

**REPRESENTATIONS OF POST-COLONIAL NIGERIAN SOCIETY AS
ENTRAPPED BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW IN FLORA
NWAPA'S WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to discuss how Women are Different by Flora Nwapa presents the entrapped situation of post-colonial Nigerian society between their old traditions, values and the new traditions the colonizer brings along. Flora Nwapa who is the first African female writer to publish in English is significant in postcolonial discourses in that she introduces female voice in postcolonial literature, thereby contributes to the feminist discussion within postcolonial theory. Her specific focus on Nigerian women and their different experiences in Women are Different sustains a new gaze to the situations of the muted and doubly colonized African women. Nwapa exclusively portrays Nigerian women as they are entrapped between the expectations of Nigerian society and the liberating education of the colonizer. Nevertheless, Nwapa's wide spectrum in the novel is inclusive of the effects of colonialism on the Nigerian men, white women and the next generation Nigerian characters, as well. Thus, setting off from the multifaceted narration of Nwapa, this article will discuss the dichotomies the colonial subjects as well as the colonizers are exposed to within colonial and post-colonial process.

Keywords: Postcolonial literature, feminist theory, Nigerian literature, Flora Nwapa, Women are Different

**SÖMÜRGEÇİLİK SONRASI NİJERYA TOPLUMUNUN ESKİ VE YENİ
DEĞERLER ARASINDA KALMIŞLIĞININ FLORA NWAPA'NIN WOMEN
ARE DIFFERENT ADLI ROMANINDA YANSITILMASI**

ÖZ

Bu makalenin amacı, Flora Nwapa'nın Women are Different adlı romanının Nijerya halkının sömürge sonrası dönemde kendi eski geleneklerinin ve sömürgeci ülkenin getirdiği yeni geleneklerin arasında kısırılmış durumunu nasıl yansıttığını tartışmaktır. İngilizce roman yayımlayan ilk Afrikalı kadın yazar olan Flora Nwapa'nın sömürge sonrası tartışmalardaki önemi sömürge sonrası edebiyata kadın sesini

tanıtması ve böylelikle sömürgecilik sonrası teori içerisinde feminist tartışmalara katkıda bulunmuş olmasından ileri gelir. Nwapa'nın özellikle Nijeryalı kadınlara ve onların deneyimlerine yoğunlaşan *Women are Different* adlı romanı sessizleştirilmiş ve iki kere sömürülmüş Nijeryalı kadınların içerisinde bulunduğu duruma bir pencere açar. Nwapa Nijeryalı kadınları, Nijerya toplumunun onlardan beklentileri ile sömürgeci ülkenin getirdiği kadını özgürleştiren eğitim arasında kısıtlanmış olarak sergilemektedir. Fakat Nwapa'nın eseri sömürgeciliğin Nijeryalı erkekler, beyaz kadınlar ve gelecek nesil karakterlerin üzerindeki etkilerini de içerir. Bu sebeple, Nwapa'nın çoksesli oluşundan yola çıkan bu makale sömürülenin ve sömürenin hem sömürge süreci hem de sonrasındaki süreç içerisinde maruz kaldığı çıkmazları tartışacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sömürge sonrası edebiyatı, feminist teori, Nijerya Edebiyatı, Flora Nwapa, *Women are Different*

Introduction

Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, who is an African scholar of literature, defines Nigerian literature as “phallic dominated with male writers and critics dealing almost exclusively with male characters and concerns naturally aimed at a predominantly male audience” in the *The Guardian*, on May 25, 1985 (qtd. in Gardner, 1994: 9). Even though male-dominated African literature already propounds critical assertions with regard to the representations of women, postcolonial woman writers' portrayal of female exclusively is a notable step in postcolonial feminist discourse. Male-authored novels hold an anti-colonial stance; however, they still prolong patriarchal order whereas female-authored postcolonial novels confront patriarchal and colonial hegemony at the same time. Postcolonial women writers portray colonialism from female perspective focusing on the effects of colonialism specifically on women, whereas male-authored postcolonial novels are more concerned with economic, social and cultural aftermath of colonialism.

