

THE ULTIMATE OTHER: ADAH OBI IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN*

MUTLAK ÖTEKİ: BUCHI EMECHETA'NIN *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN* ROMANINDA ADAH OBI

АБСОЛЮТНО ЧУЖОЙ: АДАХ ОБИ В РОМАНЕ БУЧИ ЭМЕЧЕТЫ *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN*

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ABSTRACT

As one of the important novelists in the postcolonial era, Buchi Emecheta may be thought to be a pioneering figure in English literature in terms of her representation of colonial issues in Nigeria and Britain. Although she has not received much critical attention as she deserved, Emecheta narrates her own experiences in Nigeria, a former British colony after the independence, and in Britain as an immigrant. Emecheta represents the problematic relationships in the native African community and the British society in her novel *Second Class Citizen*. The novel is quite significant in terms of the illustration of the protagonist Adah Obi's attempt to adopt social values imposed on the native community in line with the colonial discourse although it takes place in the postcolonial era. This article argues that the female protagonist Adah Obi suffers from the patriarchal and colonial discourses dominant in the contemporary Nigerian and British societies and Adah is portrayed as the ultimate other due to her disadvantageous position as a black, a woman and an immigrant.

Keywords: Buchi Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen*, Nigeria, Britain, postcolonial, mimicry, the other.

ÖZ

Sömürgecilik sonrası dönemin önemli romancılarından Buchi Emecheta Nijerya ve İngiltere'deki sömürgecilik konularını sunumu bakımından İngiliz edebiyatının önde gelen isimlerinden biri olarak görülebilir. Yeterli eleştirel ilgiyi görmese de Emecheta eski bir İngiliz sömürgesi olan Nijerya'daki ve İngiltere'deki göçmen deneyimini anlatır. Yerli Afrikalı toplum ile İngiliz toplumu arasında sorunlu ilişkiler *Second Class Citizen* romanında ele alınmaktadır. Roman, başkahraman Adah Obi'nin yerli halka sömürgecilik söylemleriyle birlikte dayatılan toplumsal değerleri benimseme çabasını sömürgecilik sonrası dönemin bakış açısıyla yansıtması bakımından son derece önemlidir. Bu makale kadın başkahraman Adah Obi'nin günümüzde Nijerya'da ve İngiltere'de görülen güçlü ataerkil ve sömürgeci söylemler altında ezildiğini ve Adah'nın bir siyahi, bir kadın ve bir göçmen olarak mutlak öteki şeklinde nitelenebileceğini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Buchi Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen*, Nijerya, İngiltere, sömürgecilik sonrası, taklit etme, öteki.

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АННОТАЦИЯ

В романах известного английского писателя Бучи Эмечета рассмотрены вопросы Нигерийской и Английской колонизации и постколониального периода. Несмотря на недостаточную критику, Эмечета описывает суть беженства в Англии и Английской колонизаторской политике в Нигерии. В романе *Second Class Citizen* рассказывается о сложных отношениях между местным африканским народом и англичанами. Важность романа заключается в том, что его главный герой Адах Оби, наряду с красноречием о колонизаторстве, рассказывает местному народу об общественных ценностях, прилагает усилия для того, чтобы народ его освоил и применял в постколониальном периоде. В статье придерживается мысли того, что Адах Оби, как женщина-героиня, угнетённая сильным патриархальным строем в Нигерии и колонизаторской политикой Англии, как чёрная, женщина и беженка является абсолютно чужой.

Ключевые слова: Бучи Эмечета, *Second Class Citizen*, Нигерия, Англия, постколониализм, подражать, чужой.

