

International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH)

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Vol. 9 (1), S/No 32, JANUARY, 2019: 99-107

ISSN: 2225-8590 (Print) ISSN 2227-5452 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v9i1.10>

Forces and Flaws in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and *Idu*

Asiegbu, Perp' St. Remy, PhD.

Department of English Studies

University of Port Harcourt

Perpstremy.asiegbu@uniport.edu.ng

Abstract

Considering her unique position as the premier African woman to publish a novel in English, given, also, her relatively artistic delineation of the African woman's experience at a time when there is a dearth of female voice on that topic; when works of the male authors generally denigrate women, Flora Nwapa receives a commendable level of attention from critics all over the world. While most of the critics appreciate her for drawing attention to the strength and challenges of the African woman, others fault her for the absence of literary dexterity in her narrative. But for some critics' romance with Uhamiri, not enough attention, relatively, has been given to the intrinsic and extrinsic forces surrounding Nwapa as a writer and how she manages these forces in plot development. Thus, this paper addresses this concern through the analysis of her foremost works, *Efuru* and *Idu*. Certain oversights are, also, noted some of which result from her deliberate or unconscious attempt to handle the forces that influence her. This is to draw attention to a writer's conscious or unconscious struggle with forces, natural or supernatural, and, also, point to certain flaws, in Nwapa's narrative, for the advancement of scholarship. The choice of Nwapa and her first two novels derives from the need to approach a relatively new topic from the beginning.

Key Words: Forces, flaws, tradition, love, muse, influence.

Introduction

Speaking of Nwapa's works, Lindfors (1967) observed that Nwapa's stories of a distressed Igbo woman are told monotonously which deprives them of life and variety and parades characters that rarely perform. He further attacks, "When her characters do act, they say and do things of little importance. Every chapter is littered with trivia, the detritus of an inexperienced novelist" (Lindfors, 1967, p. 31). The total dismissal of Nwapa's works as Lindfors does above does not tally with the concerns of this paper even though this research seeks to uncover Nwapa's oversights in the narration of her foremost works – *Efuru* and *Idu*.

Nwapa's *Efuru* and *Idu* succeed in recounting the ordinary experience of an ordinary woman in a third world community. It is, therefore, absurd for anyone to expect such works to be thrillers. A story of distress, as Lindfors noted, cannot sustain its thematic preoccupation if

told with much excitement and colour. Woolf (2006) seemed to come to Nwapa's rescue with this observation, "...in dealing with women as writers, as much elasticity as possible is desirable, it is necessary to leave oneself room to deal with other things besides their work, *so much has that work been influenced by conditions that have nothing whatever to do with art*' (Woolf, 2006, p.580. Emphasis mine). Commenting on the expectations of African fiction to appeal to international audience, Achebe (2007) recalled a tale he read:

In a recent anthology a Hausa folk-tale, having recounted the usual fabulous incidents, ends with these words: 'They all came and they lived happily together. He had several sons and daughters who grew up and helped in raising the standard of education of the country.' As I said elsewhere, if you consider this ending a naïve anti-climax then you cannot know very much about Africa (Achebe, 2007, pp.105 - 6).

Balogun and Oriaku (2004) agreed that *Efuru* and *Idu* are "compendiums of cultural practices as undergone by women in pristine Nigerian society with the main purpose of recreating the experiences of women in the traditional society with minor infiltration of other cultures in the assessment of the people" (Balogun & Oriaku, 2004, p.118). The author, herself, explained:

In my first two novels, I tried to recreate the experiences of women in the traditional African society - their social and economic activities and above all their pre-occupation with the problems of recreation, infertility, and child-bearing. Apart from exposing the pain, misery and humiliation which childless or barren women suffer in the traditional society, the two novels (I hope) give insight into the resourcefulness and industriousness of women which often made them successful, respected, and influential people in the community (Nwapa, 2007, p. 528).