Flora Nwapa is a substantial figure in male-dominated Nigerian literature as she is “the first Nigerian woman to publish in English” (Silkü, 2008: 125). Furthermore, Nwapa is especially a significant writer in respect to postcolonial discourses since she commences a new voice to postcolonial literature which is the voice of the colonized women. She puts forward female voice in commonwealth literature, thereby highlights the double colonized native women who are overlooked until then. Drawing the attention more to the women's side of colonialism than men's experience, Nwapa adds a new dimension to postcolonial discourses. Not only does Nwapa initiate the inclusion of the female authorship in overtly male dominated African literary tradition but she also catalyzes the presence of the intellectual African women in postcolonial feminist debates.

Nwapa who is acknowledged as “Africa's first internationally recognized female novelist and publisher” portrays different scenes in her novels that specifically take up the lives of women who are affected by

colonialism one way or another. As Marie Umeh points out Nwapa's novels are multifaceted with respect to female portrayals since she draws characters that flourish from a great variety of backgrounds:

[Nwapa] realistically fictionalizes the shrewd, ubiquitous market women, energetic female farmers, sagacious wives and mothers, and astute women chiefs and priestesses as an integral part of quotidian existence. It is in her fiction that the enterprising African woman takes a stand and demands her rightful place in the halls of global literary history. (1995: 24)

As Nwapa's novels are projective with regard to women at every position in a colonized society, *Women are Different* is of so much importance in that the novel portrays the changing positions of women in Nigeria on the brink of independence. On the one hand, the novel depicts the dynamics of colonized Nigeria as it awaits national independence; on the other hand it holds an exclusive mirror to women who straddle between the old and the new traditions. Therefore, this paper aims to examine how Nwapa's *Women are Different* elaborates on the women question in colonized Nigeria. Through this study, how Nwapa's *Women are Different* gives a particular gaze to the colonized Nigerian women as they are torn between their culture and Western civilization is aimed to be explored.

Women are Different from...?

Nwapa's *Women are Different* is a quintessential novel with regard to postcolonial feminism since the novel devotes a particular stance to women who are affected by colonial activity regardless of their colour. Accordingly, the title is very significant in that it leads to diverse interpretations pointing at the richness of the novel in terms of thematic purposes. While the title situates a feminist theme at the very outset, it also elicits such questions as "How and why are women different?", "From whom are they different?" and "How is this difference to be tackled?"

On the one hand, the statement that women are different might be explained in relation to the novel. The difference of women might be interpreted in terms of its relation to the different experiences of the female characters since each female character seeks their own way to survive through patriarchal and colonial dominion. Silkü also explains the title of the novel in relation to the differences between characters. She states that "[t]he differences between each of Nwapa's female characters stem from their various desires to fulfill their traditional roles as young mothers and wives as well as to become successful career women and work for a more independent Nigeria" (Silkü, 2008: 128).

On the other hand, the title of the novel points at different positions, conditions and circumstances of the women in the colonized countries compared to men. Female struggle in colonialism not only differs from male struggle in terms of its means and targets but it also proves more difficult since women are double colonized.

Apart from these, difference of women as it is suggested in the title refers to a more crucial point in the discussions of postcolonial feminism. Even though feminism establishes a sense of sisterhood, it should be remarked that 'Third World' women cannot be evaluated on the same page with 'First World' women. The struggle of 'Third World' women cannot be equated to the struggle of 'First World' women in terms of their different backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. Thus, the title of the novel – *Women are Different*– may alternatively be interpreted as addressing to not only 'First World' women but also feminists that aim to revolutionize the condition of the colonized women in a manner which is blindfolded-to-diversities.

This third interpretation of the title is notable since Nwapa herself recognizes the circumstantial differences between the colonized women and 'First World' women and feminists. Even though Nwapa is considered as an African feminist writer as is the case with other African female writers, Nwapa insistently specifies that she does not call herself a feminist. For instance, in an international conference which is titled as "Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: Bridges Across Activism and the Academy" Nwapa states that "I'm usually asked, "Are you a feminist?" I deny that I am a feminist. Please I am not a feminist, oh please. But they say, all your works, everything is about feminism. And I say, "No, I am not a feminist"" (qtd. in Nnaemeka, 1995: 83). Likewise, in another interview Nwapa clarifies her statement and she says:

I don't think I'm a radical feminist I don't even accept that I'm a feminist. I accept that I'm an ordinary woman who is writing about what she knows. I try to project the image of women positively. I attempt to correct our menfolks when they wrote little or less about women, where their female characters are prostitutes and ne'er-do-wells. (Umeh, 1995: 27).

