Prospects, countries with the highest male-female disproportion in 2015 include Azerbaijan, China, Martinique, Vietnam, and India. A 2011 Gallup survey indicates that men in the United States prefer having a son rather than a daughter (49% to 22%, accordingly), while women are nearly equal (31% to 33%) (Newport). A United Nations Population Fund report states that there is a "lack" of 117 million females in Eastern Europe and Asia in 2017 (unfpa.org). Resulting problems of gender imbalance include "rising violent crime rates, increasing rates of gang activity and rebel group activity, increasing prostitution and trafficking, and greater constraints on the movement of women" (Brink). Nevertheless, boys are still the preferred gender in many countries.

Simone de Beauvoir offers one reason for this preference. To her, mothers wish for a son because they want to raise a hero, who is typically of the male gender. It is also easier for a son to gain governing positions and achieve a higher economic status (Beauvoir 560). If they establish a close relationship with one another, a mother can leave her mark on the world through her son's deeds (Rich 345). In Africa, where the preference for boys is very strong,

other reasons may be found. A mother of sons is called “the mother of...” adding the name of the oldest son when being addressed (Olayiwola and Olowonmi), which gives her a higher status in comparison to mother of daughters. Additionally, it is more probable that a son will be able to provide for his parents when they are old, weak, and helpless. It is also a son’s obligation to give the deceased a vast and lavish burial. After marriage, a daughter moves in with her husband’s family and begins taking care of them rather than her own parents (Akujobi).

A daughter usually shares her mother’s social role and is fully controlled by her. A mother projects her life on a daughter and treats her as a replica, instead of as a partner. Due to this, the mother puts massive expectations on her daughter, and when the daughter does not live up to these expectations, serious conflicts may arise between them (Beauvoir 561). Adrienne Rich attributes the main conflict between mother and daughter to the mother’s lack of power. Rich argues that daughters need to feel female devotion, genuine love, and unconditional support to become complete women themselves. When they see their mothers blindly following the prescribed social role of a powerless individual, they turn against their mothers. Rich speaks of the importance of identification, and a child typically does not want to identify himself or herself with a socially weak parent (345, 426). However, daughters may be influenced not only by their biological mothers, but also by all women they meet throughout their lifetime. Rich proposes that all women should in some way be mothers to other women, and in this, the writer sees the “solution” to mother-daughter conflict. Women should bond, share interests, spend time with each other, and support one another’s goals and aspirations. This relationship – women’s relationship with one another - is the essential relationship that patriarchy has dismissed, according to Rich, and it must be restored and maintained (439-466).

Practical Part

4 *Second-Class Citizen*

4.1 Background

In 1974, Buchi Emecheta became known as a critically-acclaimed author, after the publication of her second novel *Second-Class Citizen*. Some people believed that in order to understand Emecheta's writing style in fiction, one had to read nothing but that novel (Frank 479). The book was semi-biographical, where Emecheta expressed her thoughts through the main protagonist, Adah. The thoughts included views on marriage in Nigeria, the rightful position of girls in society, and hardships of the immigrant life. The novel tells a story of the main character's personal development; readers follow Adah from her childhood into her adult years. In the article "A Nigerian Writer Living in London", Emecheta shared that the experience of writing the novel was a sort of therapy, during which she could release all of her remaining resentment after her difficult life in London and her divorce from her Nigerian husband. The author also mentioned the gratification she felt after receiving numerous letters from women, thanking Emecheta for helping them by writing this book (Emecheta 115-116).

4.2 Plot

Adah was born in Lagos into the family of a railway man and a seamstress. From the early years, she had an immense desire to be educated and a dream to study in England, the colonial power of Nigeria. She had a naïve perspective towards the United Kingdom, considering it to be the perfect country, full of smart and kind people incapable of doing wrong. Adah's father died when she was eight years old, after which she was sent to live with her mother's relatives; here, she had to perform all household chores to be allowed to study. First, Adah attended the Methodist school, and then won a scholarship to Methodist Girls' high school. She still wanted to move to England, but for that, Adah required a husband, which was one of the reasons she married Francis Obi, a student who could not afford to pay Adah's bride price. Later, Francis moved to study in London; Adah followed him with their two children. In London, the living conditions were dreadful and the family had to share a house with other Nigerians. Since Adah found a job at a library and kept the children with her instead of giving them to foster care, fellow Nigerians turned against her and made her move out. Adah and Francis settled for a house in a devastating condition with their three children. Throughout Adah's stay in England, she had terrible fights with the husband, which resulted

in her physical and emotional abuse. The couple had two more children, but after Francis's behavior worsened, Adah left him and moved to a separate room in London with her four children, and the fifth on the way. During the trial concerning Adah's protection from Francis's assaults, the husband refused to support his family financially and Adah fully consented to being the sole caregiver of five children.

4.3 Analysis

4.3.1 Patriarchy

According to Igbo customs in Nigeria, a man acquired a wife by paying her bride price before marriage. The exact price mainly depended on a woman's family wealth, her education, and her beauty. Any man who was able to afford the bride price was considered as a potential husband; thus, a girl had little to say on her choice of the future spouse. Such tradition left many Igbo women and Adah, in particular, feeling that a Nigerian girl was nothing but "a piece of property" (Emecheta, *Second-Class Citizen* 34). Apart from the bride price, girls also experienced inferior treatment in regards to their education. In the novel, the value the Igbo people placed on education was stressed; they respected and invested in their children's future through education. People believed in education being the primary step towards future prosperity. Within her family, Adah witnessed her parents investing money in her younger brother's schooling, whereas she was believed to need no education for her predicted career as a seamstress. Experiencing such an unfair treatment, Adah became so eager to learn that she started lying to her parents and running away to lessons. Later at school, because of her gender, she disguised her aspirations for the future: "She [Adah] never told anyone she was dreaming of winning a scholarship. That was too big an ambition for a girl like her to express." (20) Adah often rebelled against the injustices committed against her gender by misbehaving. For instance, she refused to see potential suitors when they visited her home. They were old and wealthy, while she was hardly in the beginning of her teenage years. However, only they could afford her high bride price. "She would never, never in her life get married to any man, rich or poor, to whom she would have to serve his food on bended knee: she would not consent to live with a husband whom she would have to treat as a master and refer to as 'Sir' even behind his back. She knew that all Igbo women did this, but she wasn't going to!" (19) Adah believed that a happy marriage made a woman's life, so she decided to choose a husband for herself.

After finishing Methodist Girls' High School, Adah realized she wanted to continue her studies, but she needed a home for that. Since her parents were dead, she found she needed to marry in order to avoid societal judgment. "In Lagos, at that time, teenagers were not allowed to live by themselves, and if the teenager happened to be a girl as well, living alone would be asking for trouble." (22) The fact that Adah required a home, with a husband and relatives, was the main reason for her marriage. She chose the man herself and did not look down on his financial struggles. When the couple moved to England, Adah discovered that Francis' freedom was far greater than hers. He allowed himself to cheat with various women, live on his wife's income, and spend less time taking care of their children. "To him [Francis], a woman was a second-class human, to be slept with at any time, even during the day, and, if she refused, to have sense beaten into her until she gave in; to be ordered out of bed after he had done with her; to make sure she washed his clothes and got his meals ready at the right time. There was no need to have an intelligent conversation with his wife because, you see, she might start getting ideas." (165) In addition, it was expected of Adah to apologize after any argument. In England, whether at her work or at the hospital, Adah was mostly surrounded by British women, whose behavior made Adah question the fairness of her traditions towards female gender. Using her grim experience as an example, Adah made a decision to raise her own children differently, adapting to modern standards with no bride price, which might humiliate a woman, and no attached misogyny, typical for men in her tribe (121). It took the protagonist a huge amount of effort to break gender stereotypes, to separate from her husband, to pull away the pressure of the families in Nigeria and to live on her own with her children. It could be stated that the heroine served as an example of feminine liberation in almost inhumane circumstances. The character traits Adah acquired during her childhood could be the reason for her rebellious tendencies and the strong need for social justice.