Apart from the tradition of her people which, obviously, influences Nwapa's works, we will look at other forces outside and inside of Nwapa, as a writer, and how they manifest in *Efuru* and *Idu*, while at the same time noting the presence of certain flaws in the narration of the stories. Reflecting on forces and the spirit world, Cromwell (2015) observed:

The reality of the spirit world can be understood by recognizing the reality of intangible forces in life, such as the power of love to influence people through the invisible bonds of family, friendship, nationality, race and religion. It is fair to say that most peoples' lives are governed by invisible influences stemming from belief, relationship, tradition and culture. The world of humanity's physical environment is shaped by these internal forces because the activities of the body are directed by the mind. The realm of mind and spirit is causal to the world of body (Cromwell, 2015, para. 1).

The word 'force' carries different connotations. However, all the meaning ascribed to it is connected to strength and power. Of the various definitions given on 'force' by Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, the ones below best describe it with regard to the concerns of this paper: "The strong effect or influence of something," "A person or thing that has a lot of power or influence." Thus, force is described here as a stronghold, physical or spiritual, that affects and influences a person or thing and causes situations and circumstances to change. A writer noted:

The forces within the spirit world may not breathe but they're nonetheless lifelike. Who can say it isn't true? After all, science has no idea yet what constitutes life.... much less the possible parameters. Secondly, all of life's

functions are living forces whether having a scientific (mechanical) explanation or not... and that applies to inspiration coming from out-of-the-blue. (A. O Kime, "The Muse of Greek Mythology" n. pag.)

The inspiration, thus spoken about, is celebrated in the creative world as muse. There are various muses in Greek mythology. But, of all, there are nine significant muses, otherwise referred to as 'the muse' Brian Oldwolf (2019). These are Greek goddesses who are daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne. They are believed to inspire writers, musicians and other artists. The goddesses and their domains of inspiration are as follows: Calliope – Epic Poetry; Clio – History; Erato – Song and Love poetry; Euterpe – Lyric Poetry and Music; Melpomene – Tragedy; Polymnia – Sacred poetry; Terpsichore – Dance; Thalia – Comedy; Urania – Astrology. For thousands of years, artists have acknowledged the existence and influence of the muse. Not even modern civilization with its amazing technological breakthrough in recent years has done anything to discredit the reality of muse among artists. This is explained on the basis that, "first, there isn't much about the subconscious mind that science can explain - being the 'receiving end' of emanation - and nothing at all about the spirit world. Secondly, one's intuitiveness always gravitates towards the most heartfelt reason... thus why artists credit the darling muse" (Ibid.). However, writers and other artists worldwide have chosen other archetypes and gods as their own individual muses or forces that inspire and influence their writing. *Ogun* is known as the muse of Nigeria's Nobel Laureate in Literature, Wole Soyinka, "For Ogun is Soyinka's Muse and patron god, and his thyrsus is the stave made from the palm-wine" (Macebuh, 1980, p. 210).

This paper, as hinted earlier, shall concern itself with the forces and flaws prevalent in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and *Idu*. It is noted and acknowledged, by some critics, that tradition is a major influence in Nwapa's foremost works. Here, besides tradition, emphasis is laid on certain supernatural forces surrounding Nwapa which is beyond her full comprehension and control. While this paper does not claim to know the force or muse behind Nwapa's works, it will point out some issues in the works that show the presence of certain forces. The flaws which are pointed out result, partly, from Nwapa's conscious or unconscious attempt to handle the forces some of which she is, most probably, vaguely aware of. And though I would later fault Nwapa's use of gossips, by mostly minor characters, to develop her plots, that and other observations do not write her stories off considering that she was able to sustain her subject matter revolving round the simple life of an ordinary African woman living out her experiences in a typical African setting.

The Reality of Forces in *Idu* and *Efuru*

Efuru is a self-respecting, self-assertive, and resilient woman. She builds up her husband's finances and makes him become more of a man in the sight of people. Adizua is a lazy farmer whose harvest comes to little or nothing at the end of the harvest season. His fellow farmers are amazed that NwashikeOgene is "the man whose daughter that imbecile married" (Nwapa, 1966, p.11). But, with the help of *Efuru*, Adizua makes a lot of money in trading. *Efuru* provides the strategies and advice that improve their economic well-being and, finally, he is able to pay the bride price. It maybe said, therefore, that *Efuru* paid her own bride price, showing that where a man fails, a woman can succeed. That *Efuru* and Adizua "felt really married" (Nwapa, 1966, p.24) after paying the bride price shows the force of tradition at work on Nwapa. This, clearly, describes the writer as a custodian of traditional practices that uphold the dignity of womanhood. *Efuru*'s defiant attitude in running off to Adizua without the latter paying the bride price has been adduced to Nwapa's feminist disposition. It is said to be "the first feminist statement of the book..." (Davies, 1986, p.249). I. Eshiet (1997) affirms