Buchi Emecheta, born in Nigeria in 1944, is one of the prolific and challenging novelists writing in English in the postcolonial era. Her experiences during her childhood and teenager years in the patriarchal Nigerian society along with the conflict between males and females in this social structure have been quite influential for the autobiographical themes in Emecheta's novels. Furthermore, the imperial rule of Britain in the colonial era is another issue for the writer since the political, economic, social and cultural impact of the Western colonizer changed the native lifestyle and conventions all together. In this respect, Emecheta's second novel *Second Class Citizen* (1974) illuminates the novelist's experiences as a young girl in Nigeria and, later, as an immigrant in the contemporary British society. The independence of Nigeria in 1960 was only a political development, and the effects of the colonial rule could be observed in the society with the common feeling of frustration towards their own values and inferiority against the British, which are represented in *Second Class Citizen*. It was under these circumstances that Emecheta grew up and learned about the problematic relations in her social environment in terms of the colonial past. The author mainly dealt with these matters in her autobiographical novels, which mainly focus on the difficulties Emecheta encountered in her own life. Although the names of the characters have been changed, the sequence of events in the novel follows the writer's biographical account. So, Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* deals with the protagonist Adah Obi's adventures in postcolonial Nigeria and Britain. In both settings, Adah is treated as the ultimate other because of being female, being black and being the colonized. Therefore, this article aims at a critical reading of *Second Class Citizen* from a postcolonial perspective and analyses the influence of the colonial hegemony on the individuals in the postcolonial world order.

In *Second Class Citizen*, a closer look into the beginning of Adah's story when she was a little girl in Nigeria initially displays the gender problems in this African society. Although Adah is the elder child of the family, she is not wanted by her parents just because of her gender: "She was a girl who arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. She was so insignificant. One thing was certain though: she was born during the Second World War" (Emecheta 1989: 1).

While Adah is thus discriminated, her younger brother is always appreciated and encouraged. Since little Adah is not allowed to attend school as a part of this patriarchal order in the community, she finds a way on her own to challenge the norms at that age. She hopes that her teacher at school will understand her desire to be educated. Adah also takes the risk of being beaten by her family due to her desire: “She [Adah] felt Mr Cole should have asked her why she came, but being reassured by his smile, she said in her little loud voice: ‘I came to school – my parents would not send me!’ [...] Adah scribbled away, enjoying the smell of craw-craw and dried sweat. She never forgot this smell of school. [...] 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” (Emecheta 1989: 5). This courageous action actually gives clues about the rest of Adah’s life, particularly about her attitude towards the social structure. Self-consciousness, in this respect, is one of her characteristics. The fact that she goes to school, which is not allowed by her parents, is quite meaningful. In line with this feature, she is assertive, and she tries to make her own decisions, sometimes about the grown-ups around her: “She thought that it was these experiences with ma so early in life that had given her such very low opinion of her own sex. Somebody said somewhere that our characters are usually formed early in life. Yes, that somebody was right. Women still made Adah nervous. They had a way of sapping her self confidence. She did have one or two women friends with whom she discussed the weather, and fashion. But when in real trouble, she would rather look for a man. Men were so solid, so safe” (Emecheta 1989: 5). Her lack of trust in other women is quite important in that she actually draws attention to the influence of the patriarchal ideology in Nigerian society dominating these women. The difference between the treatment of Adah and her brother by their parents as she is not sent to school simply for being a girl (Emecheta 1989: 6), the separation of her family after Pa’s death (Emecheta 1989: 12) and her being employed at her uncle’s house like a slave (Emecheta 1989: 16), her situation in her marriage that illustrates patriarchal hegemony in the attitude of Francis’s parents against Adah (Emecheta 1989: 28) exemplify discrimination against women. This primary concern is not limited only to Emecheta in African literature, but it seems to be problematised by other writers as well since the hegemony of the patriarchal society in this former British colony is quite influential on women. In this respect, Agho and Osighale assert that, “the emergence of [feminism] in the African context stems from the perceived relegation of African women to the background, whether at home front or in the domain of governance in the larger society. Essentially, feminism preaches equality of sexes and frowns at the domination of women by men. African literature, consequently, is male-dominated. This has and is still engendering reactions from concerned female and male writers who are re-writing the history of the emergent literature, countering and challenging male chauvinism by presenting conscious, active, resilient and courageous female characters in their novels. It is this anti-male domination crusade that has given concreteness to the feminization of heroism in African fiction [...] in the fight against discrimination against women” (2011: 603). In her struggles against the social order, Adah turns into a symbol of this anti-male domination crusade. She does not simply accept the role in the background, assigned by the patriarchal Nigerian society under the influence of British colonial rule, and becomes a challenging character. Against these traditional manners and degradation of women characterized by the colonial period, Adah believes in the significance of education right from the beginning. In addition to the first time in school, she steals – or rather borrows, as she put it – money from her relatives to apply the Methodist School. All alone, she becomes a story of success, because, Emecheta also believes in the education of women to overcome the social boundaries that keep women under oppression. The emphasis on the equality between men and women is achieved

