

Mother's Intricacy in Buchi Emecheta's the Joys of Motherhood

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Abstract

This paper examines mothers' perceptions, challenges the institution of marriage's blessings, and primarily focuses on the complexity of the mother. The goal is to investigate, from a feminist perspective, whether or if the "motherhood" body can eventually grant women the authority to be recognized in important spheres of human activity. The topic of motherhood has been explored by numerous African writers. The term "motherism" was created by Catherine Obianuju Acholunu as a counter to Western feminism. The Joys of Motherhood, 1979 written by Buchi Emecheta explores how motherhood in Ibo society functions as a power struggle between control and desire. Nnu Ego aspires to be a perfect mother but discovered nothing beyond the glimpse of motherhood.

Keywords: IBO Tradition, Introspection, Motherhood, Glimpse.

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One of the most intricate Buildings roman books, The Joys of Motherhood by Buchi Emecheta, was written in colonial Nigeria in the early to mid-1900s and follows the protagonist's journey over a twenty-five-year period. Nigerian-born novelist Florence Onyebuchi "Buchi" Emecheta OBE (21 July 1944 – 25 January 2017) was based in the UK from 1962 and also created plays, an autobiography, and children's books. In addition to Second Class Citizen (1974), The Bride Price (1976), The Slave Girl (1977), and The Joys of Motherhood (1979), she is the author of almost 20 works. Critics and honors were bestowed upon Emecheta in recognition of her themes of child slavery, motherhood, female independence, and freedom via education. She previously referred to her narratives as "stories of the world, where women face the universal problems of poverty and oppression, and the longer they stay, no matter where they have come from originally, the more the problems become identical." The protagonist Nnu Ego's transformation from a powerful, traditional figure to a feminist has been highlighted by the author. She tries desperately to prove the validity of motherhood, but her attempts are sadly undermined at every step by a complex web of inconsistencies that she can't seem to reconcile.

It was first released in Heinemann's African Writers Series in 1980, and it was reissued in 1982, 2004, and 2008. Allison and

Busby published it in London, UK, in 1979. The “necessity for a woman to be fertile, and above all to give birth to sons” forms the basis of the book. It narrates the terrible tale of Nnu-Ego, a reproductive misfortune for Nwokocha Agbadi and Ona. The life of Nnu Ego, a Nigerian woman, is examined in this book. Nnu’s children are the center of her existence, and they help her win the community’s respect. As colonialism becomes more prevalent and influential, traditional tribal beliefs and rituals start to change, which forces Ego to question conventional ideas of what it means to be a mother, wife and woman. By following Nnu Ego’s journey, Emecheta compels her readers to contemplate the challenges that come with embracing new concepts and behaviors in opposition to a strong desire to adhere to customs. The joys of carrying out duties pertaining to family concerns in childbearing, mothering, and nurturing activities among women are revealed and celebrated by Emecheta in this book. But the author also emphasizes how the joys of motherhood come with pain, duty, and fear.

The first chapter of the book, *The Mother*, and the last chapter, *The Canonized Mother*, are dedicated to all moms. It provides a biting critique of the patriarchal, colonial restrictions experienced by mothers like as Nnu Ego, whose value in society was determined by her capacity to procreate and her willingness to fulfill the demands of a male-dominated Ibo culture. As an enthusiastic writer who focuses on the challenges faced by Nigerian women, she said in a conversation with Adeola James that in the *Joys of Motherhood*...I made a character that had eight children and perished at the side of the road. Women were recognized in the strict and tradition-focused Ibo society as the trees that bear fruits. The development of the concept of motherhood was greatly aided by customs. They thought that becoming a mother would lead to a renowned and competitive life. Emecheta uses the mother’s reflection technique which helps the protagonist realize that she hasn’t provided happiness to the family. Nnu Ego, who experienced double colonization as a mother, writes of her sacrifices and hardships shortly after the birth of her twin daughters. She experienced one of these epiphanies when a full human being, not somebody’s appendage? she asks in her monologue. I am the only one who was born and will die alone. What have I learned from this experience? Sure, I have a large family, but what am I going to feed them? Regarding my life. To take care of them, I have to labor myself to the bone. I have to offer them everything. And I even have to offer them my soul, if I am fortunate enough to pass away peacefully. They will worship my dead spirit in order to care for them; it will be praised as a good spirit as long as the family has an abundance of yams and children, but if something goes wrong, such as a famine or a young wife not becoming pregnant, my dead spirit will be held responsible. When will I have time to myself? (JOM,186)