4.3.2 Adah's childhood

4.3.2.1 Relationship with the parents

Second-class Citizen is a great representation of how childhood happenings can influence a person's adult life. In her early childhood, Adah had both parents. She developed a close relationship with her father, who she fully trusted, was supported by, and feared less than her mother. In addition, "Pa thought Adah was the very picture of his mother ..." (15)

Her strong bond with the father might have been the reason for her general assurance in men. “She had a tendency to trust men more because her Pa never let her down.” (149)

Once, Adah decided to go to school without telling her parents since they would not have allowed her. She disappeared from the house and hoped that the teacher would not tell her parents. “Pa would be all right: he would probably cane her, you know, just a few strokes - six or so, not much - but Ma would not cane, she would smack and smack, and then nag and nag all day long.” (12) Due to Adah’s disappearance, Adah’s mother was brought to the police station for child neglect. At the police station, police officers told the mother to let her daughter go to school since she wanted to learn so much. Adah’s mother listened to their advice. Her relationship with Adah was so weak that she had never truly noticed her daughter’s strong desire for education, and only when men pointed out her daughter’s strengths, she listened. Adah’s father died when she was eight years old. After his death, she lost her main protector and was unable to rely on anyone for help. “She was aware that nobody was interested in her since Pa died. Even if she had failed, she would have accepted it as one of the hurdles of life.” (20) Adah became an orphan and was inherited by “her mother's elder brother as a servant. Ma was inherited by Pa's brother, and Boy was to live with one of Pa's cousins.” (17) It could be proposed that the girl felt abandoned by her mother, who was her only parent at that time. She also was extremely disappointed when the mother married again, especially since it was an unhappy marriage. Apart from that, at the age of eleven she was told she could not continue going to school anymore since the mother’s funds were running out and the remaining sum had to go towards the schooling of Adah’s younger brother. As a result, Adah needed to find a job and help her mother financially. The girl did not want to do that, so she was happy to win a scholarship and escape to the Methodist Girl’s School for five years.

In many cases, Adah felt betrayed by her mother. She felt a close connection with her father, who passed away early, and her mother was never an exemplary figure in her life. It could be stated that the girl felt the need to rebel against her own gender and traditions, partly because she did not want to resemble her mother. In her adult life, Adah did not leave her children alone, despite the profound financial struggles and emotional abuse from her husband. She refused to favor boys to girls, and instead, put the same amount of love and effort in raising each of her children, regardless of their gender. The degree to which Adah wanted to save her marriage is also notable; this is most likely due to the resentment she carried towards her mother for remarrying and her desire to avoid a similar destiny for her

children. Her distrust in women, which started with her mother, transferred into her adulthood: “Women still made Adah nervous. They had a way of sapping her self-confidence.” (12)

4.3.2.2 Relationship with the relatives

After Pa’s death, Adah was sent to live with her mother’s relatives for approximately three years, from the age of eight to eleven years old. It was likely that those were the most formative years for Adah, which tremendously influenced her future life and relationships.

She lived in a small house with her uncle, his wife, and their four grown sons. To them, she was an unpaid servant and did all the household chores, beginning at four-thirty in the morning. She adapted to the tiring work every day, fending for others with no reciprocity and accepting her hardships, simply because she was a girl. “Children, especially girls, were taught to be very useful very early in life, and this had its advantages. For instance, Adah learned very early to be responsible for herself. Nobody was interested in her for her own sake, only in the money she would fetch and the housework she could do, and Adah, happy at being given this opportunity of survival, did not waste time thinking about its rights or wrongs. She had to survive.” (18)

She also experienced the strongest beating by one of her cousins, Vincent, when she lied about losing two pounds. She was given money to buy food at the market, but she needed this money for her entrance exam. Adah knew it was the only chance for her to get this sum, so she lied about losing it. Vincent hit her with the firmest stick more than a hundred times; Adah never forgot the pain. She developed a strong vengeance towards her relatives, and she felt great satisfaction for disappointing them later in life. Her relatives never helped her financially, but insisted on collecting her high bride price. It might have been for that reason that Adah chose a poor man who could not afford to pay it; none of her relatives spoke with her after this incident.

Adah’s relationship with her uncle’s family laid the foundation for her relationship with her husband, since almost the exact same traits were present in both relationships. In her marriage, she was also a servant rather than a full partner. She always tried to please her husband with any achievements she could make, be it finding a house to live, or getting a well-paid job. “She did not delude herself into expecting Francis to love her. He had never been taught how to love, but he had an arresting way of looking pleased at Adah's

achievements. Adah hoped she would never stop achieving success. Maybe that would keep the marriage together until they got back to Nigeria.” (74) In addition, she asked for no reciprocity, support, or acknowledgment of her success. She felt responsible for both of their well-beings. She always felt she needed to win her husband’s affection. In a sense, the role distribution in the marriage was very unconventional since Adah was the provider. Nevertheless, her gender and possibly her childhood hardships made her feel inferior to Francis. In England, Francis started to beat Adah severely, which left the woman in a state of emotional numbness, but did not drive her to leave him. Only the burnt manuscript of her first novel and the fear for the children’s safety encouraged Adah to turn against her traditions and separate from Francis.

4.3.2.3 Relationship with the in-laws

As a teenager, Adah had a strong desire for a family, caring parents, and a house. Francis’s family gave her that. “As for her mother-in-law, she was everything that Ma was not: quiet, beautiful, and motherly. Some of Adah's friends used to think that she was Adah's real mother, they were so close. But she suspected somewhere in her heart that the contentment she had then was superficial.” (30) It could be said that because Adah had a general distrust of women, she could not believe in her mother-in-law’s pure intentions. She felt that her relationship with Francis’s family was beneficial for both parties. Adah had a great income and financially supported her in-laws, while in return, she acquired a full family. In Lagos, the spouses never seemed to argue, since Francis appeared to be the best version of himself next to his parents.

In England, however, the situation changed and Francis became aggressive towards Adah. Adah placed the blame on her mother-in-law for spoiling Francis: “There were so many girls in the family that the boys grew up thinking they were something special, superhuman creatures.” (97) Despite that, she still appreciated her. When Francis found out that Adah secretly went to a doctor to order contraception, he wrote about it to his family in Nigeria. Adah was devastated. “She knew that, after that, things were not going to be the same any more. She cried then. She was lonely again, just as she was when Pa died and Ma married again and she had to live in a relative's house.” (146)

Later on in her marriage, Adah realized she had missed the signs of Francis’s behavior towards his mother. Perhaps Francis was beating Adah because he was mimicking the same

behavior he had seen growing up: “My father knocked my mother about until I was old enough to throw stones at him. My mother never left my father.” (172) At the same time, Adah endured the beatings since she was used to them since childhood. In addition, Francis was selfish in the marriage, likely due to the fact that he was selfish as a child as well. As Adah pointed to him, “You never loved or respected her [his mother]. You simply tolerated her, I know that now, because it never crossed your mind to work and send her money like other Nigerian students do. ... It was always you, you all the time and she, poor soul, was always giving and giving to you. To her nothing is too much, no human is good enough for you.” (172) As Adah was analyzing her own past with the past of her husband, the reader also noticed how much childhood relationships shaped the characters’ lives.