Nwapa's resistance to being labeled as a feminist is related to the argument that feminism is, in fact, overtly a white construction. Nwapa recognizes the significance of the careful consideration of contextual difference when it comes to the practice of the theoretical knowledge. At that point, insider/outsider dichotomy arises. Gay Wilentz accordingly notes in her criticism that Nwapa "writes like an inoutsider", whereas the discussions over African women conducted by Western feminism is the product of the very outsider knowledge and power (qtd. in Nnaemeka, 1995: 102).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who similarly scrutinizes the relationship between intellect/critic and subject/subaltern in "Can the Subaltern Speak" asks "[c]an the subaltern speak? What must the elite do to watch out for the continuing construction of the subaltern?" (1988: 294). In this discussion of elite-subaltern relationship, Spivak digs for the position of subaltern women and states that "[t]he question of woman seems most problematic in this context." (1988: 294). Spivak remarks the significance of context and cultural background of the aforementioned subaltern, whereas she clearly declines

ethnocentrism (McLeod, 2000: 186). As she stresses on the distinct line between theory and experience, she clearly states that “the problem of the muted subject of the subaltern woman [...] cannot be served by the call for more theory in Anglo-America” (1988: 295). Likewise, McLeod sums up Spivak’s argument and states that feminists should not “speak for women”, on the contrary they should “learn to speak to” women (2000: 186). Moreover, they should learn “the limits of their methodologies through an encounter with women in different contexts, rather than assimilate differences within a grander design” (2000: 186). At this juncture, Nwapa’s *Women are Different* asserts a flight from mere theoretical evaluations in that Nwapa illustrates the very reality of the women of her own society. As a colonized subject herself, not only does she project her own experiences within colonialism but she is also enriched by the experiences of her mothers, her grandmothers, and the lives of other females who are around her. Even though she is knowledgeable about feminist and postcolonial theories, in *Women are Different* Nwapa ensures a specific gaze to Nigerian women, highlighting the significance of taking contextual diversities into consideration in postcolonial discussions.

Mimic (Wo)men

My contention is that Homi Bhabba’s idea of mimicry in colonial discourses as is suggested in his essay “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse” is displayed in terms of female characters in *Women are Different*. Mimicry in colonial discourses is used to define colonizers’ inclination to liken the colonized to them by means of imposing their values, demeanors and characteristics. However, mimicry, as the concept itself suggests, evokes negative associations and can be observed as a result of what Bhabba calls ambivalence as he states that “the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence” (1994: 86). By drawing the attention to the ambivalent condition of the colonial subject, Bhabba points out discordant and contradictory attitude of the colonizer. John McLeod, who elaborates on Bhabba’s idea of ambivalence in *Beginning Postcolonialism*, clarifies the term pointing at the fact that the West simultaneously stereotypes and revolutionizes the colonized subjects. Recalling Said’s assertion that “Western representations of the East are based primarily on fantasies, desires and imaginings” McLeod explains Bhabba’s ambivalence and states:

[Colonised] subjects are domesticated, harmless, knowable; but also at the same time wild, harmful, mysterious. Bhabba argues that, as a consequence, in colonialist representations the colonized subject is always in motion, sliding ambivalently between the polarities of similarity and difference. (2000: 53)

Colonizing power perpetually strives to fit the colonized subject in its expectations in order that they can serve the colonization; yet, the colonizer ironically makes use of the differences of the colonized subject against them through stereotyping. As a result of this dilemma, the colonized subjects lose

their previous distinct identities turning out to be “mimic men” (McLeod 54). As McLeod refers, mimic men are aimed to “take on English opinions, morals and intellect”, however, they are eventually transformed into “mimic men who learn to act English but do not look English nor are accepted as such” (2000: 54).

