

AN ARCHETYPAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN FLORA NWAPA'S *IDU*

Dr. A. Ashmi, J. Janani & Felicit Beneta

Assistant Professor, Mar Gregorios College of Arts & Science, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

Women in African literature were described only from a male perspective. In the narrative of African men, Women were portrayed as passive women who had no voice and accepted their status of subjugation. They were rarely depicted as strong, self-determining women worthy of self-respect. For these reasons, Flora Nwapa, a Nigerian women writer, wrote her first book, Efuru, in 1966 to explain the condition of underprivileged women in Igbo society. Nwapa's works raised awareness of the experiences of women by challenging gender norms and cultural practices that were imposed on them by her patriarchal Igbo community. Without delving too far into the feminist components, the current article investigates how Nwapa hopes to raise women's awareness through realistic, considerate, and emotive writing. Idu is a heroine-oriented novel. The protagonist faces adversities and emerges as an example of the self-assertive, self-determining, skilled, and highly individualized African woman. She tries to free herself from the constrictive old rules imposed by the patriarchal system stand in for and the burgeoning "New Woman" in African society. Nwapa portrays the "African Woman" as the embodiment of various traits, including being an African who is patient and long-suffering, hardworking, well-wishing, and distinguished. She also represents the universal woman fighting for independence and demanding her rightful place in society. Furthermore, this article also illuminates Nwapa's innovative writing style and the techniques she used to build her novel and critique the patriarchal customs of Nigeria that oppress women.

KEYWORDS: *Woman, New Woman, Patriarchal Society, Education, Liberation, Culture*

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