through the comparison between Adah and her husband Francis. As opposed to Adah's success in life, Francis is clearly a loser. Although Adah supports him and her entire family financially like a traditionally powerful male figure, her husband Francis is simply loitering around lazily without any proper occupation. The role of education and intellectual development in Adah comes to the fore at this stage: "Through the character of Adah, Emecheta also emphasizes the significant function of education in the political, social and economic liberation of women as demonstrated by Adah. If Adah had not been educated, she would not have been able to become the family's breadwinner. With education, a woman is free" (Agho and Osighale 2011: 606). Education is necessary for the development of an intellectual mind and a questioning attitude towards this patriarchal and colonial order that aims to subordinate women as subservient creatures. Adah's growing consciousness and awareness as she is educated present a challenging young woman to the image of ordinary African female. Under the oppression of the society, sometimes supported by other women like her own mother or mother-in-law, Adah has to continue her contest alone. Before she gets married to Francis, her attitude in rejecting her suitors shows that Adah challenges the oppressive patriarchal social order in a former British colony: "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 Ibo women did this, but she wasn't going to!" (Emecheta 1989: 12).

Although Adah strives to overcome these boundaries, her marriage with Francis turns out to be a continuation of this hegemonic relationship. In fact, even the marriage is compulsory for young girls, because "Adah could not find a home like that. 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. In short, Adah had to marry" (Emecheta 1989: 16). As a woman who has to conform to the norms of this particular social order, Adah is obliged to obey the decisions and choices of her husband, who in fact cannot make his decisions without asking his parents and relatives. Adah has no right to say anything on her own life: "[M]ost of the decisions about their own lives had to be referred first to Big Pa, Francis's father, then to his mother, then discussed amongst the brothers of the family before Adah was referred to. After all, she would have to pay for the plan in most cases but the decision would have been made behind her back" (Emecheta 1989: 18). It is almost impossible to refuse the established order symbolised by the elders in such cases, but Adah still tries to manipulate them making use of reasonable explanations. The decision as regards their stay in Britain may be taken as a good example of this case. Adah's life-long dream of going to Britain, the wonderland for Nigerian people living in this former British colony, is to be finally achieved despite these social limits on her.

In addition to the problematisation of gender roles exemplified by Adah's experience in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, the novel actually focuses on the condition of the characters in the postcolonial period as subjects of the colonial rule. As Porter points out, "it would be nonsense, of course, to suggest that in evaluating the works of a writer such as Emecheta, one can avoid the feminist question. It is something else, however, to imply that this is the only aspect worth examining in her *oeuvre*" (1995: 267). One of the most important problems, in this respect, during Adah's childhood is the influence of British colonial rule over the native African community. Adah's lifelong dream of going to Britain results from the notion of British superiority in social, cultural, economic and political aspects in comparison to the native values. As Frantz Fanon states, "colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with hiding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of