that it is Nwapa's way of condemning "an obsolete custom which ensnares women and keeps them as chattel in a male culture" (Eshiet, 1997, p.22). Efuru's attitude, rather than show disregard for tradition is, perhaps, the first sign of *Uhamiri's* interest in her. In Igbo land, those who are under the influence of some gods or spirits are known to exhibit some queer characteristics. Stubbornness or defiant attitude is one of such character traits. And it is such a thing that can make a beautiful girl like Efuru run to a man of Adizua's low status without, even, her father's knowledge. Thus, Efuru's attitude of living with Adizua without observing the custom is a familiar characteristic of one possessed by the water spirit.

Efuru's beauty is such that prompts a character to quip, "...she is so beautiful. You would think that the woman of the lake is her mother." The other character agrees: "After seeing this type of woman, one hisses when one sees one's wife" (Nwapa, 1966, p.12). Unless Adizua is the Oguta version of the Greek Adonis, the reason why such a rare beauty (who later shows that she is not a woman to be treated shabbily), runs off to him, can be explained on the basis that she is under the influence of some strange force which is beyond her control; a power which is bigger than NwashikeOgene, her father. This is why he does nothing but sends men to bring his daughter back, and this also explains the rather strange and effortless manner with which the men handle the case. *Uhamiri's* influence, therefore, more than Nwabuzo's gin, compels the men to leave Efuru to remain in Adizua's house. The spokesman says: "We shall go, our daughter... you seem to be happy here and we wonder why your father wants us to bring you back..." (Nwapa, 1966, p. 9). NwashikeOgene dissatisfied with the outcome, "sent another batch of young men from his village. But nothing came out of it" (Nwapa, 1966, p. 10).

It is not out of place, therefore, to say that *Uhamiri's* choice of Efuru as her priestess does not just happen towards the end. There has been something of the *Uhamiri* spirit in her. Thus, Efuru's unwelcomed attitude in the beginning of the story serves, perhaps, as a prologue to the epilogue of her being chosen as *Uhamiri's* devotee.

The great love that exists between Idu and Adiewere, around which *Idu* as a story revolves, is a significant force in the novel. The story of Idu as a character starts with her show of concern for her sick husband: "He had a headache yesterday, so he took some purgative medicine which I bought from the market. He has had a tummy upset since this morning" (Nwapa, 1970, p. 1). This sickness, like Efuru's stubbornness in *Efuru*, serves as the prologue to Adiewere's death of which cause is, supposedly, a brief illness (Nwapa, 1970, p. 208). At the beginning of the story, the indescribable love between Adiewere and Idu is revealed to us through Uzoechi and Nwasobi's gossip: "Sometimes when I see them, I am filled with happiness. Have you ever seen two people so happy before?" "No, I never have. God created them as good people and God gave them to each other. You never see them quarrel; don't they ever quarrel?" (Nwapa, 1970, p. 2) Adiewere echoes the above statements: "... God meant us for each other and we were lucky to find each other" (Nwapa, 1970, p. 206). Uzoechi and Nwasobi tell us, when Adiewere is ill again: "... well if something happens to Adiewere, Idu will be finished. I have never seen anyone lose weight as Idu has done recently. God created the two of them together and said they must be husband and wife. Do you know that if one is sick the other one becomes sick too. It is strange ..." (Nwapa, 1970, p. 150). This is a foreshadowing on the death of Adiewere and, consequently, Idu. Their love is very strong and their union is characterized by mutual respect and understanding so that even when Idu challenges her husband about his extramarital affairs with Izukanane, he shows his great regard for her feelings by apologizing thus: "Leave it, my wife, forgive me. We men are like that ... I want peace. There is no woman in the whole world like you ..." (Nwapa, 1970, p. 207).