4.3.3 Pressure on mothers

In this novel, mothers potentially experienced permanent observation of their mothering skills. Even in London, where the couple moved after Lagos, relatives in Nigeria were always aware of Adah’s actions thanks to written correspondence.

Adah was lucky to be able to conceive children easily. “She was very prolific, which, among the Igbos, is still the greatest asset a woman can have.” (26) She felt respected in Lagos for raising her children well, but motherhood in England acquired a different twist. Nigerian women in London, at the residence where Francis and Adah stayed, gave their babies for adoption. Virtually no children lived there with their parents, and Adah felt great judgment from the housemates, as well as from the landlord, for keeping her offspring. “When the children cried, the landlord would stamp upstairs, warning them that they were disturbing the other tenants. The landlady, still childless, claimed that Adah was showing off her children.” (71) Everybody, including Francis, was pressing Adah to give the children to a foster mother, but she refused. As a result, the family had to move out and find other accommodations, which was extremely difficult to find at the time for Nigerian immigrants with kids.

In Lagos, Francis was delighted with children, but in England, they were a nuisance to him. He blamed his failing exam scores on his family. “He blamed it all on her [Adah]. If she had not brought her children and saddled him with them, if she had allowed them to be fostered, if she had not become pregnant so soon after her arrival, he would have passed.” (48) In addition, Francis refused to watch the children while Adah was at work and referred to them as being solely “her” children. “In Nigeria, when children were good, they were the

father's, they took after him, but when they were bad, they were the mother's, taking after her and her old mother.” (45)

Despite this displeasure with his offspring, Francis rejected the idea of contraception. He believed if Adah took it, she would be able to cheat on him with other men. Under severe emotional constraints, Adah went to a doctor in secret. “It was the picture of her mother-in-law when she heard that Adah went behind her husband's back to equip herself with something that would allow her to sleep around and not have any more children. She was sure they would interpret it that way, knowing the psychology of her people. The shame of it would kill her. Her children's name would be smeared as well. God, don't let Francis find out.” (145) Francis did find out and immediately wrote to his parents about it.

Throughout the novel, it seemed that the whole responsibility for the children's well-being rested with Adah. As was previously mentioned, she exempted Francis of all duties, but when she saw that the actions of the husband negatively affected her children, she considered leaving him in earnest. At court, Francis denied financial help to his five children after separation, and Adah took all of the offspring upon herself, “The children are mine, and that is enough. I shall never let them down as long as I am alive.” (174) In her life, Adah could not enjoy being a proud mother that the Nigerian society urged women to be. Conversely, she was shamed for having many children and was pushed to give them for adoption. The negative reaction to her prolificness as a mother caused her to question her traditions. Marriage and multiple children did not bring about the contentment Adah had expected. She started to believe that the values of traditional Nigerian family did not apply in a foreign country. Later, the protagonist started analyzing the fairness of other customs, such as bride price and the preference for male children.

4.3.3.1 Maternal instinct

An example of strong maternal instinct is present in the novel. When Adah was at her job in the library, she went for a walk during the lunch hour. When she returned, her colleague was ready to give her the news about her children. Adah had known that it was about Vicky even before the colleague uttered a word: “Yes, how had she known? How could a mother tell another woman who had never given birth to a baby that sometimes she lived in her children? How could she explain that if her son underwent an operation her own body would ache; how could Adah tell Cynthia that when she was looking at the fishcake, she had

seen Vicky's wet face, twisting in pain, reflected in the window? There was too much to explain; too much about herself as a human being that she did not know. She just felt these things.” (56)

4.3.4 Boys versus girls

Adah knew that her parents had expected her to be a boy. She was a disappointment to all of her extended family; hence no one recorded her birthday: “She was so insignificant.” (5) Later, she felt jealous when she took notice of how family members treated her brother with special care. “This envy later gave way to frustration, which she showed in many small ways. She would lie, just for the joy of lying; she took secret joy in disobeying her mother. Because, she thought to herself: If not for Ma, Pa would have seen to it that I started school with Boy.” (10) Adah might have had a strong desire to be male since she wished for everything that the male gender possessed.

When Adah gave birth to her first child, it was a girl, and even though the parents were pleased with the baby, her in-laws visibly expressed their frustration. “Everybody looked at her with an 'is that all?' look. She had had the audacity to keep everybody waiting for nine months and four sleepless nights, only to tell them she had nothing but a girl. It was nine good months wasted. She paid for it, though, by having Vicky soon afterwards.” (112) It was not explicitly stated in the novel if Adah had a closer relationship with the boy or the girl, however, having children gave her a sense of fulfillment.

In England, Adah witnessed the rejection of gender preference in children. She heard a nurse in a medical center say that her daughter was a person, too, despite being female (61). Later, when Adah was staying in a hospital after having delivered her third child, she saw women happily boasting about their children, regardless of if they were boys or girls. After that, Adah never mentioned being happier about her sons. She did, however, recognize that in Nigeria, boys were the preferable gender. “In her society, she could only be sure of the love of her husband and the loyalty of her parents-in-law by having and keeping alive as many children as possible, and that though a girl may be counted as one child, to her people a boy was like four children put together? And if the family could give the boy a good university education, his mother would be given the status of a man in the tribe.” (61) Adah, in contrast with Francis, adapted to the British mentality and rejected gender favoritism amongst her children.

4.3.5 Women's relationship with each other

Despite Adah's suspicion towards fellow women, it was ultimately the women in her life from who she gained the most knowledge, inspiration, and strength. Growing up, Adah heard from her parents that women in the village of Ibuza were allowed to engage in a physical confrontation. "If a woman abused your child, you went straight into her hut, dragged her out, beat her up or got beaten up, as the case might be." (8) Another custom in Nigeria was creating songs for various occasions. "Native housewives used this method a lot. If an older wife of a polygamous marriage wanted to get even with a younger rival who was the favorite of the husband, she would make up all sorts of songs about the younger woman. Many women would go as far as to teach their children these songs, which were meant as a kind of psychological pressure on the young woman." (72) Overall, in Lagos, Adah experienced rivalry with other women, which mainly stemmed from the desire to please men. When the protagonist found a job at the library in London, she was surrounded by women. She felt ashamed that she had so many problems at home, when her colleagues, who were the same age, had never experienced anything like Adah had. "They made her feel inferior somehow, always talking of boyfriends and clothes." (43) Among her illiterate housemates, Adah eventually found a friend named Janet. She was intelligent, friendly, and always agreed to look after Adah's children for her. The most significant case of female support, however, happened in the hospital ward. Adah went through a serious surgery and was on the verge of death, when women surrounded her in an attempt to lift her spirits. "They were kind, those women in the ward. ... They seemed to be telling her to look around her, that there were still many beautiful things to be seen which she had not seen, that there were still several joys to be experienced which she had not yet experienced, that she was still young, that her whole life was still ahead of her." (110) Nevertheless, after the incident was over, Adah could not bring herself to talk to them anymore. She kept thinking of her poverty, comparing her cheap robe and her unhappy marriage to theirs. Her inner dissatisfaction with her life protruded into a suspicion that other women were gossiping about her, and she decided not to reveal any additional details about her life. At the end of her stay, she decided not to say goodbye for the fear of them discussing her old clothes.