the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (1967: 37). This process of deconstructing native norms is accomplished in the colonial era. Therefore, even after Nigeria gained independence, the feeling of inferiority could still be recognized in the native people. This point constitutes the greatest dilemma in the protagonist Adah's identity and the novel's focal point. As Emecheta points out in the introduction to the novel, "*Second Class Citizen* [...] also had to describe a culture conflict if it was going to be successful. It had to describe the experience of young African families, uprooted from their own culture to the one they encountered in Britain. [...] So the subject of the book is both a young person's dream and a social reality" (1989: vii-viii). This social condition refers to the postcolonial experience of Nigerians both in their own country and in Britain, which is presented as the ideal land on earth in the postcolonial period under the influence of British superiority in the colonial past. However, the problem in this apparently perfect portrayal of Britain will be realized only in Britain. Adah gradually realizes that her experiences in the native Nigerian community and, later, in the British society lead to an othering process due to her status as a woman and a subject of a former colony.

Even in the first pages of the novel, one comes across with the comparison between Ibuza, the symbol of all native values left behind by the Nigerians, and Lagos, which the symbol of civilization established by the colonizer. For the natives, living in the city is "a misfortune" (Emecheta 1989: 2). However, even this city is not considered to be civilized enough when it is compared to Britain. A native African who has simply been to Britain is regarded to be someone superior to his fellow people, and all others rush out to meet this extraordinary personality that has experienced Britain. The influence of having been to Britain completely changes social status of the native people: "The Ibuza women who lived in Lagos were preparing for the arrival of the town's first lawyer from the United Kingdom. The title 'United Kingdom' when pronounced by Adah's father sounded so heavy, like the type of noise one associated with bombs. It was so deep, so mysterious, that Adah's father always voiced it in hushed tones, wearing such a respectful expression as if he were speaking of God's Holiest of Holies. Going to the United Kingdom must surely be like paying God a visit. The United Kingdom, then, must be like heaven" (Emecheta 1989: 2). Clearly, this concept of holy status is a result of the colonial discourse. Once the native mind is thus colonized, the natives can never recognize the inferiority they assign to their own values, conditions and lifestyles. For this reason, we observe a great amount of mimicry in the colonial society: "[T]he women of Ibuza bought identical cotton material from the UAC department store [...]. They dyed their hair, and straightened it with hot combs to make it look European. Nobody in her right senses would dream of welcoming a lawyer who had come from the United Kingdom with her hair left naturally in curls. [...] It meant the arrival of their own Messiah" (Emecheta 1989: 2). The native women prefer to look like European women in a manner of aspiration. Moreover, these colonial people adopt colonial values that introduced electricity, a tarred road and power in politics, which have all been brought in the European colonizer. It is a matter of aspiration towards the higher values and standards of the superior civilization. In other words, the Nigerians simply mimic European manners and lifestyle, and confirm the inferiority of their native values. As Homi Bhabha also argues, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, unrecognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (1995: 86, emphasis in original). These similar, yet different people in Africa aspire for a sophisticated European style, but it will always remain to be impossible for them to achieve this desire. As Bhabha further argues, "mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which

‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (1995: 86). Therefore, it might be argued that the colonial rule in Nigeria has successfully achieved the process of colonizing the native’s mind, since, even after the independence, the British are still considered to be superior people in Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen*. However, this image of European in a holy status is to be smashed down with the first hand experience and particularly the education of the native as the protagonist Adah Obi succeeds in going to Britain and explores the reality behind the colonial mask.