Love is such a huge force in *Idu* that wives die after their husbands' death. It is observed that Ojiugo died in a way after the death of Amarajeme: "She "died" the day her husband died. The day Amarajeme died, that was the day she "died" (Nwapa, 1970, p. 216). At the knowledge of her husband's death, Idu suffers mixed anxiety depressive disorder which is as a result of the shock and the burden of realizing that she is going to live without Adiewere. Her reaction is worthy of note:

Idu entered her house, went straight to the back. Her husband was lying face downwards on the floor. She turned him over, called his name many times, but she could not reach him. He was already dead. She left him there, in the blood and filth. She said nothing to Anamadi. She went to Nwasobi's house. She sat down. Nwasobi brought kola and they ate. "I have come to tell you that Adiewere is dead. I am going, are you coming with me?" The calmness of Idu made Nwasobi's blood run cold (Nwapa, 1970, p. 209)

Idu remains in this schizophrenic state; not eating; not sleeping; not crying, until she, finally, eats her last meal, lies down and dies. Her love for Adiewere is so strong that she forsakes her only beloved son (Ijoma), her only sister (Anamadi), and her very good friend (Nwasobi), and dies for her husband (Adiewere). The force of love in this novel cannot be overemphasized.

The intrinsic force at work in creative writers is, largely, referred to as muse, as noted above. Writers, consciously or unconsciously, struggle with their muse in the course of developing their plots. This quarrel often appears as a disagreement between one and oneself. It is a confused state in which a writer is indecisive about the next sub-plot or detail that the story should expose. This excerpt will help buttress this point. It is from Deanna Mascle's witty testimony on the muse captioned: 'Why I Killed My Muse and You Should Too.'

It started out quietly. As I would sit at my keyboard or curl up with a notebook, she would perch on my shoulder as was her want to do. "I don't think you meant to write that sentence," she would whisper in my ear. "That doesn't sound like the best description," she would snipe. "Is that the best you can do?" she would sneer. I took to sneaking my writing in when I knew she was occupied elsewhere. She never could resist critiquing the writing in the morning paper if it was left spread on the kitchen table. That way I could sometimes write several pages before she began her commentary. "Surely you can find a better way to approach this topic," her mocking voice would interrupt. "That has been so done." Soon I was spending more time arguing with her, defending my words, than I was writing. Then my production slowed to a crawl as I would overanalyze each word choice and sentence formation before committing it to screen or paper. All that did was give her more time to find fault with the few words I did write...(n.pag.)

It appears that Nwapa does not allow the creative force behind her writing to have the final say in *Efuru* and *Idu*. This is noticeable in the final chapters. But it is hard to say who wants what. For instance, it is difficult to decipher whether it is her inspiration that must have a quarrel between Adiewere and Idu, or if Nwapa insists. Notice that Idu and Adiewere rarely disagreed, they live very happily with Adiewere showering praises on Idu at every opportunity as has been observed before. They had a quarrel only once and this is towards the end of the book. This misunderstanding heats up to the extent that Adiewere refuses to eat Idu's food for days and even raises his hand to beat her. Idu exclaims: "A human being like yourself will not beat me for nothing. It is not really me you want to beat. Go and look for men like yourself to beat. It is here where I am that you have strength" (Nwapa, 1970, p. 168).

The only explanation to this bitter quarrel is that, “The men-folk lorded it over their women-folk. Adiewere was merely making a fuss. All he had wanted was some petting from his wife it seemed. He was unable to hold anything concrete against Idu” (Nwapa, 1970, p. 174). One would expect that what causes such a fight between such lovebirds will be something almost inexcusable. But, surprisingly enough, the cause of this huge quarrel is little or nothing. Moreover, there are no instances of “men lording it over their women” in *Idu*. Thus, it seems Nwapa is about to end the tale when suddenly, it occurs to her that it would appear larger than life if Adiewere and Idu do not quarrel even for once. So, she creates a quarrel which appears as fake as its cause.