It might be stated that Adah could not trust in women's friendship because of her relationship with her mother-in-law. She expected a female friendship to be a bargain, where both sides contributed something valuable to the relationship. Adah believed her mother-in-law was satisfied with her only because of her high income; therefore, other women also had

to have something on their agenda. Due to her loneliness, Adah always carried depressing thoughts inside of her. “In England, she couldn't go to her neighbor and babble out troubles as she would have done in Lagos; she had learned not to talk about her unhappiness to those with whom she worked, for this was a society where nobody was interested in the problems of others. If you could not bear your problems any more, you could always do away with yourself.” (94) She was too fearful and too responsible of a mother to consider suicide, but by the end of the novel, she still did not find a female helping hand. However, she found an outlet for her emotions – she became a writer.

5 *The Joys of Motherhood*

5.1 Background

The book was first published in 1979 and instantly brought critical acclaim to Buchi Emecheta. The title of the novel is clearly ironic, since the plot is focused on portraying the biggest hardships of motherhood. The novel begins with a portrayal of the pre-colonial Igbo society, followed by the colonial era in the international city of Lagos, where traditional values concede to modern innovations. Emecheta shared that she had written the novel to warn all mothers that they should not have expected anything in return for their care and dedication to their children; the joy of being a mother was the joy in fending for your children. The writer offered a moral that mothers should have learned from the main character: “whilst giving all, one should keep something, some self-respect, preferably a career, or a business” (Emecheta 120).

In her article “Unpopular Opinions: Some African Women Writers,” Kirsten Holst Peterson analyzed the contradictory position held by the main protagonist of the book. According to Peterson, African men were undignified by white settlers during colonization, so they “clung even more tenaciously to the power they had over the women and children within their own group” (116-117). The last victims were women like Nnu Ego, who vigorously fought the dreadful poverty by endeavoring to be businesswomen, but were unable to do so because of the traditional African views of a woman’s role.

5.2 Plot

Emecheta’s fifth novel opens with Nnu Ego attempting suicide due to the loss of her first son. Nnu Ego was infertile in her first marriage, and after the divorce, her father found

her a new husband in the city of Lagos. After the traditional village life, life in Lagos appeared improper to Nnu Ego. It took her a long time to become accustomed to her new husband, Nnaife, and the new reality of city life. Soon after, she gave birth to a son, who died, but within a short period of time, she gave birth to another son. Once Nnu Ego became a mother, her financial situation worsened. Her husband was sent to fight in World War Two and the protagonist was left to take care of four children by herself. She became involved with illegal trading, but still could not make ends meet. When her husband returned home with some money, the couple sent their sons to school and had their daughters receive private lessons. Later, Nnaife inherited a second wife after his older brother passed away, and the new wife moved to Lagos to live with the family. Nnu Ego had more children, seven of whom survived past childhood. The novel's apex was when the husband tried to kill another man because his daughter decided to marry the man's son and run away from home. Since the in-laws were from another tribe whose tradition did not include the bride price, the husband became furious and started a fight with a knife. He withstood the trial, in which it was evident Nnu Ego was the family's main provider which publicly humiliated the husband. Nnu Ego married off two of her oldest daughters, and her sons went abroad to continue their studies; as a result, there was no one left to take care of Nnu Ego in her old age. She went back to the village of her ancestors, where she later died. All of her children reunited at the expensive funeral organized by her sons.

5.3 Analysis

5.3.1 Change in patriarchy

Life in pre-colonial Nigeria is depicted at the beginning of the novel. During this time, the original Igbo culture was developed in accordance with a strong patriarchal tradition. The proper roles of two genders were strictly divided. "You are [said to Nnaife] to give her children and food, she is to cook and bear the children and look after you and them." (Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* 71) In the pre-colonial era, the patriarchal regime was intricately connected with physical strength and social power. One could not be a leader without possessing qualities that facilitated hunting, killing, fighting, and providing for a family. Such qualities included bravery, physical strength, quick decision-making, and a sharp wit. "Nwokocha Agbadi was a very wealthy local chief. He was a great wrestler, and was glib and gifted in oratory." (31) Men in big cities, such as Lagos, during this time period were subjected to the British patriarchal system as well as their race. Patriarchy was experienced as

a twisted institution, where one could potentially become successful without possessing physical strength. Nnaife worked for a British man washing and drying his clothes all day. Nnu Ego found this job disturbing, since she was used to men being farmers and typically doing physical job. “Every time she saw her husband hanging out the white woman’s smalls, Nnu Ego would wince as someone in pain. The feeling would cut deeper when, with sickening heart, she heard Nnaife talking effusively about his treatment of dainty clothes and silk. The man was actually proud of his work, she realized.” (47) Nnu Ego was confused by this altered version of Nnaife as a male: she discovered new, unappealing qualities in him that she identified as feminine, but she had to accept the fact that this was his life. The perception of feminine-masculine characteristics abruptly changed in big cities in Nigeria as a result of the country’s colonization. Masculine ideals fell, and in this situation, a woman deliberately took charge. “Not only did life in Lagos rob him [Nnaife] of his manhood and of doing difficult work, now it had made him redundant and having to rely on his wife.” (87) Life in Lagos required a change of character, which, in turn, asked for the change of traditional values.

In order to maintain their status within their ethnic group in Lagos, Nigerian men acquired a British mindset and retained their values concerning marriage and children. Men exercised their power in a variety of ways throughout their novel that confirmed the patriarchal system of the time. Firstly, due to gender alone, men considered themselves superior to women; as Ubani, a family friend, stated: “A woman may be ugly and grow old, but a man is never ugly and never old. He matures with age and is dignified.” (71) Secondly, Igbo tradition allowed men to own their wives indisputably by paying their bride price before marriage. As Nnu Ego claims at the court: “Nnaife is the head of our family. He owns me, just like God in the sky owns us. So even though I pay the fees, yet he owns me. So in other words he pays.” (217) Thirdly, the traditional system of patriarchy was built on an explicit hierarchy that found its way into women’s lives. In a family with multiple wives, the most important wife was the first wife who bore a son. The younger wives would then follow her orders, and if the age gap was significant, even call her “a mother”. For example, Nnu Ego offended Adaku’s cousin, and when Adaku called upon men to resolve the conflict between two wives, men stated that since Nnu Ego was a senior wife of three sons and Adaku had no son, she could not complain about Nnu Ego’s behavior (165). Next, as a consequence of communal way of living, poverty in a village was not apparent. Everyone helped everyone and a person could always rely on farming. This way, a woman could have many children and not fear

awful living conditions. Finally, there was a strong sense of female spirit in a village: women had their own gatherings and older women always supported young mothers and provided them with advice.

