

In after their first  
marriage, efuru and  
adizua



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In “Efuru”, Flora Nwapa put a lot of emphasis in marriage and procreation. Both of these aspects are indispensable in creating new family units and in increasing the population of the family or lineage. Nwapa is reflecting, in “Efuru”, the situation, as it exists in her society. Children are greatly valued in “Efuru”. Each marriage is expected to produce many siblings, both male and female (with preference for a male). In Igbo culture, the most important reason for marriage is procreation. Even in marriages where love is the main attraction that brings couples together, the desire to have children is always the ultimate goal. This is the reason why most marriages, including those that are built on affection, crumble or are seriously threatened when they are not blessed with children.

Why do everyday Igbo woman, whether married or unmarried, have a strong desire to have a child? The concern with procreation is not limited to the marriage couple. It is their relatives, friends, and neighbors who first express these concerns when the woman has not become pregnant. A year after their first marriage, Efuru and Adizua (in her first marriage)-and she and Eneberi (in her second marriage)-are still enjoying new and fresh marital life when gossip spreads about Efuru’s barrenness, among her female neighbors, as anxious gossips are made over the fact that she has not had any children: ‘Seeing them together is not the important thing,’ another said. ‘The important thing is that nothing has happened since the happy marriage. We are not going to eat happy marriage. Marriage must be fruit-ful. Of what use is it if it is not fruitful. Of what use is it if your husband licks your body, worships you and buys everything in the market for you and you An

important role that women play in the family is the upbringing and nurturing of children.

This role limits, confines, and domesticates women. It also distracts women from achieving higher goals or roles for themselves. In "Efuru", Flora Nwapa constantly refers to the proper upbringing of children; especially girls who are expected to become wives and mothers. Amede, Efuru's mother-in-law and her friend, Omirima, express their disappointment with Ogea when Amede complains: 'It is that silly girl, Ogea. She washed my wrappers and all of them will have to be washed again because there is still black soap on all of them. How is it that a grown-up girl like that is not able to wash clothes properly? How can she live in a man's house?' (181) 'That's what I keep on saying, children of these days are no good. How men of today marry them is what This part of the book makes someone ask themselves: If motherhood is so vital to the mental health of the African woman, why does Flora Nwapa punish the heroine, Efuru, with the malignant trauma of childlessness? The pain of infertility is inflicted in Efuru.

As I have read as well, in some of the websites that I have visited dedicated to Flora Nwapa, this pain is inflicted in most of her independent and assertive women in four of her novels: Efuru and Idu, Amaka in One is Enough, and Rose in Women Are Different. When these women eventually conceive a child, it brings about a lot of difficulty to them and doesn't bring about total satisfaction. Perhaps the Lake Goddess is responsible for the fact that these women do not have children, the state that they eventually find themselves in. I say this because it is strange that the women who either worship her or share her attributes-long hair, beauty, wealth, and independent spirit are the <https://assignbuster.com/in-after-their-first-marriage-efuru-and-adizua/>

women that do not have children or are not capable of being mothers.

Omirima states in "Efuru" that Uhamiri's worshippers mostly are without children: 'How many women in this town who worship Uhamiri have children? All right let's count them: Ogini Azogu,' she counted off one finger, 'she had a son before she became a worshipper of Uhamiri. Since then she has not got another child.

Two, Nwanyafor Ojimba, she has no child at all. Three, Uzoechi Negeneghe, no child. They are all over the place. Why do we bother ourselves count-Efuru's mother only had Efuru, and Efuru loses Ogonim, her only child.

Uhamiri, The Lake Goddess, is barren and her state justifies the others. The fact that she does not have any children and is very wealthy, have a structural and thematic relevance to the lives and experiences of Efuru. The concern shown by mothers and elders in Igbo society underscores how seriously they take the socialization of young people to proper behavior. Women always express these concerns and they also enforce the code. This means that women are kind of the custodians of tradition.

They also guard these traditions to kind of a ridiculous extent when you think about it. An example is when Ajanupu insists that Nkonyeni should greet her and Efuru warmly, than how she had originally greeted them (174), and the time that Omirima censures her daughter-in-law for trying to protect her children from yaws by sending Omirima's daughter away (174). I think that what Flora Nwapa is trying to convey in Efuru is that children alone do not bring about happiness or self-fulfillment to women. In Efuru, Uhamiri is said to be happy even though she doesn't have a child. She is probably consoling

those women in Igbo society that cannot have children and are barren, by relating how happy The Lake Goddess is even though she cannot have children. It is as if Flora Nwapa is saying that there are other factors to happiness. Companionship and love in marriage are as important as motherhood, if not even more. Originally, a marriage fails or succeeds depending on the circumstances that affect it.

Childlessness, in Igbo society and in “Efuru”, is one aspect to a marriage that fails but there are other aspects to consider, like neglect, incompatibility, lack of trust, and unfaithfulness. Efuru’s marriages fail because her husbands are unfaithful, ungrateful, and irresponsible where she is concerned. Efuru survives her failed marriages. After her marriages end she gains strength and an increase in her stature. She eventually finds fulfillment in her worship of Uhamiri. As well, her business expertise and strength of her character enables her to leave her husbands and continue with her life. Her marriages to both of her husbands were her choice and she doesn’t blame anyone but herself. She offers a life of service to her community; an example would be when she helps those that have felt ill by calling on the doctor for them, and her worship of the Lake Goddess.

Throughout all her trial and tribulations Efuru had the support of those in her age group. Throughout her ordeal those of her age group advised her to have patience with Adizua. She felt like it was up to her to terminate her marriage to him when it becomes burdensome as well as destructive to her. She remains self-reliant and independent in her action though.

In *Efuru*, Flora Nwapa illustrates to us the traditional Igbo woman and their relentless capacity to survive despite all the odds that are against them and their determination to achieve economic independence and a measure of fulfillment as human beings in their communities. To me, the Lake Goddess is kind of used to criticize the tradition that values women as only being useful for the sake of procreation rather than a human being with aspirations to attain self-fulfillment and independence. The image of the goddess symbolizes the potential of Igbo womanhood. They can aspire and achieve great things in life; they are not only here on this earth for the sake of procreation. All women are not only here on this earth for the sake of procreation. It also represents the glory and beauty of womanhood. The Lake Goddess gives women the power to aspire, whether it's economic aspirations, political aspirations, or social aspirations.

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