There is, most probably, a force surrounding Idu’s childlessness which Nwapa fails to expatiate upon. We see her conscious and, rather, artistic pairing of Ojiugo and Idu, “They had plenty of things in common as both had devoted husbands, but neither had borne her husband children ...” (Nwapa, 1970, p. 37). This pairing becomes important to show that childlessness in a marriage is not always the fault of the woman because Ojiugo later leaves her husband, Amarajeme, when she realizes that she is pregnant with his friend’s child. Thus, Ojiugo’s childlessness is her husband’s fault, and Idu’s is her fault, or her *chi*’s? This makes one wonder why Idu gets pregnant only when her husband takes another wife or is having an affair with another woman. It is to be noted that she takes in after years of childlessness when her husband marries the “small wife” (Nwapa, 1970, p. 49). Also, when her husband begins an affair with Izukanane, she takes in again (Nwapa, 1970, p.p 204 & 206). Could it be that there is something deeper about Idu’s *chi* that Nwapa fails to lay emphasis on? A force which, most probably, is responsible for Adiewere’s strange and untimely death especially as Nwapa has no explanation for his death as will be shown later.

Flaws and Oversights in the Narration of *Efuru and Idu*

Nwapa uses what may be termed as a telltale technique in developing her plots. The stories are informed by a number of gossips by different characters - mostly minor characters in the novels whose opinions should not count. There is, also, too much dialogue and little narrative. Furthermore, the stories are told in fragments of different people’s lives with Idu’s and Efuru’s at the centre. Those minor plots, unfortunately, fail to come together in the end and are not interlinked.

Nwapa makes it clear that Uhamiri does not deny children to her devotees intentionally, it is because she could not give what she does not have. She has beauty and riches, and she gives them freely. Given her supernatural power, Uhamiri could cause the beauty and wealth of these women to make-up, adequately, for their childlessness. But they still suffer, especially in the case of Efuru. When Efuru leaves Adizua, she has a company - her slave, Ogea. And her father is still alive. But, when she leaves Gilbert, she is a lonely woman, her father is dead, and Ogea is to marry Gilbert. Why does she suffer so much? Efuru’s suffering, as it is, is not as a result of her childlessness; Gilbert accepts her, childless or not. If, therefore, her tragic end is not connected to her childlessness, not for an evil she committed in the story, then could it be her destined end as an Uhamiri devotee? Uhamiri seems to, purposely, deny her devotees personal fulfillment - when they are happily married, they are childless; when they have children, they lose their husbands and or children. What Efuru, for instance, gains in beauty and economic well-being, she loses in unhappy marriages and childlessness. This makes true an Igbo adage especially among non-worshippers of the water spirit – “*Weteisibia were isi, onyinye mammy water.*” This means that the water spirit’s modus operandi is that she gives you something precious, and takes an equally precious thing from you. There is

doubt that this is how Nwapa sets out to depict Uhamiri considering the way she (Uhamiri) is celebrated in these works, but this is what the facts in the stories reveal.

Efuru's 'washing', for which Nwapa has been criticized, no doubt, is an aberration. But, we see the force of tradition at work again in Nwapa. However, while she dances attendance to the masquerade of traditional ethos, she reveals the reality of women's life in the Igbo tradition. Observe that Efuru "screamed and screamed" (Nwapa, 1970, p. 14) while the circumcision is going on. This is Nwapa's way of exposing the torture that women undergo under certain traditional practices. The writer seems to show her approval for traditional practice as long as it does not bring so much pain or inhibit women. The ceremony that follows is celebrated not because the writer intends to put circumcision in good light, but, because she wishes to celebrate womanhood. However, in so doing, the ills of circumcision are not highlighted. Nwapa might have succeeded in this if she has given a different reason for the death of the baby whose mother failed to be circumcised (Nwapa, 1966, p. 14). By failing to do this, she approves of circumcision, albeit, unconsciously.