It was under these circumstances that Adah always wanted to go to Britain and be a part of the civilized world. Her husband Francis turned out to be the only means for her to achieve this, but his manners are not civilized enough for her. When Francis tells Adah the decision of his family about her not going to Britain, she thinks that “Francis was an African through and through. A much more civilized man would probably have found a better way of saying this to his wife. But to him, he was the male, and he was right to tell her what she was going to do” (Emecheta 1989: 19). Accordingly, this insensitive and ignorant attitude of Francis repeats itself in Adah’s treatment throughout the whole novel. Similarly, Adah looks down upon native people of Nigeria due to her education and close relation with the Europeans. She treats all her people as inferior, and considers herself to be in a higher status, which is closer to the ideal civilized world associated with Britain above the level of the natives. Hence, Adah believes that “[Francis’s] outlook on life was pure African. He had had little opportunity of coming in contact with Europeans as Adah had. Those god-forsaken missionaries! They had taught Adah all the niceties of life, they taught her by the Bible, where a woman was supposed to be ready to give in to her man at any time, and she was to be much more precious to her husband than rubies” (Emecheta 1989: 20). This religious teaching also affects Adah, and she makes use of it under various circumstances. Upon persuading her mother-in-law for her following Francis into Britain, she just comments, “that was life, she said to herself. Be as cunning as a serpent and as harmless as a dove” (Emecheta 1989: 25). It may be put forward that the colonized is thus responding back with the discourse of the colonizer as Adah does not esteem native values and believes in the superiority of the colonizer, which is expressed in her desire to go to Britain despite all difficulties.

At the end of all her struggles, Adah succeeds in reaching Britain. However, beginning with the first impressions, her experience does not turn out to be what she has been expecting all her life. The first interaction between the colonized and the mother country is depicted as follows: “England gave Adah a cold welcome. [...] If Adah had been Jesus, she would have passed England by. Liverpool was grey, smoky and looked uninhabited by humans. It reminded Adah of the loco-yard where they told her Pa had once worked as a moulder. In fact the architectural designs were the same. But if, as people said, there was plenty of money in England, why then did the natives give their visitors this poor cold welcome? Well, it was too late to moan, it was too late to change her mind. [...] Her children must have an English education and, for that reason, she was prepared to bear the coldest welcome, even if it came from the land of her dreams” (Emecheta 1989: 27). Clearly, the reality is quite disappointing in comparison to the dream in her mind. Although she has spent all her life dreaming about Britain, she is quite surprised that nobody cares about her arrival, and what is more, the civilized world does not look like what was taught her in Nigeria. The change she observes in Francis when he kisses her in public contributes to this initial shock (Emecheta 1989: 27). The most significant matter, however, appears in the manners of the idealised Europeans for Adah. Although she condemned her own people for lack of manners and civilization, the British do not seem to be appropriate for Adah, too: “[The whites] she saw did not look like people who could make jokes about things like death. They looked remote, happy in an aloof way, but determined to keep their distance”

(Emecheta 1989: 27). This dialogue between Adah and Francis makes her realize that the old problem of being civilized resurfaces in Britain once again: "The sharpness [in his voice] seemed to say to her: 'It is allowed for African males to come and get civilized in England, but that privilege has not been extended to females yet.' [...] but she prayed that two of them would be strong enough to accept civilization into their relationship. Because if they did not, their coming would have been a very big mistake" (Emecheta 1989: 28). This early anxiety proves to be meaningless when Adah faces the reality of being a black and a subject of a former British colony in the contemporary British society. The horrible conditions appropriate for the blacks have nothing to do with the living standards she was accustomed in Nigeria. As Francis says, "Well, I know you will not like it, but this is the best I can do. You see, accommodation is very short here in London, especially for black people with children. Everybody is coming to London. The West Indians, the Pakistanis and even the Indians, so that African students are usually grouped together with them. We are all blacks, all coloured, and the only houses we can get are horrors like these" (Emecheta 1989: 29). Furthermore, despite their differences among them, all immigrants were considered and treated by the English in *Second Class Citizen* as if there were similar to each other, whereas Adah could not cope with the idea of being equal to some immigrant in England. Adah's reaction is depicted as follows: "Then, to her horror, she saw that she had to share the house with such Nigerians who called her madam at home; some of them were of the same educational background as her paid servants" (Emecheta 1989: 29). This condition seems to be degrading for Adah, yet she has to face the reality that condemns her to a socially inferior position in England as an immigrant. Upon Francis's expressions in anger, there is no need to answer for Adah: "You must know, my dear lady, that in Lagos you may be million publicity officers for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants; you may be living like an elite, but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen. So you can't discriminate against your own people, because we are all second class" (Emecheta 1989: 30). In other words, the blacks constitute the lowest social class in England as a result of the degrading attitude that dates back to the colonial period. Although Adah deems herself to be different from and superior to all other blacks, she is a second class citizen in the eyes of the English society. As Lisa Iyer points out, "Adah [...] is not only representative of trends among urban African women; once in England, she becomes a microcosm of Africa herself and her place in the Western mindset, a place which is surely second if not third, *third* in fact being a more likely ranking for a *Third World* continent" (1995: 28, emphasis in original). Accordingly, the colonial attitude continues in England even after Nigeria's independence, and Adah is treated like a colonial subject in the postcolonial period among all other black immigrants. Adah's condition in line with the Western perspective towards the colonial subject is a disappointment in comparison to the protagonist's condition in her homeland and her education that has brought a better position in the society. Iyer further states that "But does it matter what [the British] think of Africa? Is it arrogant to assume that [British] opinion is important enough to warrant such effort and attention? Arrogance it is to assume that our views are crucial because we are somehow the moral center of the universe; *realism* it is to recognize that [the British] have the military and economic capability to destroy African people, and that if Africanists do not make a serious effort to correct the dehumanizing stereotypes, Africans will continue to be at greater risk than would be the case if they were seen as fully human with civilizations worthy of study and emulation" (1995:28-29, emphasis in original). This colonial attitude is still dominant in England, and Adah with her family becomes just another victim to the othering process. Her background, education, financial status and social class have no significance in this situation. Therefore, she has to accept the social role assigned to her and all other blacks. The notion of a black

