

THE AFRICAN WOMAN AND THE BURDEN OF TRADITION: A SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF FLORA NWAPA'S EFURU & IZUCHUKWU EMEAM'S WIFE OF THE GODS.

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DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.2.14922.03528](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.14922.03528)

Abstract

*The black woman has always been seen as one who should not have the liberty to be on her own rather, she should be possessed by either a man or a spirit/ deity/god/. She has suffered this ordeal from the inception of the world. Man, and spirit continue in their struggle to ensure that the African woman remains under their dominance or in their custody. Efforts made by certain national and international bodies have not borne significant fruits as the African woman still suffers under the hegemonic influence of obnoxious traditional practices. Some African novelists, in their works have tried to make it a point of duty to loudly present this ordeal and culturally imposed marginalization of the African woman. Our aim in this paper is to critically analyze the relationship that firmly attaches the African woman to the African tradition and thus review the aspect of the African tradition responsible for the reduction of the value of the woman. To effectively achieve our aim, we have chosen as our corpus two novels: Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and *Izuchukwu Emeam's wife of the gods*. Given that both authors come from the Igbo region [Eastern Nigeria] in Africa and that both books have their setting in the same part of the country, we would like to narrow our analysis to the Igbo woman who incidentally is the black African woman. Also giving that the African tradition plays an important role in our analysis, we shall make use of the culture theory to achieve our goal in this paper.*

Keywords: African woman, tradition, culture, possession, marginalization and socio-cultural

Introduction

The difference in gender has been so glaring in Igbo Land. From time immemorial the male gender has enjoyed preference over the female counterpart in the Igbo traditional society. It is not that the Igbo woman has been unaware of this treatment from the society, the man and the gods but she has kept on fighting for her liberation, a fight which has yielded little or no result (in this part of Nigeria). For instance, as Nwando Achebe recounts in "Women and Authority in West African History":

Strikes and boycotts often meant that West African women would ignore their household or marital responsibilities. For instance, West African women could "boycott" or abstain from sexual intercourse with their husbands. J.S. Harris reports on a case when a community of Igbo women repeatedly asked their clansmen to clear the paths leading to the market. When they did not, all the women in the village refused to cook for their husbands until they did. The boycott worked because all the women of the village cooperated. Husbands could not ask their mothers or sisters for food.

Despite this result from the resolve of an aggrieved group of women as shown in the traditional Igbo society, the Igbo woman still suffers seriously under the weight of traditionally prescribed beliefs. It is important to understand the social organization of the Igbo society since our two books of interest are written by authors from Igbo land and both books have the Igbo land as their settings. At this time, we would like to talk a little about the Igbo society to enable us understand our topic of interest.

The Igbo Society

The typical Igbo society is patriarchal and highly patrilineal with the exception of some communities like Ohafia, Abiriba and Arochukwu who are matrilineal. In a traditional Igbo society, kingship, inheritance and succession are traced through the father. As a result of this, very great value is placed on the male child. Family is the smallest social unit while the clan is the largest. A family in Igbo land consists of both the immediate and extended family members. The Igbo culture allows a man to marry more than one wife; a choice can be influenced by the economy, war and the ability to give birth to children especially the male ones rather than sexual circumstances. For instance, a male farmer; who has large and

numerous farm lands may like to get more wives who will give birth to so many children, so as to bring in more hands to work in the farms. A clan who is always at war with other clans could advice their men to take many wives, to give birth to more sons, to fight and to replace those who could possibly die in the war. So, when a woman does not get as many sons as she desires, or even get any at all, the husband is encouraged to marry more wives. All the members of the family are expected to live in the same compound and the eldest male child is expected to be in charge of maintaining peace and order in the compound. The men are the breadwinners of the family, they honour their ancestors and defend their communities in times of war, while the women are trained from childhood to carry out domestic tasks which comprise mainly of: cooking, cleaning, raising and taking care of infants and maintain a well-run home.