Furthermore, Ajanupu is supposed to be an exemplary character. She speaks the truth bluntly and condemns injustice. She is strong, independent, assertive and a custodian of tradition. But, Nwapa contradicts her character when she tells us that Ajanupu owes another woman and refuses to pay until the woman creates a scene:

It is Ajanupu", the woman said. "It is Ajanupu, the newly rich, who has forgotten the poverty of her mother and father. She bought some yams from me three months ago. She gave me one pound and asked me to come the next day for five shillings. I have gone to her house nearly every day for the money but she refused to pay... (Nwapa, 1970, p. 49)

The embarrassing part is that Ajanupu even has the money and would not pay until other women urge her to. Worse still, she has just returned from Nwabuzo, who owed Efuru, and has collected the money rather aggressively. Refusing to pay her own debt is, therefore, conduct unbecoming of a woman of Ajanupu's character. It may be argued that Nwapa is only being realistic considering that no one is perfect, but presenting Ajanupu in this manner confuses her character. She is a flat character, maintaining a wholesome attitude of strength, sisterhood, justice and fairness. Her fight with Gilbert, even, goes further to solidify her character. But, the quarrel with this creditor is like a square shape in a round whole – unsuitable.

Ajanupu talks about her children as if they were still very young, she should be talking about daughters-in-law and grand-children, she is older than Ossai, Efuru's mother-in-law (*Efuru* 176). Though, it is possible that she may not have begot children until much later in her life, nothing in her depiction suggests that.

Another flaw is in the detail of Gilbert's first meeting with Efuru. It is mentioned on page 117, through a flashback, that Gilbert had first seen Efuru in the stream and asked questions about her. "Efuru had gone to the stream to bathe and Gilbert was in the stream also washing his shirt. He liked the look of Efuru and when he asked about her, he was told that she had married but had left her husband." But, Nwapa forgets that Gilbert and Efuru had been mates in school and he had visited Efuru before in Adizua's house:

...as she was about to go to collect her debt from someone, Ogea told her that somebody had come to see her. Efuru came out and greeted the visitor in her usual, pleasant way. She had known him before as they were in the same age-group. As young boys and girls, they had danced together... She hadn't seen

the man for years because the man's parent decided to send him to school when he was over sixteen years old... Efuru brought kola-nuts and a bottle of home-made gin. "Who will break the kola?" Efuru asked laughingly. "I will of course," said Gilbert, for that was his name (Nwapa, 1966, p. 84-85)

In *Idu*, Adiewere is ill from the onset of the story. When he finally dies, Nwapa mentions that, "he had died of poison." But, it is not clear if this is what the people think, or if it is the truth. Nwapa does not expatiate. This is how she puts it:

People gathered, and in no time everybody knew that Adiewere, the husband of Idu, was dead, that he had died of poison. What else could it be if not poison? That's not the way to die. One cannot return from the beach and die having one's bath, after vomiting and passing out blood. It is not natural (Nwapa, 1970, p. 209).

If indeed he is poisoned, Nwapa should have told us how and why, if not she should have made it clear that the sickness which he suffers from in the beginning of the story killed him. Adiewere's death is a significant event in the novel, so, the readers ought to be sure of the cause of it.

Furthermore, why is it that Efuru does not, as a devotee of the woman of the lake, consult and implore her when she is sick? And, is the cause of her illness known? It seems that as in *Idu*, Nwapa comes up, suddenly, with a fuss without a cause. Efuru suddenly takes ill, a sickness that lasts for quite a long time and defies every effort to get her healed. She, who takes others to the doctor could not request to be taken to a clinic. And then, the cause of this illness for which she is accused of adultery is not made clear, at least, to exonerate her from such false allegation. Perhaps, the reason Nwapa strikes Efuru with such sickness is to cause a misunderstanding between her and Gilbert, to create a reason for Efuru to go back to her father's house – an end which makes her childlessness more significant and agonizing. She goes back to her father's house alone, without a child to comfort her, without Ogea to assist her, not even is her father alive anymore to keep her company. Thus, Efuru ends up a sad, lonely and suffering woman. Yet, she has not committed any atrocity in the novel to warrant such a tragic end. Her fate is, therefore, worse than that of Idu, for the latter dies gallantly for love, rejecting a traditional practice that would impose on her a nonentity as a husband. Efuru's sad end is completely arbitrary unless it is explained on the basis of her destined end as Uhamiri's devotee.