The urban lifestyle differed drastically from the rural one. In Lagos, a Nigerian conglomerate of ethnicities and cultures, traditional Igbo values were challenged. As was mentioned before, men often had to rely on women for financial support. Also, the notion of “owning a wife” by paying her bride price vanished within one generation of Igbos. In a conversation with Nnu Ego after the court, Adaku stated, “Nnaife does not own anybody, not in Nigeria today” (218). Then, the hierarchy among wives in a family unit changed. Adaku was the second wife in the family, but she became equal with the first wife, as a product of her financial success. She was also considered a rebellious wife for leaving her poor husband and becoming independent. In regards to the way of living, individualism as a characteristic of people within society quickly spread as the sense of a community simultaneously weakened; this can be attributed to everyone trying to survive on his or her own by working constantly. Presumably, this change also affected mothers and female friendships. Poverty, endless work hours, and numerous children prevented Nnu Ego from attending women’s gatherings and sharing news with friends. All of these changes resulted in Nnu Ego living a different kind of life; she ultimately realized the mistake of not adapting the new rules.

The peculiar standpoint of Nigerian patriarchy was its transformation during the colonial period, similar to as how other spheres of life also changed. Women were still bound to traditions since they had less contact with the colonizers. The task of cultural preservation rested with the females more than with men. Nnu Ego was depicted as an example of a firm traditional believer who suffered as a result of maintaining pre-colonial, traditional views on a woman’s role and motherhood. Adaku, on the other hand, bridged the Ibo values with the modern societal senses and gained a more comfortable life than Nnu Ego.

5.3.2 Dualism

In Nigerian pre-colonial society, the difference between men and women was truly vast due to the strict role distribution. In modern Lagos, because of financial strains, women often had to work and earn their own money. This practice, however, did not change the women’s inferior position to men, since a majority of women had multiple children and depended heavily upon their husbands’ income. Gender roles were implemented immediately after birth, so from a young age, children were aware of their limits and possibilities.

The contradiction of childless woman versus mother seemed to have endured the biggest change in the novel. At the beginning, in the village of Ibuza, women had children immediately after marriage, which was what Nnu Ego intended to do. Her case, however, was exceptional since she could not conceive a child with her first husband, Amatokwu. Family pressure and, more importantly, her husband's refusal of her, resulted in an emotional breakdown, which then led to her stealing a child from another wife. Nnu Ego was severely beaten for her actions and was returned to her father's house. In her second marriage to Nnaife, as a mother, and more specifically as a mother of a son, Nnu Ego felt fulfillment from being the "right" woman. Despite her financial problems, she gave birth to nine children, seven of whom stayed alive. Only in the end did she question her decision to fully dedicate herself to motherhood. "How was she to know that by the time her children grew up the values of her country, her people and her tribe would have changed so drastically, to the extent where a woman with many children could face a lonely old age, and maybe a miserable death all alone, just like a barren woman?" (219)

What distinctly stood out in the novel was the division between mother of sons versus mother of daughters. The former had higher status in society, both in the village of Ibuza and in the city of Lagos. This status granted Nnu Ego great respect from all of her neighbors, friends, and acquaintances, and especially from her distant family. "All because she was the mother of three sons, she was supposed to be happy in her poverty, in her nail-biting agony, in her churning stomach, in her rags, in her cramped room... Oh, it was a confusing world." (167) Nnu Ego's position contrasted with Adaku's one, who only had two daughters and was the second wife in the family. The pressure to have a son made Adaku leave the house and become involved with prostitution. Despite Nnu Ego's hardships, she fully embraced the role of the mother, possibly because she was deprived of it at the beginning of her adult life. "I don't know how to be anything else but a mother. How will I talk to a woman with no children? Taking the children from me is like taking away the life I have always known, the life I am used to." (222)

Another present antithesis in the novel was of a "bad" and a "good" woman. Nnu Ego's mother Ona was considered mischievous, and was called "a rude, egocentric woman who had been spoilt by her father" (14) with a "heart of stone" (17) simply because she refused the role of a wife. As opposed to Ona, Agbadi's senior wife Agunwa was "so unobtrusive, so quiet" (22); she was a virtuous woman who helped the younger wives in Agbadi's household. In addition, men in Ibuza appreciated women who were "helpless

without them” (36). A good woman had to combine being a helpful daughter, an exemplified mother, and a loyal wife. If a woman did not comply with any of those descriptions, she was viewed unfavorably. In Ibuza, as well as initially in Lagos, the fear of such labels strongly affected a woman’s decision-making. Ato, Nnu Ego’s childhood friend, warned her of what might have happened if Nnu Ego had not overcome the death of her first child: “You know our people, you would not be the only one to suffer; your father would never live it down. All your many sisters would find no husbands, because it would be said that madness runs in the blood.” (74) Often, in order to avoid bringing shame to one’s family, women married men who they despised, did not speak up about their husbands’ awful treatment, and avoided contact with people who had been given a bad reputation. Nnu Ego doubted her friendship with Mama Abby due to the social position of the latter, even though Mama Abby was one of her best friends: “Her [Mama Abby’s] other child, a girl called Bena, had had to get married very early and was never forgiven for bringing such disgrace to her family; so Mama Abby had no young grandchild to look after.” (107) The ultimate example of a “bad” woman was Adaku. Upon her appearance in the novel, the reader found she was an ambitious woman: “Even Adankwo in Ibuza had warned of Adaku’s ambitiousness” (168). Emecheta did not elaborate on the definition of this trait at first, but later, it became clear that Adaku was referred to in this manner because she had interests outside of being a wife and a mother. She wanted to achieve a solid financial status as well as be a respectable person. When she learned that the latter was impossible without having a son, she chose a different path for herself. Her qualities, such as hard work, dedication, and leadership skills, were always undermined and even disapproved of in the community. Emecheta seemed to have doubted the traditional notion of a “bad woman” in her depiction of successful, prosperous and cheerful Adaku, who nevertheless remained an outcast.

5.3.3 Denying maternal instinct – a case in the novel

One specific instance in the novel called maternal instinct in question. Before Nnu Ego’s birth, her mother and father agreed on special terms regarding who the child would stay with after the delivery. Since the parents were unwed, Ona and Nwokocha Agbadi decided that if a girl was born, she would live with the father, and if a boy was born, he would stay with the mother. When Nnu Ego was born, Ona left the child with Agbadi, as she had promised. Ona went back to her father and spent two years in his village before her father’s death. Her actions might have implied that she did not feel a strong urge to be with her daughter. She knew Nnu Ego was safe with Agbadi and his family. She presumed her

daughter would be loved and cared for; therefore, her presence was not required. This example might be a fraction of what Elisabeth Badinter presented as a “parental love graph” denying the maternal instinct. However, some details were unclear in the novel, as Buchi Emecheta only briefly mentioned this episode. (27)

5.3.4 Pressure on mothers

Mothers in Nigeria experienced permanent observation of their child-rearing methods due to the communal sense of living. Nnu Ego’s first marriage collapsed because of her inability to conceive a child: “Nnu Ego and her new husband Amatokwu were very happy; yet Nnu Ego was surprised that, as the months passed, she was failing everybody. There was no child.” (31) It was not explicitly stated in the novel why Nnu Ego was not able to get pregnant, however, the severe pressure of both families and her own neurotic longing for a child could have potentially affected her health and created a psychological barrier, which transferred into her physiology. The only way to avoid this would have been to eliminate stress from her life and ensure that she received the support of family members. Nnu Ego experienced the opposite: Amatokwu became distant and resentful towards his wife, since to him, Nnu Ego’s barrenness reflected on his masculinity. Amatokwu soon married another woman who gave him children, after which he refused to take Nnu Ego in earnest: “I am a busy man. I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line. If you really want to know, you don’t appeal to me anymore.” (32) The negative turn in the couple’s relationship - a new, fertile, and therefore desirable, wife, coupled with Nnu Ego’s fear of bringing shame to her side of the family - might have been the reason behind Nnu Ego’s eventual outburst. “On the eve of the day Amatokwu’s second wife was giving birth, the pain hit Nnu Ego with such force that could stand it no longer. When she thought no one was looking, she took the boy and went into her own inner room, forgetting to lock her door. She began to appeal to the boy to either be her child or send her some of his friends from the other world.” (34) Amatokwu, who witnessed the scene, violently beat Nnu Ego, who later returned to her father’s house.