immigrant in the English society is presented like a stereotypical figure, while it is imposed on the black immigrant regardless of all differences among them.

Although Adah tries to resist this social attitude, the black community in Britain has already accepted their inferior status. Just as she wants her children to have a good education in English, the blacks look for foster mothers that will help their children adopt English manners while disregarding their native traditions. Adah reacts to this tendency among the immigrants in England as follows: “They say that in England Nigerian children have two sets of mothers – the natal mother, and the social mother. As soon as a Nigerian housewife in England realized that she was expecting a child, instead of shopping for prams, and knitting little booties, she would advertise for a foster mother. No one cared whether a woman was suitable or not, no one wanted to know whether the house was clean or not; all they wanted to be sure of was that the foster-mother was white. The concept of ‘whiteness’ could cover a multitude of sins” (Emecheta 1989: 36). The problematisation of the people’s colour is again important at this stage in Adah’s life as she wants her children to adopt British manners. While the requirements for raising a child in England differ from those in Nigeria as a challenge for the black parents, the intention to be acceptable among the English forces them to comply with the norms. Adah and Francis thus leave their children to an English foster mother: “Only first-class citizens lived with their children, not the blacks” (Emecheta 1989: 38). However, this experience also turns out to be a means of deconstruction for one of the myths in Adah’s mind about the superiority of the white man. As Trudy, the English foster mother, treats Adah’s children in a cruel manner and tells lies about her treatment to the children’s officer, Adah experiences a process of enlightenment as regards the superiority of the English society: “As for Adah, she listened to Trudy destroying for ever one of the myths she had been brought up to believe: that the white man never lied. [...] But Adah could not stop thinking about her discovery that the whites were just as fallible as everyone else. There were bad whites and good whites [...]! Why, then, did they claim to be superior?” (Emecheta 1989: 42-43). This question at the very end is actually a turning point for Adah, because with this question, she accepts the reality around her. Furthermore, she has developed the consciousness and awareness to question the colonial discourse established in her mind. The colonized person is thus questioning the colonial discourse, because she has realized their weaknesses. As Aimé Césaire asserts, “henceforth the colonized know that they have an advantage over them [the colonizer]. They know that their temporary ‘masters’ are lying. Therefore that their masters are weak” (1972: 172). Adah begins to think independent from the colonial discourse imposed on her in the homeland, and her attitude towards the social environment begins to change dramatically in line with this new perspective.