If Nwapa has intended, however, to make Efuru an independent, happy woman by letting her become separated from her second husband, then she (Nwapa) did not succeed in that because Efuru does not strike one as a successful, happy and contented single woman, but as a lonely, forsaken and suffering woman. Her end evokes pity from the reader, not 'eureka!' This feeling of pity strikes the reader more at the point when Gilbert is absent at Efuru's father's burial. The irate Efuru refuses to talk about Gilbert: "Efuru hissed when Ajanupu mentioned Gilbert. She did not want to discuss it. She was very sad. Gilbert was not at the burial of Efuru's father" (Nwapa, 1970, p. 204). This incident, undoubtedly, opens the wounds inflicted by Adizua's absence at their daughter's burial. The sympathy for Efuru begins with Adizua's elopement with his lover, it gathers momentum when Gilbert accuses her of adultery and climaxes when she leaves his house. One begins to wonder why Efuru is very unfortunate in marriage. Could it be that Uhamiri frustrates her purposely so that she could worship her with undivided attention? Future researchers on Nwapa may want to address this question and, also, unravel why Uhamiri is so celebrated, her inability to give the much-wanted children notwithstanding. Even Nwapa wonders at this, the last three lines of Efuru read thus:

“She gave women beauty and wealth but she had no child. She had never experienced the joy of motherhood. Why then did the women worship her?” (Nwapa, 1970, p. 221).

Be that as it may, Flora Nwapa succeeds in telling stories of her female folks by showing that they are not mere appendages to men; that they are worthy, hardworking and dignified women, their sufferings as wives, mothers and childless women notwithstanding. Nwapa’s *Efuru* and *Idu*, therefore, “set the stage for many of her contemporary women writers to define the African reality” (Sridevi, 2015, p. 16).

References

- Achebe, C. (2007). The novelist as a teacher. In Olaniyan, T.&Quayson, A. (Eds.) *African literature:An anthology of criticism and theory* (pp.103 - 106). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Balogun, M., & Oriaku, R. (2014). Charting the growth of Gyno-texts in Nigerian prose fiction. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 6(9), 117 – 133.
- Cromwell, T. (2015) The physical World and the spiritual World: Essentials of the unification principle. Retrieved 21 Jul. 2015 from <https://www.tparents.org/Library/Unification/Books/Eup/Eup-1-05>.
- Davies, C. B. (1986). Motherhood in the works of male and female Igbo writers: Achebe, Emecheta, Nwapa and Nzekwu. In Davies, C.B.& Graves, A. A. (Eds.) *Ngambika: Studies of women in African literature* (pp. 241 - 256). Trenton, New Jersey: African World.
- Eshiet, I. (1997). Flora Nwapa as a disruptive pathfinder in a male dominated literature. In Eko, E. (Ed.) *Flora Nwapa: Critical perspectives* (pp. 21-32). Uyo: University of Calabar.
- Kime, A. O. (2010). The muse of greek mythology. *Wikipedia.com*. 10 Nov. 2010.
- Lindfors, B. (1967). Nigerian novel of 1966. *Africa Today*, 14(5), 27 – 31.
- Macebuh, S. (1980). Poetics and the mythic imagination. In James, G. (Ed.), *Critical perspective on Wole Soyinka* (200-211). Washington D.C, USA: Three Continents.
- Masclé, D. (2010). Why I killed my muse and you should too. *Testimonials to the Muse. Wikipedia.com*. 12 Nov. 2010.
- Nwapa, F. (1966). *Efuru*. London: Heinemann.
- . (1970). *Idu*. London: Heinemann.
- . (2007). Women and Creative Writing in Africa. In Olaniyan, T.&Quayson, A. (Eds.) *African Literature:An anthology of criticism and theory* (pp.526 - 532). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Oldwolf, B. (2019). Who were the nine muses of Greek mythology. Retrieved Jul. 15, 2019 from <https://owlcation.com/Humanities/Mythology>.
- Sridevi, L. M. (2015). Revival of usable past: Use of myth and folktales in selected works of Flora Nwapa. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies*, 2(2), 14 - 17.
- Woolf, V. (2006). Women and fiction. In Dorothy, H. (Ed.) *The novel: An anthology of criticism and theory*. (pp. 579-585). Oxford: Blackwell.