In her second marriage, Nnu Ego did not love or respect her husband, but she was able to conceive a child with him within the first month of their living together. She did not particularly desire a child at that time, since she had just moved to Lagos from her village, and new surroundings, neighbors, and domestic chores took up all of her time. She converted to Christianity because of her husband who, in turn, followed his British masters, and she started

a small business of selling cigarettes and matches. Moving from the constant “gaze” of her relatives and not being under pressure from her husband or acquaintances in the city, she became pregnant and gave birth to a boy. Her love for the child transformed her relationship with Nnaife: “Only now with this son am I going to start loving this man [Nnaife]. He has made me into a real woman – all I want to be, a woman and a mother.” (53) The child died after two weeks and Nnu Ego attempted suicide. She was saved by some passersby at the railway station, who all felt compassion towards her due to her situation: “They [crowd] all agreed that a woman without a child for her husband was a failed woman.” (62)

Concerning the setting, in which the majority of pressure on mothers would have occurred, the informal setting is most applicable to Nigerian circumstances. All schools or colleges in Lagos required tuition, therefore many children were homeschooled, so school as an instance of the formal setting was not applicable to everyone. Hospitals were rarely used among Nnu Ego’s generation. Contrarily, family and neighborhood gatherings and celebrations happened in abundance among Igbos in Lagos. Women often shared their marital dilemmas, as well as child rearing problems. When Nnu Ego did not attend one of such gatherings, but sent her oldest son Oshia there, she was disturbed that Oshia was asked to leave the party because of his poor outfit: “The other children would have been in smart clothes with neat haircuts, looking very healthy and clean; her Oshia looked like a tramp compared with them: it would have cost her good money which she could not spare to wash his tarpaulin” (99). Constant comparison with other children and her inability to adhere to her neighbors’ expectations contributed to Nnu Ego’s rejection of friendships with other women. She felt guilty for not being able to provide as much for her children, causing her to shut down emotionally. It never occurred to Nnu Ego to question Nnaife’s role as a father, since her husband was always away, whether for work or for a war in another country. It also never crossed Nnu Ego’s mind to doubt governmental policies, which left her alone with seven children and without assistance. In the end, the only people who helped her get through the toughest period were her female friends. However, Nnu Ego dismissed them due to her deep self-guilt and doubt in her own mothering skills.

Pressure to be a mother in Nigeria coincided with the pressure of having a male child. Adaku’s case was the perfect example of this. She felt extremely unfulfilled by having two daughters and suffered through severe depression when her only son passed away. In a conversation with Oshia, Adaku screamed, “You’re worth more than ten Dumbis [her daughter].” (128) She even admitted to wishing that one of her daughters had died instead of

the son. Nevertheless, Adaku was able to withstand the societal pressure, when she realized it was women themselves who succumbed to it. “The more I think about it the more I realize that we women set impossible standards for ourselves. That we make life intolerable for one another. I cannot live up to your standards, senior wife. So I have to set my own.” (169)

For Nnu Ego, the biggest pressure came from her noble house and, in particular, her father, who had strong views on gender roles. Nnu Ego often imagined Agbadi’s voice in her head, and she feared to object to what it said: “What greater honor is there for a woman than to be a mother, and now you are a mother – not of daughters who will marry and go, but of good-looking healthy sons, and they are the first sons of your husband and you are his first and senior wife.” (119) Nnu Ego lived her whole life under societal pressure. She came from an honorable family and had the status of a daughter, wife, mother, and a senior wife to sustain. It seemed that, in the end, Nnu Ego fulfilled the criteria of being the “right” woman. Along her path, however, she created barriers in her social circle of friends and family members, which left her in a lonely state.

5.3.5 Parent-child relationship

Within the novel, two distinct cases of Oedipus complex are present, both occurring in father-daughter relationships. In fact, a parallel may be drawn between the lives of Nnu Ego and her mother, Ona. Ona’s father was the village chief who had no male heir. He loved Ona dearly and wanted her to stay in his house forever, so he forbade her from marrying. It could be interpreted that such attachment between Ona and her father was sexual, since her father did not want to lose his beautiful daughter to another man. However, Ona had a lover, Agbadi, but always returned to her father’s house. “Oh, how torn she [Ona] was between two men: she had to be loyal to her father, as well as to her love Agbadi.” (18) Agbadi always wanted to marry Ona, but could not change the woman’s deep respect and pity for her father. Ona’s father allowed his daughter to have a comfortable life despite carrying the label of a “bad woman”. Their relationship was not influenced by societal judgments. Compared to other Igbo women in her generation, Ona was a rebellious woman, but her father’s protection saved her from a grim destiny and thus guaranteed her devotion to him. Therefore, it may be stated that her relationship with her father was built on both sexual and anxiety attachment. Agbadi criticized Ona and her father: “Why do you not turn her into a man?” Agbadi said biting. “Clinging to your daughter as if...” (18). In the future, however, Agbadi experienced a similar connection with his daughter, Nnu Ego. Nnu Ego was raised in a wealthy household

with many female family members, who served as substitute for her deceased mother. Nevertheless, no mother figure was mentioned in the novel; the father, on the other hand, was depicted as her major mentor. To Agbadi, Nnu Ego was precious: “Nnu Ego is the only part of Ona that I have. Of course, she isn’t arrogant like her mother, but the way she throws her head back when she looks you in the face, her light walk...” (29). Because Nnu Ego reminded her father of Ona, this could suggest that Agbadi possessed a sexual desire for his daughter. Nnu Ego seemed to have had an anxious attachment to her father, in part because of her need for strong protection due to her fertility problems in her first marriage, and it was Agbadi who welcomed her back and helped her in times of distress. Although a few similarities existed, Agbadi was a very different man from Ona’s father. He was a traditional man, the chief of the village, a hunter, and one of the most respectable and law-abiding citizens, who took societal opinions into account. For example, he prided himself on his daughter’s virginity before marriage: “There is nothing that makes a man prouder than to hear that his daughter is virtuous.” (31) After Nnu Ego’s return to his house, he listened to his friends’ advice on the second husband for his daughter. Agbadi took others’ opinions into consideration, which influenced Nnu Ego’s future judgment of her life happenings. Later in life, Nnu Ego could not turn to her father with her problems for the fear of disappointing him. She was afraid to ask him for money, even when she was virtually starving, was afraid to go back to his house when she realized she did not want to live with her second husband. “The poor man [Agbadi] suffers more than I do. It is difficult for him to accept the fact that anything that comes from him can be imperfect. I will not return to his house as a failure.” (33) Her strong father figure vanished when Nnu Ego left the village, and she did not manage to find a substitute in her husband. She also sought this role in her male children, but the oldest of them left her in old age.