Marriage in Igbo land is usually contracted between the large families of both the man and the woman and not just between the two people involved, and when there is dispute between the man and the woman, both families get involved in looking for solution and when there seem to be no solution, the dissolution is made by the two families. When the Igbo woman gets married, she is expected to contribute to the welfare of her home and community. She is expected to participate in Agriculture and Trade, some participate in customary religious practices but they do not perform significant roles in sacrifices and community rituals like their male counterparts. In the Igbo cultural background, the nuclear family and the extended family are seen as family. The culture teaches that family is family, and there should exist strong unity and bond amongst family members. Parents are the head of the family, and the children should respect and obey their parents. Parents take care of their children as required; however, when parents get old, there is a shift of responsibility; children take care of their parents in their homes and not care facilities. This aspect of the culture is taught in the veins of all. Grandparents have their roles too in the lives of their grandchildren. They also contribute to raising their grandchildren and grandchildren if they are fortunate enough to support their grandparents in their old years, they do so joyfully without any compulsion. Uncles and aunts from both sides are also seen as members of the family. They have their roles in correcting and directing their nephews and nieces, and the latter, in turn, are bound to show great respect to them. The culture made it that the family is a vital part of the society where the foundation of love, respect, and care is laid. The impact of the culture on the family is immense.

During the time of Flora Nwapa, the Igbo, society supported themselves mainly by farming and their main foods were yam, cassava, cocoyam, maize, melon, okra etc. Yam was cultivated by mostly men. Some other parts of the Igbo society in addition to these crops, cultivated palm oil, palm wine. In the Igbo cultural society women are prohibited from certain cults and activities that are strictly for men such as: belonging to the Masquerade cult, Ozo cult, praying over cola nut, discussion on bride price, praying over yam during the new yam festival, getting close to the house of the masquerade etc.

The pertinence of our submission in this study is dependent on the fact that despite the countless efforts put in place to shove up the Igbo woman's dignity and give her some independence that can allow her be on her own without having to face the humiliation of being owned by either the man or the god/goddess, there are still traditional practices that hamper her emancipation. Our aim in this paper is therefore to analyze the strong bond that links the Igbo woman to the Igbo tradition, and thus expose the aspects of this tradition responsible for the subjugation of the Igbo woman. To effectively drive home our point, we have chosen as our corpus, two novels: Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Izuchukwu Emeam's *Wife of the gods*.

Before delving into the analysis of our work we wish to throw some light on certain aspects of the Igbo tradition that interfere with the liberty of the Igbo woman. These aspects include discrimination and violence, obnoxious rites associated to marriage, female genital mutilation, son preference, etc.

Harmful Traditional Practices: Discrimination and Violence

In 1945 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which "prohibits all forms of discrimination based on sex and ensures the right to life, liberty and security of persons; it recognizes equality before the law and equal protection against any discrimination in violation of the Declaration". (Fact Sheet No. 23). In spite of this Universal declaration, discrimination against the Igbo woman continues. As far back as 1995, about 135 countries had endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This endorsement is targeted at traditional practices, values and beliefs that debilitate the freedom of the woman. Most of these cultural practices have been established in the African communities for generations. According to Fact Sheet, some of these practices are

Beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to a specific group such as women. These harmful traditional practices include female genital

mutilation (FGM); forced feeding of women; early marriage; the various taboos or practices which prevent women from controlling their own fertility; nutritional taboos and traditional birth practices; son preference and its implications for the status of the girl child; female infanticide; early pregnancy; and dowry price. (No 23)

According to Wester, in Sub-Saharan Africa, women face human rights abuses more than anywhere else in the world. She makes us understand the confusion in the resolution of some gender problems when she says that although the colonial powers left behind judicial systems that may be considered national in African nations, customary courts are allowed to exist. According to her, despite the fact that this arrangement is “designed to be culturally inclusive, these systems neglect gender as a category of analysis and often trap women’s human rights between formal law and traditional culture (3). It is necessary to mention that Igbo land is the said Sub-Saharan Africa.

Oloruntoba-Ojo and Oloruntoba-Ojo examine the position of the African woman from the standpoint of “imagery and categorizations that ironically reinforced the colonial tags of African intellectual inferiority”. They criticize Senghor for setting the tone for the glorification of the African woman with the ironical legacy of creating the impression that only her body counts. According to them “...the trouble is that the association of males and females with separate and fixed biological and psychological characteristics leads to hierarchical social power dynamics within society that is generally unfavourable to the genders, and is particularly oppressive to the female”. (6) The earliest realization of this is at birth “when a nurse or midwife announces ‘it’s a girl’, this is not merely stating the sex but engaging a social performative that keys into existing social norms and established semiotics of gender differentiation” (Oloruntoba-Ojo and Oloruntoba-Ojo, 7). To justify this discrimination that begins at birth, Fonchingong (135) points out reactions of husbands after the birth of their children in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine*. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo slaughters a goat to celebrate the birth of a third son in a row by one of his three wives, and, in *The Concubine* Madume is unhappy because his wife cannot produce a male heir.