Mimicry in colonial discourse might be evaluated as a contradictory but at the same time a strategic constitution. The West conducts a seeming mission of westernizing and civilizing; however, mimicry at the same time functions to point out the inferiority of the colonized, thereby highlighting the power of the colonizer. Likewise, Bhabba observes the duality of mimicry in *The Location of Culture*:

[M]imicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. 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. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance. (1994: 86)

In *Women are Different* Homi Bhabba’s attribution of mimicry as “almost the same, but not quite” is verified through Nwapa’s female characters who are torn between the old traditions and the Western traditions which are new to them (1994: 86). Nigerian girls who are portrayed as born into native traditions but to be educated in Western style take white women as their role model. On the brink of their adolescences, a new boarding school and female missionary teachers who come from England set light to their future. In other words, instead of Nigerian mothers, English teachers set an example for the girls in the colonized Nigeria. Nigeria’s young girls who are entrapped between the old and the new traditions idealize white women regardless of the problems and hardships that they might be exposed to as outsiders in Nigeria. Miss Hill who is a significant white female figure in the novel can be evaluated as a primary white female role model. Miss Hill’s kind attitudes, helpfulness and most of all her Western look evoke admiration in Nigerian girls:

[...] Miss Hill was very gentle and kind. Rose was able to observe her well. She wore a pink check dress which was well tailored. She had the white handkerchief over her belt as she did on the entrance examination in Port Harcourt. Her hair was long and clean. There was a kind of scent emanating from her which Rose could not recognize. It was after she had remained in the school for four years that she discovered that Miss Hill used Blue Grass perfume by Elizabeth Arden (*Women are Different* 9).

As Nigerian girls incline to imitate white woman figure through Miss Hill, Miss Hill, as a representative of Western civilization feels the responsibility of educating and civilizing her Nigerian students. As Miss Hill

raises an anti-colonial voice through her warnings about the post-independent Nigeria and constantly emphasizes the significance of women's education, she is sympathized as a white woman. However, Miss Hill's fallacy results from the situation that as an outsider she intervenes in a different culture than her own with an aim of completely transforming it. Even though Miss Hill "thought, she was a foreigner in a foreign land with strange cultures", she, as a Western missionary "felt Nigeria needed well brought Christian girls who would take their places when they eventually handed over power to the people" (*Women are Different* 22-23). In this respect, Miss Hill might be interpreted as a symbol of "First World" women that struggle to liberate "Third World" women.

"First World" women's role- modeling for Nigerian girls as is the case with Miss Hill, however, does not lead to a fulfillment of expectations. Nigerian women now have become financially independent as opposed to their mothers; notwithstanding, they cannot attain happiness and peace as they are alienated to their values and customs. Even though economical independence for Nigerian women and regulation of power relations are already requisite for Nigerian society even before colonial activity, the colonizer's blunt and profit oriented interference as is epitomized in Miss Hill's character proves unfruitful for the colonized subjects.

Taken as the symbol of "First World" women, Miss Hill's projection of raising educated independent Nigerian women turns out to be problematic. As Miss Hill overlooks the different cultural contexts of her subjects, her subjects are transformed into mimic women who are partially westernized but still are under the influence of the old traditions and are expected to act in accordance with social norms. Even though Dora, Agnes, Rose and Comfort all are educated in Western system, economically self-supportive, speak English, and behave in accordance with English manners, they are portrayed partially under the influence of the expectations of traditional Nigerian society. Their attitude towards marriage, and the society's fixed perception of them as commodity, submissive, ready-to-serve figures render Nigerian female characters entrapped. Furthermore, the colonizer brings its civilization, technology and education, whereas it also perpetuates gender roles already present in its own structure. Likewise, Susan Gardner in "The World of Flora Nwapa" points out the transfer of Western patriarchy to Nigeria:

Western notions of appropriate gender roles were imposed on Nigerian youth. Men received some schooling, vocational education and later access to university education, while women were urged into professions regarded as extensions of (Western) female roles, such as nursing or elementary school teaching. (1994: 9)

The most obvious dilemma of Nigerian women presented in *Women are Different* is sustained through the conflict between economic independence and perception of marriage. Even though three main protagonists of the novel are self-supportive, they still feel the need of getting married and starting a family.

Dora's dream about her future in the boarding school demonstrates how Nigerian girls desire to work but at the same time become a good wife as the society expects from them:

The girls dreamt so much and had many illusions of what life would be like in the future for them. Dora was going to be a good wife to Chris. Nothing would cause a quarrel between her and Chris. She would work and earn money, so food money would not be a problem. [...] She was not going to work during the first four or five years of her marriage until she had had about four children. Not working did not just mean being a mere house-wife. She would do other jobs, like sewing and baking. (*Women are Different* 28)

Likewise, asked about her opinions about marriage and increasing rates of polygamy in Nigerian society in an interview, Nwapa's observation regarding her own culture is quite realistic:

There is this stigma on a woman who elects to be single. Mothers bring up their daughters telling them that they have to marry. In my own language we say, "No matter how beautiful one is, if she doesn't get married she's nothing." It's left for us who have received a Western education to de-emphasize this tradition. However, you discover that a woman who has gone to college, who is working, who has profession, who is a lawyer or a doctor, who doesn't have a husband, then she will not mind being a second wife. In fact, polygamy is becoming very fashionable in Nigeria these days among Western educated women. (Umeh, 1995: 28)

Nwapa's answer to the question and her observation with respect to the attitudes of the colonized women in Nigeria are quite affirmative in her portrayal of Dora and Rose. Dora's welcoming Chris in high spirits when he returns from Germany and Rose's melancholy about not being able to get married fit in expected reactions. Rose builds a successful career as she remains free from male oppression throughout the novel. However, as she feels the necessity to get married as it is imposed on women by the society, she develops the idea that she is deficient since she cannot meet social norms:

I have never had a husband, so I feel inadequate. But from what I have read in books and from experiences of other people one should rather have a husband than a lover. There are so many advantages, I think. But can one combine a husband with a lover? (*Women are Different* 99)

Comfort, on the other hand, is initially portrayed as a self-confident, free-spirited and outspoken girl who wants "to live life fully" as her name suggest (1992: 30). However, it is later revealed that Comfort is also hindered from fulfilling her desires and is confined to domestic life: "[Comfort] wanted to teach but, when she asked her husband to let her go abroad and do the Tutors course in nursing, he refused" (ibid. 85).

Women are Different starts off with an optimistic projection with regard to the future of Nigerian woman through the display of ardent Rose, Agnes, Dora and Comfort, Yet, the novel proceeds towards disillusionment in terms of personal disappointments of these characters. Nnaemeka who explores feminist criticism of African literature asserts that feminist arguments about African literature are generally based on “tradition/modernity dichotomy” (1995: 91). As tradition/modernity dichotomy is illustrated through female protagonists of *Women are Different*, it might be deduced that colonized women develop split personality and lose the sense of wholeness and belonging. They are imposed upon Western values, life style, manners but are haunted by their old traditions at the same time, hence turning out to be mimic women. Accordingly, Katherine Frank asks “How can the contemporary African woman negotiate her way between the claims of tradition and modernization, how, finally, can she be rendered whole again?” (qtd. in Nnaemeka, 1995: 91).

This destructive dichotomy relates to the so-called Western mission of civilizing and democratizing ‘Third World’ countries. The colonizer’s bringing civilization to the colonized lands via importing Western institutions and values regardless of the unique circumstances of the target culture is called “imperialist arrogance” by Nnaemeka (1995: 106). As this mission arises from the assumption that what is good for the West is equally good for the East, it disregards the internal dynamics, cultural background and history of the colonized people (Nnaemeka, 1995: 106).

Representation of the Next Generation and White Women in *Women are Different*

In *Women are Different*, Nwapa holds a multi-perspective narration in that aside from main female characters, the novel additionally presents the position of the next generation women and the white women in colonialism. In terms of the effect of colonialism on the next generation women, Dora’s daughter Chinwe and Agnes’ daughter Elizabeth might be suggested as examples. It might be inferred from the novel that the way the daughters end up is a devastating situation for their mothers. While Chinwe is portrayed leaving her husband for another married man, Elizabeth is drawn committing illegal acts with Ernest. Mary D. Mears who comparatively analyzes the generations identically denotes that these four women:

are satisfied with some choices but not all of them. Agnes and Dora accept their failed marriages, but are not pleased with the moral and economic choices their children are making, such as leaving husbands, moving in with other married men, and selling drugs. (2009: 158)

The next generation women’s socially unfitting behaviors, in fact, allow different interpretations. On the one hand, Chinwe’s courage to leave her husband in spite of the society’s probable stigmatizing contrasts Dora’s re-acceptation of Chris. The passage from the mother figure who is afraid of being labeled by the society towards the daughter figure who takes over the control of

her own life may be evaluated as a promising change. On the other hand, both Chinwe's abandonment of her family and Elizabeth's illegal acts point at the complete loss of Nigerian values. While the colonizer offers its education, democracy, scientific and technological advancements to the colonized subject, it also soaks up the very core units of the identity of a society that is to say its culture and values and leaves it in a vacuum.