5.3.5.1 Preference for boys

The preference for boys is a reiterated motif in the novel. Nnu Ego strongly favored boys as children. When she had lost her first male child, she attempted suicide mainly because she had lost a boy. Later, when she gave birth to three sons, her societal status rose significantly, despite the fact that she did not have money to properly care for them. Throughout her life, Nnu Ego gave preference to sons by providing them with a much better education, releasing them from home chores, and spending more time with them. Conventionally, she believed her efforts in raising sons would provide a return benefit in her old age. “She was sure this son of hers would live next door to her, whatever profession he

chose, as a good son should live near his parents and look after them. And she would see to the growth and welfare of his children and wives” (79). Nnu Ego’s strong preference for boys was also visible when she gave birth to the stillborn baby. She was pregnant during a very difficult time with no financial resources while simultaneously striving to educate her sons and provide for the rest of the children. She gave birth in her own room without assistance because she felt too proud to bother anyone for her ninth delivery. She bled severely and lost the child. For a while, Nnu Ego’s conscience was tormented, as she was secretly pleased the child did not survive. Moreover, “that it was a girl had lessened her sense of loss” (195).

It could be stated that because of Nnaife’s continuous absence, Nnu Ego naturally became the prevalent parent figure in the life of their children. However, in many instances, the children could not rely on their mother. The boys in particular did not manage to develop a strong relationship with Nnu Ego because she was often working to provide financially for the family. Poverty, poor living conditions, and virtually no friends or helpful family members made the children become independent at a very young age and choose their own paths. The oldest sons studied and chose to move abroad to continue their education rather than to stay in Lagos and support their parents financially. The dream of a wealthy old age was not fulfilled for Nnu Ego, but in the end, the mother discovered that her hopes were unrealistic, since in caring for children, one could not expect reciprocity: “The joy of being a mother was the joy of giving all to your children ...” (224).

5.3.5.2 Mother-daughter relationship

The general attitude towards daughters in Igbo culture experienced a drastic change during Nnu Ego’s lifetime. In Igbo “original” patriarchal society, girls were considered “love babies” (53) and both parents reacted positively upon the female child’s arrival. As was previously mentioned, Agbadi agreed with Ona to get a child in case it was a girl⁷, “If I [Ona] have a son he will belong to my father, but if a girl, she will be yours.” (25) When Nnu Ego was born, “Ona was dazed with happiness” and “Agbadi was visibly overjoyed” (25). The father chose a name for his daughter: “This child is priceless, more than twenty bags of cowries. I think that should really be her name, because she is a beauty and she is mine. Yes, “Nnu Ego”: twenty bags of cowries.” (26) The birth of the chief’s daughter was celebrated in the village and Agbadi’s friends prayed for the happiness of Nnu Ego (26).

⁷ Such arrangement was made since Ona’s father had no male heir.

When Nnu Ego gave birth to her first set of female twins in Lagos, she felt agitated. She did not feel as satisfied as when she had boys, but rather felt compelled to accept her new role as a mother of daughters. “I doubt if our husband will like them very much. One can hardly afford to have one girl in a town like this, to say nothing of two.” (126-127) Her doubts came true when she introduced the newborns to Nnaife: “Nnu Ego, what are these? Could you not have done better? Where will we all sleep, eh? What will they eat?” (127) The only argument for their acceptance stemmed from the future bride price the family would receive when the girls were ready for marriage.

The drastic change in appreciation for the female gender in Lagos was linked with the new way of patriarchy imposed by the colonial power. Men were needed for the army, or a cheap source of labor, therefore increasing the value of male children. Later, Nnu Ego felt perplexed about the discrimination towards female children, since to her, women had to be born in abundance in order for the beloved boys to also be born.

Following the societal devotion to the male gender, Nnu Ego behaved differently towards her daughters than she did towards her sons. She transferred her father’s traditional views on gender roles into the life of Lagos. For instance, she unevenly distributed house chores amongst the children, leaving her sons less work so they could attend school: “They [boys] have to go to their lesson, Taiwo; and stop moaning. You are a girl, you know.” To which Taiwo responded, “I know that, Mother. You remind us all the time.” (175) Nnu Ego claimed investing in the boys’ futures would be beneficial for both the parents and the sisters, since the brothers would defend the girls if their future husbands were aggressive towards them (176). Overall, Nnu Ego’s daughters were raised differently than were her sons; they were raised with a strong sense of what women had to become in order to be “good women”. In a conversation with Adaku, Nnu Ego summarized the rules that guided her children’s upbringing: “They [twins] only attended [school] for a couple of years. We have Adim and Nnamdio to think of and, with Oshia’s big school fees, we cannot afford fees for the twins. I think they can read a little. I personally do not regret it. They will be married in a few years. They can earn an added income by trading. The most important thing is for them to get good husbands.” (189)

The daughters of Nnu Ego and Nnaife learned the limits placed upon them by their gender from an early age. Their father, Nnaife, as was mentioned, was not present a majority of time, and when he did return, he did not pay much attention to the girls. It seemed that he

was mainly interested in marrying them off to receive their bride price. “He [Nnaife] had never had much time for his daughters. One planned for and had sleepless nights over boys; girls, on the other hand, girls were to help in running the house and be disposed of as soon as possible, unless one was asking for trouble.” (204) The trouble came when one of the twins decided to elope with her fiancé, who was from the Yoruba ethnic group; this was totally unacceptable to Nnaife. In a drunken state, he attempted to murder the fiancé’s father, and was caught and sent to prison. From the very first day of their lives, the girls in the family of Nnu Ego and Nnaife experienced neglect from their father, unfair treatment from their mother, and occupied an inferior position to their brothers. In a sense, they did not acquire a strong exemplary figure in the face of their parents to help them navigate their childhoods. The essential parent-child bond was non-existent and they could only turn to each other or other people. It seemed that the girls developed attachments outside of their family, finding husbands and getting pregnant quite early in life.

Again, in contrast with Nnu Ego, Adaku might have been a more stable and confident person in her daughters’ lives. She invested the money she earned into their education and did not intend to marry the girls early: “I will spend the money I have in giving my girls a good start in life. They shall stop going to the market with me. I shall see that they get enrolled in a good school. I think that will benefit them in the future. Many rich Yoruba families send their daughter to school these days; I shall do the same with mine. Nnaife is not going to send them away to any husband before they are ready. I will see to that!” (168)

5.3.6 Women’s relationship with each other

Despite the mutual support between wives in the village of Ibuza and the city of Lagos, the women did not always regard their gender in a positive light. The *chi*⁸ of Nnu Ego was believed to be a deceased woman who, in her previous life, was the slave of the first wife of Agbadi. The female slave was murdered upon the wife’s death since, according to Igbo tradition, everything the person possessed in life had to be put with them in the grave for their next life. Nnu Ego blamed her *chi* for the hardships in her life: “She knew her *chi* was a woman, not just because to her way of thinking only a woman would be so thorough in punishing another. ... The slave woman was making sure that Nnu Ego’s own life was nothing but a catalogue of disasters.” (29) Nnu Ego did not think about the slave woman’s position or the reason of her death, but rather believed that her *chi* enjoyed torturing her.