Another challenge for Adah and her family stems from their inappropriate lifestyle according to the standards established especially among the black community. These standards actually reflect the colonial and patriarchal discourse dominant among the immigrants while they are considered as the other by the English society. The fact that Adah makes a decent living out of her job in the library and Francis has to take care of children while she is away results in their being othered by the blacks, too. Adah and Francis simply try to live like first class citizens in England. When the landlord asks them to move out, they recognize their inbetweenness: Neither the English, nor the black people accept them. Hence, Adah elaborates on her first year in England as follows: “Adah could not help wondering whether the real discrimination, if one could call it that, that she experienced was not more the work of her fellow countrymen than of the whites. Maybe if the blacks could learn to live harmoniously with one another, [...] there would be fewer

inferiority feelings among the blacks” (Emecheta 1989: 59). Clearly, Adah questions the results of the colonial discourse that condemns them to their current status. Nevertheless, this reasoning turns out to be futile since they have to look for another place to live under these circumstances. Adah Obi is othered both by white English community due to her ethnic origins and colonial roots, and by the black community due to her desire to live like the superior first class citizens in Britain.

Adah’s attempt to find proper lodging for the family illustrates racial discrimination and othering process on a new level for the protagonist. While Adah and Francis try to find a vacant room, they always come across with the expression “Sorry, no coloureds” on the notices (Emecheta 1989: 59). This is the expression of racism in the most explicit and insurmountable manner. Just because of her colour, Adah cannot rent the room she wants. The feeling of inferiority is thus put into her mind. So, it is clear that “she was beginning to learn that her colour was something she was supposed to be ashamed of. She was never aware of this at home in Nigeria, even when in the midst of whites. [...] She was now learning to suspect anything beautiful and pure. Those things were for the whites, not the blacks” (Emecheta 1989: 59). However, there is still one great difference between Adah and other blacks including Francis because of Adah’s determination to prove that she is also as capable and sophisticated as the first class citizens in Britain and that she will not simply acquiesce to the lower social status ordained by the English people. Adah contemplates on her condition in the society as follows: “They believed that one had to start with the inferior and stay there, because being black meant being inferior. Well, Adah did not yet believe that wholly, but what she did know was that being regarded as inferior had a psychological effect on her. [...] but after a while, she was not going to accept it from anyone. She was going to regard herself as the equal of any white” (Emecheta 1989: 59-60). Additionally, Adah’s attempts to be equal to the whites in England might be observed again when she gives birth to her son in a hospital. During the whole time she spends there, there is only one question in her mind. While other white women that have given birth at the hospital are appreciated appropriately by their families, Adah does not have satisfactory interest from her husband, who does not treat her like the white women (Emecheta 1989: 72). Moreover, the financial problems, as well as lack of manners, prevent him from sending “flowers,” “cards” and “presents” (Emecheta 1989: 72). So, Adah always compares herself to other women and makes promises for the next time in a hospital. But, she cannot go into the room when the nurses show her little son to all those mothers. Out of shame for her poverty and the old clothes on the baby, she does not want to see other white mothers (Emecheta 1989: 75). Clearly, Adah is obsessed with her appearance and status in the society as a black immigrant that aims to be equal to the white people.

During all these experiences based on the discrimination against her gender and race till the decision to leave Francis and live alone, Adah first displays the colonized mind of the natives that aspire to the colonizer’s manners, and, then, follows her awakening upon the realization of truths in the relationship between the masters and the natives of the colonial period. Adah’s inner conflicts stem from the fact that she has spent her entire life in an illusion that kept her mind under control in a former colony in line with the hierarchical order between the colonizers and the colonized established by the colonizers to protect the status quo for the benefits of the masters. Jita Allan claims that “sexual and racial messages are mixed as Emecheta oscillates between rebellion and submission. [...] In Emecheta, the problem is exacerbated by the competing demands of two opposing cultures – African and Western” (1995: 96). While Adah considers herself different from other black people, she aims to adopt the values of the Western culture, which puts her in a