African writers including writer of Igbo origin, continue to write on these issues because, despite international human rights laws, these treatments continue to exist. It is obvious that those who are supposed to effect these laws are guilty of these attitudes that humiliate the African [Igbo] woman morally, psychologically, physically and economically. Fact Sheet No. 23 says that these

unpleasant traditional practices persist because "...neither the governments concerned nor the international community challenged the sinister implications of such practices...Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation were considered sensitive cultural issues falling within the spheres of women and the family".

Besides the negative effects of these harmful cultural practices on the woman, as explained above, the woman has to, in addition, bear the burden of domestic violence. This explains why the topic keeps on recurring in literary texts that seek to expose this negative attitude that affects the African woman [Igbo woman]. Fulu and Warner (4) argue that "Violence against women and girls has historically been silenced, overlooked or condoned". Going further to encourage writers to continue to hammer on this negative societal phenomenon and to bring it to the front burner, they state that "violence against women and girls is now widely recognized as a fundamental violation of human rights, and a problem with considerable social and economic cost to individuals, communities and countries" (Fulu and Warner, 4). Going further to lay emphasis on the plight of the Igbo woman, Ashmi; a research scholar, Bharthi Women's College, University of Madras Chennai, Tamil Nadu India, in his paper " Gender disparities in the Igbo Culture as portrayed in Nwapa's *Efuru*" points out that Men are not the only beings who exploit women. Women do it to themselves. They become advocates to male dominance. Igbo culture is one of the foremost cultures which follows Patriarchy. Women in the culture are inferior to men by all means. The women are provided with various restrictions while the men are free from customs to a certain extent. Exploitation of women in the Igbo culture happens at various levels and existence of women is a times unrecognized. In a male dominated society men dictate what is right and wrong, what should be done and what should not be done. Women are mere spectators in matters concerning them. To better analyze these issues as presented in our work, we need to rely on the culture theory.

Culture Theory

According to Encyclopedia.com, cultural theory is a term has been applied to diverse attempts to conceptualize and understand the dynamics of culture. Some of its major concerns border on culture and nature, culture and society, high and low culture, cultural tradition and cultural diversity. Cultural theory can be viewed from different theoretical prisms such as structuralism, Marxism, feminism, etc. Some theorists who have shaped the theory include Raymond Williams in *The Long Revolution* (1961), E.P. Thompson in *The Making of the*

English Working Class (1963), Louis Althusser who related cultural theory to Marxism, Antonio Gramsci who charted new ways of conceptualizing the role of culture and cultural practices in class formations and Michel Foucault who shaped a more discursive understanding of cultural language and how power and representation work. The relation that exists between race, ethnicity and culture has also surfaced as a primary concern of cultural theory. Recently feminist arguments have greatly influenced cultural theory. This has elicited a lot of discussion about the “ways in which gender identities are formed within cultural languages and through cultural practices” (Encyclopedia.com)

Tyson talking about cultural criticism states that “while we are constrained within the limits set for us by our culture, we may struggle against those limits or transform them.” (297) This struggle to transform the negative aspects of the African tradition on the liberties of women is the driving force behind the literary creations of many authors including Flora Nwapa and Izuchukwu Emeam.

It is mainly due to the overlap of other relevant theories, as expressed above, that we have deemed it necessary to depend on the cultural theory for our analysis. The interplay between culture, society and cultural diversity that is at the root of discrimination against women can be better handled by exploiting the cultural theory. Obnoxious traditional practices deeply rooted in the history of the Igbo culture have succeeded in relegating the woman to the background. An analysis of our corpus would expose how Nwapa and Emeam contribute their literary voices respectively to the fight against the Igbo traditional “values” that negatively affect the Igbo woman.