⁸ Personal God

It is important to stress the benefit that female friendships provided Nnu Ego. With the help of fellow Ibuza women, Nnu Ego began to trade in Lagos: “They let her borrow five shillings from the women’s fund and advised her to buy tins of cigarettes and packets of matches.” (52) Additionally, her female neighbor Oweri delivered Nnu Ego’s first boy: “We are like sisters on a pilgrimage. Why should we not help one another?” (53) While Nnaife was away, Nnu Ego’s female friends assisted her both financially and emotionally, and when Nnaife returned with money, they were happy for her. (109) In the beginning, Nnu Ego went to regular women-meetings and participated in the Igbo social scene. Later, however, she was so overwhelmed by taking care of her family that she did not have time or, more often, was too embarrassed to meet anybody. Her social life suffered greatly, which affected her psychologically as well: “She could not confide in anyone” (195). At the end of her life, she regretted not investing in friendships: “Nnu Ego told herself that she would have been better off had she had time to cultivate those women who had offered her hands of friendship; but she had never had the time. ... She had shied away from friendship, telling herself she did not need any friends, she had enough in her family. But had she been right?” (219) Her unhappiness led to her jealousy of Adaku and eventually a fight between the women. “Nnu Ego accepted her lot, taking comfort in the fact that one day her boys would be men. But to be so reduced in status as to be almost a maid to a junior wife, and an inherited junior wife at that, dampened her spirit.” (161) Since Nnu Ego did not invest in any friendships during her lifetime, she spent her old age alone in the village of her ancestors.

Conclusion

The question of motherhood does not belong to a particular point in time, but rather encompasses human history as a whole. The topic itself is so vast that it seems difficult to choose the beginning thread of the analysis. During the research for the thesis, the problematic nature of the institution of motherhood stood out due to its immediate relevancy in the changing course of our society. Today, as women fight for their rights to be upheld, the issues of motherhood and their solutions are widely discussed. However, few people today understand the constraints which motherhood places on a woman. Many are unaware of the confined role that mothers and women are pressured to maintain to be accepted socially. The goal of this diploma thesis is to offer an insight into the problematic nature of motherhood and analyze the effects of patriarchy on the life of women. It is important to note that although this work attempts to prove the great influence of patriarchy on the institution of motherhood, the study is based on the lives of fictional characters. Buchi Emecheta's writings are based on real-life events, but they are nevertheless imaginative and only reflect the reality. With this, the secondary literary sources dedicated to the theme of motherhood help to analyze the actions of the main protagonists.

The analysis of the novels reveals that the Nigerian motherhood experience is constructed within a strong patriarchal tradition. Men are superior to women solely due to their gender, gender roles are strictly divided, and any deviant behavior is judged severely by society. In *Second-Class Citizen*, Adah furiously fought for the right to be educated and as a result, withstood physical abuse. She chose her own husband, despite the unpaid bride price, and was rejected by her relatives. Eventually, when she refused to cater to her husband's every need and endure his behavior, and left him, she faced rage and backlash from her in-laws. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nnu Ego made a great effort to comply with the traditional rules of patriarchy. The protagonist gained the respect of the fellow Igbo for being an exemplary mother, but in reality, she ended her life with crushed dreams and loneliness. Society offered no physical reward for her torturous struggles, only granting her verbal praise.

Both novels provide a realistic example of the great amount of pressure which Igbo mothers face. Adah conceived children with ease, but her Nigerian housemates and landlord pushed her to give them for adoption. Her husband left her all of the responsibilities concerning the children, and in the end, Adah officially became their sole provider. Nnu Ego went through infertility issues in her first marriage, which tremendously affected her and may

have contributed to why she had so many children in her second marriage. Adah was strong enough to differentiate society's idea of happiness from her own happiness, but Nnu Ego lived according to the patriarchal rules.

The parent-child relationship can have a significant detrimental effect on an adult's behavior. As is visible in *Second-Class Citizen*, the relationship with her parents and especially her extended family influenced Adah's relationship with her husband. Adah's connection and simultaneous distrust of her mother and mother-in-law affected her bond with women later in life. Since she had experienced relationships based on mutual benefits, she could not accept that the other women were being genuine and sincere without expecting anything in return. Nnu Ego, in contrast, had a happy childhood and developed a strong protective bond with her father. Nevertheless, she experienced various disturbances later in life, as a result of her fear of constant disappointment. Although her father, Agbadi, was an exemplary figure to her, Nnu Ego lacked his support when it came to public judgment.

Furthermore, both novels prove a strong preference for male children over female children in Nigerian society. Typically, mothers wish for a boy as strongly as fathers do. This is due to the higher societal position they award her; they raise her position in the female hierarchy and usually guarantee her a blissful old age. As it becomes clear from *The Joys of Motherhood*, the latter is not the case for the main protagonist; this may be Nnu Ego's biggest conflict. At the end of Adah's marriage in *Second-Class Citizen*, the woman rebels against the unjust order and treatment towards females by raising her children to ignore gender preferences. The preference for boys also creates a dual relationship of powerful-powerless among women, with the powerful women being those who have male children. In addition, the contradictions of masculine-feminine and mother-infertile woman are also present.

Another theme present in both novels is the mutual support of women. The main protagonists experience unhappy marriages and because of their marital and financial struggles, they refuse to communicate with other females. Due to society's continual observation of the main protagonists, Adah and Nnu Ego develop a severe insecurity by comparing their problems with others. They both avoid the company of other females they perceive as luckier by isolating themselves socially, ignoring that female friendships had previously helped them tremendously in life. In the case of Adah, other women help her regain her confidence and a positive perspective on life. Nnu Ego could not have survived without her female friends in Lagos. She was always busy fending for her children, which

deprived her of spending time with other women. At the end of the novel, Nnu Ego explicitly stated her regrets on that matter.

The main contribution of the thesis is the portrayal of the visible consequences of patriarchal influence on the life of the main characters in the novels of Buchi Emecheta. As a product of this influence, the dual nature of the powerful-powerless was produced, where women with the associated “female” values fell into the latter category. This powerless gender helped to explain why children turned away from their mother in search of a socially stronger parent. Both girls and boys may have lost a protective bond with a mother and thus rejected her. According to patriarchal tradition, the male child inherited all of the property and was generally responsible for his parents’ security in old age. This also had a direct effect on a mothers’ preference for male children. Additionally, mothers experienced massive pressure while raising their children. Numerous rules for a proper parental behavior were enacted, many of which solely affected the mother and ignored the role of fathers, social institutions, or even governments played in a child’s upbringing. Mothers developed self-blame while judging other mothers with ease. It seems that to writers, such as Buchi Emecheta, one of the solutions to the question of female equality, independence, and a happy motherhood, is the focus on strengthening mutual support among women, be it in a mother-daughter relationship or a female-to-female relationship. In her novels, Emecheta criticizes the lack of women’s relationship with one another. Furthermore, the writer deliberately highlights the unwanted life many women may encounter if they do not learn how to stand up for themselves and defend their rights in the patriarchal world. The legacy of Buchi Emecheta hence concerns teaching future generations of women and men to respect individual choice and strongly defend the rights of the inferior party. In this, she is a truly ground-breaking author who has challenged the traditional patriarchy globally.

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