dilemma in the face of racial discrimination by the white English community. It might be further stated that “Adah’s second-class status of being African, female and poor is counter balanced by her ‘first-class’ capacity for independence and creativity” (Allan 1995: 98). Adah becomes an embodiment of the contradiction between the East and the West, Africa and England. Therefore, Emecheta creates an exemplary figure through the heroine in *Second Class Citizen*. Barthelemy claims that “torn between loyalties of race, culture, and sex, Emecheta writes about a world lost and a world becoming, a world destroyed and a world indestructible. The Africa in Emecheta’s novels is a continent reeling in two times: Western diachronicity and traditional African synchronicity. And in these novels, Emecheta chronicles the personal dilemma of the African confronted and lured by Western time and Western culture. The author herself and her female characters struggle to find their place in this world in these times” (1989: 559). Clearly, Adah realizes her inbetweenness in Britain as a black immigrant that came from a former British colony, and as a woman capable enough to be equal to the first class white citizen in *Second Class Citizen*. At the end of a long adventure looking for the idealized country that she believed in all her life, she could find nothing except for disappointment in Britain. Although she has some qualities that will help her stand alone as an equal in England, she still has to struggle in order to overcome the colonial discourse conflicting in her mind. Since the grand narratives she believed throughout her life are gradually deconstructed, Adah is searching for the place she really belongs. Ward claims that “a choice must be made, for despite the traditional dual imagery of the self-other dichotomy whereby Western white male subjectivity is constructed, a unified representation of the perfectly *other* ‘Other’ – black, female, colonized – appears [to have been constructed]” (1990: 84, emphasis in original). As the colonized mind responds to the colonizer under the influence of an enlightenment process, new concepts begin to appear. Accordingly, by means of her answer in a Western manner by writing her experiences, Emecheta succeeds in creating a character who challenges the white, patriarchal and colonial discourse of the West. In relation to the significance of the novel against the Eurocentric discourse, Joya Uraizee argues that “the act of writing (or painting or any “aesthetic art”) is itself ideological. What this means is that not only does the writer/artist represent a particular (class-based) ideology, but that the product itself creates a reaction within the reader/viewer, a reaction that Althusser terms ‘ideological self-recognition’. This in turn implies that there will be confusion and contradiction in the way ideology operates, while literary text seems to offer a symbolic or formal resolution of contradictions within itself” (2000: 9). Hence, it may be argued that against the colonial discourse she had to live in, Emecheta develops a challenging attitude. On the one hand, she recognizes herself from an ideological perspective against the Western norms. She reflects, on the other hand, the postcolonial attitude, which in fact gives an answer back to the colonizer. So, she succeeds in contradicting the way imperial ideology operates. Adah’s attempt to become independent from her husband and the black community signify that she aims to free her mind from the restrictions of the colonial discourse.

In conclusion, it may be argued that *Second Class Citizen* reflects the postcolonial experience in the former colonies dealing with the never ending influence of the colonial era. The protagonist Adah tries to act like an independent character, but she is surrounded by restrictive discourses, which turn her into the ultimate other wherever she goes. As a little child in Nigeria, Adah is compared to her brother and she is othered by the family. As she grows up, her desire to have proper education is also considered inappropriate by her relatives. After she decides to get married to protect herself from familial oppression, her husband and his family appear as new forms of oppression. Despite her education and

qualities, which enable her to go to Britain to lead a decent life, Adah is othered again by the white English community due her being a black woman immigrant in Britain. Under these circumstances, Adah Obi is presented as the ultimate form of the othering process that results from the colonial discourse. Still, Emecheta illuminates the experience of the black immigrants in Britain through her autobiographical novel and responds to the Western society making use of their language and their literary style, combining it with qualities of oral literature in African civilization.

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