In *Women are Different*, Nwapa partially reflects the effects of colonialism on white women, as well. Miss Hill who represents white missionaries in the colonized lands is represented as an in-between character as is the case with Nigerian girls. As she devotes her life to the education and the future of Nigerian girls, she internalizes them as it is stated in the novel that "[i]n her heart of hearts she loved this set of children" (1992: 40). Despite this assertion of Miss Hill's candid commitment to her job, it is also implied in the novel that female white missionaries inevitably relinquish certain positions throughout their lives. The girls' conversation regarding missionaries points at this kind of situation:

'[...] Look, thinking of it now, do you think Miss Hill and Backhouse will ever marry?'

'Why not?' asked Rose. 'If men propose to them.'

'What men will propose to them?' Comfort asked.'

'Missionaries like them, who are not like Roman Catholic priests. Bishops get married in the Anglican Church,' said Rose.

'And is it true that the female missionaries choose not to marry?'

Comfort went on. (*Women are Different* 41)

This conversation points out the colonizing power who suppresses white female through imposing certain missions and responsibilities on them. However, the girls' paradoxically blunt commentary on the marriage of white missionaries might be interpreted as their own way of overlooking the difference between women of diverse contexts. The Nigerian girls evaluate marriage as a necessity for women on the basis of the cultural and social circumstances of Nigerian society. Thus, Nigerian girls' imposing such premises on white women on the one hand and white women's mission of educating Nigerian girls on the other hand points to a mutual implementation of values and norms.

Another noteworthy remark about Miss Hill that gives a hint about the position of white women in colonialism is sustained in her leave. Her departure from Nigeria and the actual reason behind it remain ambiguous. Furthermore, it causes suspicion in terms of its possibly not being her decision:

Why was she going home so abruptly? Why was it kept a secret? Was she recalled by the authorities in England? Was she going to be married? Nobody had answers to those questions, and they dared not ask. [...] The girls could get nothing at all from Miss Backhouse who said very little about Miss Hill's impending departure. (*Women are Different* 46)

As the unrevealed reason of Miss Hill's leave refers, white missionaries function as a means for the continuation of colonial activity and they are not subjects of their lives, either. Colonialism, as a male-constructed activity that empowers control over the weak has its own ruler-ruled hierarchy within. Vron Ware states that "colonial representations of white women are mostly iconic representations that epitomize West's higher moral and civil standards (McLeod, 2000: 176). However, this act of molding an icon out of white woman is a kind of stereotyping and accordingly victimization of women for the sake of male-dominated colonialism. Hence, it turns out paradoxical that white female missionaries who educate Nigerian women in order to emancipate them from stereotypes are themselves imposed upon stereotypical attributions. In relation to this, McLeod diagnoses the condition of women in colonial representations regardless of their colour as he states that "patriarchal values in colonial discourses impacted upon both colonized and colonizing women, albeit in different ways" (2000: 176).

Representation of Men in *Women are Different*

Male characters in *Women are Different* might possibly be interpreted as antipathetic characters in terms of their victimizing female characters. Whether grown up in traditional style or educated in Western style, men in the novel are presented as either unfaithful, abandoning figures or suppressing women and treating them as if they are commodities. However, Nwapa's ostensible portrayal of malignant men and victimized women should not be interpreted as a projection of sexist stance. Instead, despite the particular focus on the women, the novel portrays the destructive effects of colonialism on Nigerian men, as well. In relation to this, men in Nigerian society are presented as either perpetuating the old traditions of patriarchy at the extremes or as being completely consumed by westernization.

Agnes' father and her husband, in this respect, reveal Nigerian society which is conspicuous in terms of unequal human rights and specifically inequalities regarding genders. Though educated in Christian doctrines in Western schools, Agnes' future is decided by her family in relation to the customs of Igbo culture. The fact that her life is decided upon regardless of her dreams, plans and wishes points at the women's position in Nigerian society as muted and commoditized. The conversation of the women in the wedding day of Agnes regarding her husband and their arranged marriage demonstrates the decisive power of patriarchy over women. Though the mother displays a protective figure, the father turns out to be authoritative as a husband and a father at the same time:

He had wanted to marry Agnes when she was a little girl of ten years old, when Agnes' mother was alive. He paid Agnes' school fees both in primary and secondary schools. It was Agnes' mother who insisted that Agnes went to school in the first place. She did not like the man

of course. But you know what our husbands are like. Once they are given money, they sell their daughters. (*Women are Different* 53)