Analysis

One notes that both novels: Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru* published in 1966 and Izuchukwu Emeam’s *wife of the gods* published in 2009 talk about the menace of the burden that igbo culture and tradition place on the Igbo woman. It is seen that man is not the only one that exploits the Igbo woman, she is exploited by herself and also by the gods. For instance, in Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru*, we see Adizua who could not pay Efuru’s bride price without Efuru’s help, starting to maltreat her. He started tormenting her by not eating her food without any cause and going out to other women without saying anything to her, knowing that in the Igbo tradition, it is the duty of the woman to cook her husband’s food and the man refuses to eat his wife’s food only when there is a quarrel or when his wife has committed a crime or a sacrilege. He exploits Efuru emotionally, she says to

her mother-in-law: “you mean Adizua, my husband...My husband did not return last night. I waited till about midnight and when I did not see him, I went to bed, but I did not sleep a wink... He has been doing this for weeks now. What beats me is that I have not offended him. If I had offended him, I would render an apology easily”. (Nwapa 51). Efuru goes through the emotional torture, because the society has so indoctrinated and messed up the head of the Igbo woman, she blames herself on her inadequacies whenever her man leaves her. She thinks that there must have been something she didn’t do right. He makes her think so low of herself. This explains Efuru’s thought: “Perhaps there is no woman in my husband’s life after all...No it is not possible. Men behave this way when women are in their lives and she is so influential that they cannot but bow to her whims and will. No, I was right. There is a woman behind this indifference. A woman whose personality is greater than mine...” (Nwapa 54) Even the day Adizua came back asking for his food After wasting food severally, food he never provided money for, Efuru went in to make his food, he left the house by the time Efuru was done with the food. “I did not cook anything for you. For weeks now you have not asked for your food and tonight you have returned demanding your food. There is no food. I have wasted a lot of money cooking food that you never ate”. [Nwapa, 52-53]. When he insisted that he wants his food, Efuru went into the kitchen that night to make food for her husband who was nowhere to be seen by the time the food was served. “That night Efuru did not sleep”. [Nwapa 52]. When she confronted him to know why he treats her the way he does, he treated her with silence. “...Adizua where did you go last night and why did you get me up from bed to cook for you only to go out before I finished cooking? Adizua made no reply” [Nwapa. 52.]

Also, in Emeam’s *Wife of the gods*, one remarks the same emotional exploitation and torment between Umunna and his wife. Nwanjije, Umunna’s wife is naturally endowed with good features which gets her favour from other people, but her husband turns those good features into having bad connotation.

“Her gap teeth, however, made her distinct in a crowd. She loved her gap teeth and flaunted it around. Her smiles were captivating and made her look more good-natured, beautiful and welcoming. Such infectious smile got her almost everything she wanted from people, but not from her husband. Umunna, her husband, saw the smiles of his wife as chameleonic.” [Emeam, 39]

Again, it was demeaning for a man to share information with women because the women are seen as being inferior, for instance, Emeam gives a reason why Dike is looked down upon. "Any way Dike's talk did not carry much weight. He was flippant, sharing much with women." [Emeam. 44].

Igbo culture is one of the cultures in Africa where there is a great male dominance. It is unfortunate that according to Ashmi in his article "Gender Disparities in the Igbo Culture as portrayed in Nwapa's *Efuru*", "Patriarchy or the male domination in the society has been followed not only because they are forced by the men in the society, but also because they are advocated by the women in the society". One sees in *Efuru*, Women encouraging this male dominance and working against fellow women by deceiving other women and by literally being brainwashed themselves in accepting that they are inferior to men. When one is brainwashed, she tries to sell the notion to other women. Often women suffer in the hands of other women. For example, Omirima, in the novel trying to discredit *Efuru* before her mother in-law by blaming *Efuru* for not giving Gilbert a child after one year of being married to him. She tells Gilbert's mother: "It is a year since your son married. One year is enough for any woman who would have a baby to begin making one. Find out quickly and if she is barren start early to look for a black goat, because at night a black goat will be difficult to find. Besides there are other girls you will like to have as daughters inlaw" [Nwapa, 139] She automatically blames *Efuru* for her delay in child bearing. At the end of the novel Omirima lies against *Efuru* that she has committed adultery and because of her waywardness, the gods have struck her with a strange sickness.