This is a novel idea in Nigerian literature, where thoughtful female characters express their feelings. *The Joys of Motherhood*, a classic book that questions the high standards placed on women in the name of becoming the perfect mother, contributes to the development of the literary legacy of African women. Although Emecheta presented this concept from the traditionalist perspective of Nnu Ego, she also contributed to the realization that women have a common responsibility to criticize and support the social order. The title of the book was taken from the last line of the well-known book *Efuru* by Flora Nwapa. The final line, She has never experienced the joy of motherhood, elevates a paradox regarding the frequently consulted river deity Uhamiri, who is childless. So why did ladies adore her?

The story of Nnu Ego, a mother, in *The Joys of Motherhood* is written with nuance, strength, and an abundance of compassion. The same issues are raised in this masterpiece, albeit Nnu Ego’s world is more sinister than *Efuru*’s. Due to the two colonial situations, her motherhood fails her from the moment of birth until her death. The native Ibo people were oppressed by the western lords, who then began to control their women. The independent settlements where Nnu Ego finds herself imprisoned have their appearance altered by the colonial powers. She wanted to live up

to her father's expectations of her in the strange city life, be a good mother and wife to Nnaife Owulum—the man her father had chosen—and be a decent daughter. Even her father, the arrogant Ona and renowned chief and elephant hunter Agbadi, is just like the other males.’’ Let her go, she is as barren as a desert, he told himself as he learned that Nnu Ego had departed for Logos’’ . (39) The stress of trying to be a complete woman kills one of Agbadi's oldest wives, who was Nnu's eldest mother. It's interesting to note that wives' and mothers' problems are not exclusive to any one generation. She described her hubby as a pregnant cow, which horribly shocked her on their first meeting. On the first night, her spouse requested his legal rights and sexually assaulted her without offering her the opportunity to withdraw her consent. Rape appears frequently in Emecheta's books and is even used as a metaphor for manhood.

Because it was customary, the male characters kept their women under control. She vehemently argues that having fun sexually is just as important for males as it is for women. The current unique artistic creation examines the devastating implication of the experiences of a traditional African woman caught between the modern industrialized world and traditional Igbo society. It offers a thorough analysis of the mistreatment and reliance on Ibo women. The author challenges the legitimacy of ingrained male social rights and the powerlessness of women. The protagonist is compelled by the inner voice to change from the group realization to the personal perspective. Nnu Ego suddenly transforms into a feminist after her emotional outburst, saying in a grounded way, I am a prisoner of my own flesh and blood. Is this a truly envied position? It seems from the males that having children is a requirement or else we will perish. I failed to live up to the expectations placed on me by my father and husband—two men in my life, and now I have to add my sons—which is why I wanted to die after I lost my first son. Nnu Ego battled greatly to be a mother because she feels empty without being a mother. Emecheta wishes to convey the idea that having more than five or six children does not guarantee a mother would be wealthy when she gets older.

She looks at the institution of motherhood, the bad experiences associated with it, and the shock it causes among Nigerian women. In the words of Katherine Frank, The complete futility of motherhood that we find in *The Joys of Motherhood* is the most heretical and radical aspect of Emecheta's vision of the African Women . The ups and downs of Nnu Ego's destiny are described in the chapter titles, *The Mother*, *The Mother's Mother*, *The Mother's Early Life*, *First Shock of Motherhood*, *A Mothers Investment*, *A Failed Woman*, etc. The novel's final chapter, *The Canonized Mother*, has an ironic title chosen by the author. Throughout her life, Nnu Ego was subjected to patriarchal enslavement and ultimately passed away alone. Ibo society is patriarchal and has a strong tradition of victimizing mothers, such as Ona, Akadu, and Nnu Ego. However, Emecheta's Nnu Ego refutes the traditional belief that having a large family will make a woman feel extremely euphoric.

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