Nevertheless, neither the education nor the civilization the colonizer brings to Nigeria revolutionizes the society in terms of gender inequalities or the male attitude towards Nigerian women. Chris' abandoning Dora and his children, Ernest's numerous disappearances exemplify post-colonial transformation of men. While the traditional Nigerian men commoditize women, the colonized men are represented as completely losing such values as family, partnership and love. However, it should be noted that even though the novel brings forth a critical attitude towards patriarchal society, Nwapa does not raise a sexist voice in *Women are Different*. Umeh also points out Nwapa's anti-sexist stance in her preface of her interview with the author implying, in a way, the universality of Nwapa in postcolonial discourses:

Nwapa x-rayed and analyzed her own realities and concluded that sexism is a secondary problem that arises out of race, class, and the exploitation of people of color. Hence, she preferred to identify with Alice Walker's term "womanist", which reflected the African reality of effacement based on racial difference. (Umeh, 1995: 22)

As the novel progresses, it is openly dictated that Nigerian men are also dazzled by the new Western ways that colonization procures. Rose and Dora's conversation points at colonialism as the core reason behind not only the changing attitudes of men but also the changing values of the society:

You see, Dora, we in Nigeria are in a kind of cultural melting pot. We have moved too fast since independence. Think of the colonial era. Things did not move fast but we were sure where we are going. [...]

Think of our culture again at this period. Even before the British came to rule us, there were so many primitive societies in our country, untouched by any outsider influence. In one primitive society, if a man caught his wife with another man, he cut off the man's head, a very glorious action indeed! [...]

"So what has changed? Our values. A man knows that if he catches his wife in a most compromising situation the law forbids him to cut off the head of the intruder. So he is restrained." (*Women are Different* 101)

On the one hand, Western education and new opportunities help Nigerian society, especially women, to take a new step for a new life style in the positive way, hence enabling them to participate actively in public sphere. On the other hand, this new life style and new opportunities are alternatively suggested to violate the old customs overwhelming colonized subjects. For instance, Chris initially involves in a bribing case and when he loses his job and has to work for his wife at her bakery he displays intolerance since he sees it "unmanly" (*Women are Different* 69). In such a case, his involvement in bribing and his resistance to work for his wife indicate patriarchal society's discordance

with the changing economical, business systems and social power relations. Or, Ernest and Chris' departure from Nigeria and their depletion in Europe demonstrate the devastating after-math of colonialism and early arrival of independence. Towards the end of the novel Dora recognizes this situation as she states that "[t]here must be something in Europe that makes our men behave in that strange way" (1992: 107). In fact, Dora's observation about the men in their lives is not only relevant for Nigerian men who are overwhelmed by Europe, but it also symbolizes Nigerian society as whole which cannot cope with the new traditions.

Conclusion

To conclude, aside from the contribution of Flora Nwapa's *Women are Different* to feminist discourse in postcolonialism in terms of Nwapa's being the first Nigerian women writer to publish in English, the novel is also significant with respect to its representations of diverse aspects of colonialism. The outcomes of Western institutions and ideologies in Nigeria such as education, capitalist business, Christianity on Nigerian culture and society are portrayed in a broad time frame and space throughout the novel. In addition to its plurality, however, as Chukwuma states Nwapa's main "interest was women and her motive for writing was to correct the disparaged image of women in male-authored novels" (2006: 3). Nwapa, who abstains from an accusing tone, shifts perspectives in *Women are Different*, thereby points at the disruptive influence of colonialism on different sides. On the contrary to the blunt intervention of 'First World' women, Nwapa inclines to present portrayals inclusive in multiple respects. On the one hand, criticizing male-dominated suppressing Nigerian society, Nwapa stresses on the importance of economic independence for women that is purveyed by the colonizer. On the other hand, as a multicultural person herself – as she is a colonized female writer who writes in the language of the colonizer about her own content – Nwapa draws the attention to the female struggle between two opposing forces which are modernity and tradition. As Nwapa ends her novel with a question "But, Rose, what had she?" (138), she does not propound a probable spectrum for the future of the colonized women. However, it might be deduced at least from Nwapa's implication that the colonized women would not completely figure out what they have or do not have, for a while ahead.

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