Adizua's mother Ossai is an example of the brainwashed docile igbo woman, who is not satisfied that she makes a mistake but wants to convince other women to tow her path. She explains her situation to *Efuru* telling her of her resolution and dedication to staying faithful to her husband who abandoned her and her son Adizua for another woman. she kept faith alive in waiting for him. She had a hope that he would come to her and Adizua. Ossai encourages *Efuru* to do the same with Adizua. She advises *Efuru* to be patient until her son Adizua returns back. She advises *Efuru* "My daughter... my son has neglected you...be patient. It pays to be patient. I have been patient all my life" [Nwapa 59]. Ossai had lived the rest of her life without her husband. She tells her story to make *Efuru* stay and wait for her son:

“When Adizua was five years old, he was very ill...Harvest came and everybody returned to the town to sell their yams, but Adizua’s father did not return...for a long time I heard nothing from him and we almost begged for food... My husband refused to return... my mother asked me to leave my husband’s house but I refused. I still had faith in him. I was so confident that he would come back to me and Adizua... we heard that he was at Agbor and was married to a wealthy woman.” [Nwapa. 60]

In *Efuru* Nwapa fights for the Igbo woman to be allowed to have a say in matters concerning her. She should be allowed the right and freedom to choose her path without the social inhibitions that are found in the Igbo culture. She uses *Efuru*, a beautiful and strong woman who comes from a well-respected family. *Efuru* falls in love with a poor young man, *Adizua*, a nobody. She knows that *Adizua* is no match to her and may not have been allowed to marry her, because of the class distinction. She decides to tow a more difficult path, by running to him who could not afford her bride price. She does this knowing very well how the society frowns at such, especially coming from a well-respected home. She leaves the same *Adizua* when he proves himself unworthy of her. She defies again the advice from the people whom she holds in high esteem.

In her father’s house she marries *Gilbert* because she feels he would be good enough for her and treat her well, and, leaves him when she feels humiliated by him by believing *Omirima*’s lies that her sickness was as a result of the adultery she committed and the gods being angry with her and striking her with a strange and incurable disease. One expects that when *Efuru* returns to her father’s house she would be independent and free from the clutches of being owned but unfortunately, she is free from the clutch of being answerable to husbands and father but not to the gods. Here Nwapa shows that the Igbo woman unlike the man cannot be allowed total freedom. One sees the same ordeal facing *Ihuaku* in *Emeam*’s *Wife of the gods*. *Ihuaku* was struck with an incurable disease because she refused being wife of the gods, she was healed by *Nma* who marries her afterwards. She is not given the privilege of independence.

An Igbo woman considers herself a real woman only when she proves her fertility by giving birth to children especially male ones. Women who don’t have children in the Igbo society experience the feeling of rejection and incompleteness. These women are blamed by the society for their barrenness. The society does not care to know if the man has a share in the infertility, the woman is solely blamed for it. Nwapa speaks about the frustration and

restlessness faced by Efuru because of her barrenness. Efuru frequented the Dibias [native doctors], made sacrifices to her chi and her ancestors to placate them in case they are angry with her. This is because in Igbo land a Woman's worth is measured by motherhood. When she fails to attain this stage, she is considered as waste to herself, to her husband and to her society, irrespective of her wealth, generosity and good nature. No wonder Omirima tells her mother-in-law "Your daughter in-law is good but she is childless. She is beautiful but we cannot eat beauty. She is wealthy but riches cannot go on errands for you." [Nwapa 163] One sees that irrespective of these qualities the goddess must have endowed Efuru with, denying her fruitfulness, makes her irrelevant and useless in the eyes of the society and bad luck to the families she was married to. Omirima gives a list of those women in her category: women who have been chosen by Uhamiri, the river goddess to worship her and to whom she gives wealth but denies the joy of motherhood thereby subjecting them to huge emotional hardship, torment, humiliation and ridicule.

When a woman is blessed with the fruit of the womb, she spends most of her time taking care of the children and her husband. She is dependent on her husband for her major needs and that of the children, which are dependent on the man's disposition. The man decides whether to grant her requests or not. She does not have much choice than to be at the beck and call of her husband. She seems to have no life and liberty except the ones her husband allows her to have. This keeps the woman as a "second-class citizen" and the man lords over her. Now when this woman is chosen by the gods to serve them, she is also kept in the bondage of not offending the gods. The woman is perpetually under the bondage of the man or of the gods which tradition places on her. The Dibia, Enesha Aagorua tells Efuru's father, Nwashike Ogene "... your daughter is a great woman. The goddess of the lake has chosen her to be one of her worshippers. It is a great honour. She is going to protect you and shower riches on you" [Nwapa 153]. Riches are seen as moving into the man's domain. It is supposed to distinguish the person who has it and give him honour and respect in the society but in the case of the woman as seen in Flora Nwapa's Efuru, Uhamiri punishes her by denying her the most sought-after blessing: the fruit of the womb, making her suffer mockery and humiliation. Although Efuru is kind loving, beautiful and wealthy. Omirima says, "It is said she makes money; she makes money are you going to eat money? [Nwapa. 162]. Nwapa reminds us that even the wealth comes with conditions:

“...you must keep her taboos. Orié day is her great day. You are not to fish on that day.... You should persuade people not to fish. You are not to eat yams on this day. You are not to sleep with your husband. You have to boil, roast or fry plantains on orie days. Uhammiri likes plantains very much.... When you got bed, you must be in whites on Orié nights. You can sacrifice a white fowl to Uhammirir on that day. When you feel particularly happy, or grateful, you should sacrifice a white sheep to her. Above all you will keep yourself holy...” [Nwapa 154]

Also, in Emeam’s *Wife of the gods*, the same fate befalls the woman. Ihuaku chosen by tradition to be wife of the gods, against her will, is prohibited from getting married to the man of her dreams and from procreating. She too invites the chief priest to interpret her strange and disturbing dreams. After some enchantment and divinations, he looked straight into Ihuaku’s eyes and said “you are the wife of the gods of our land. You are to be where our people are. The foreign land will not keep you. And you are to remain single ... Ihuaku objected that she could not possibly be a wife to evil spirit.” [Emeam. 16]

Like Efuru, she is blessed with beauty and wealth. Okeziri one of her suitors describes her as: “a woman of means and extreme beauty”. [Emeam 85] She is so beautiful that her beauty paves way for her where men are afraid to get into. “The colonial masters were severally deceived by her beauty. They supposed her to be an unfortunate African woman, favoured by nature to be a white but disfavoured by destiny and had to be an African. Every District Officer who sets eyes on her gave her an open cheque of employment.” [Emeam 47]

She is influential in the society, “but the story of the perilous path to Gadaga changed when Ihuaku influenced the colonial administration to reconstruct the road to the river.” [Emeam 28]. Also, she goes against the tradition by stripping off the right of Kingship from the rightful clan and brings it to her family, even when she knows that tradition favours the first village to occupy the Royal seat. “Ihuaku recommended her elder brother for the crown. Nwabara an overweight, dull and detestable character was crowned the king of the community.” [Emeam 47]. These wealth and influence make the men to fear her but like Efuru she belongs to the gods and she is denied the joy of motherhood. She is allowed to enjoy her wealth and influence as long as she lives within the confines of the rules and regulations of the gods which is not getting married to any mortal nor procreate. Like Efuru she defies the gods and gets pregnant for a white man

lover, the gods in their anger strike her with an incurable disease which made her white lover abandon her and goes back to his country Britain.

Conclusion

In different societies, motherhood is enveloped with different meanings as it affects the culture of that society. In both books, both authors being from the same region, write, how motherhood plays an important role in the Igbo society: which presents a woman's central purpose as being able to bear a child and also believes that, motherhood is the only thing that gives a woman her identity. Both authors in their various ways bring out in their books the importance of childbearing in the Igbo society. Their female protagonists long to have that inner fulfillment that motherhood brings even with their wealth and influence; showing that wealth does not substitute for motherhood.

Both authors are not against their women being under the protection of the man but are not comfortable with the fact that the Igbo woman is voiceless. They present their female protagonists as not only being made to be docile or just being there to take care of children and their men, but should contribute to the needs of the society and, not see such acts as belonging to the male folk alone. They also bring out the ordeal of the Igbo woman; the culture and tradition do not allow her to have both freedom, wealth and fulfillment like her male counterparts. The woman has to be possessed by either man or spirits or even both, just to make sure that she is not free. Though they both tried to create a space for their women in the masculine league by giving them beauty, wealth and influence, which are supposed to empower these female characters and give them freedom and dignity in their community, these women still need support and compliment from either the men or the gods. Efuru though, very strong and successful still longs for a suitable husband. She has the coverage of the river goddess when both husbands failed. Also, her counterpart Ihuaku is healed and married by Nma an extra ordinary man equipped and sent by the gods. The Igbo society, through culture and tradition, has made it that, the fate of the Igbo woman will always be decided by either the gods or man or even both. We in this paper, are not asking the woman to revolt against the society and the tradition but to lend her worth and voice to the society. She should be a player in her team and a voice in matters concerning her. When she gives to the society, the society will recognize her.

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AKU: AN AFRICAN JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

ISSN: 26814-0761 (Print) 2814-0753 (e). Vol. 3 No. 2. 2022

A Publication of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies

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