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POWER RELATIONS: A WOMANIST READING OF AKACHI ADIMORA-EZEIGBO'S *HOUSE OF SYMBOLS*

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Abstract

African society is bipolarized along the social reality of gender. This has been affecting the perception of women in a phallocentric society. This situation has its reflection and realization in the attitude of men towards the personality of women. Even in literary expressions, men have been dominating the scene until recently that women have taken up the scribal challenges of textualizing themselves through forms of literary media. Since the time that women have taken up the challenges of self-representation in literary texts, there have been dialogic discourses in the thematic thrusts and literary criticism of African Literature. It is on this basis that this study engages in a womanist reading of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's House of Symbols. The paper examines the dialogic representation of the status of men and women in the text. Like other womanist texts, the House of Symbols makes efforts to reposition the status of women viz-aviz the phallocentric standard of our contemporary socio-political realities. Since the emergence of female voices in literary expressions, there have been proliferations of gender-based texts stating the cause and course of women's burden in a phallocentric society. It is therefore in the thinking of this paper that:Is there no sentimental re–representation of male and female characters in a gender–biased literature? The paper some suggestions such as - Men should see women as partners in progress and not objects to be desired and possessed. Men need to collaborate with women to achieve home/national development. Women should strive to diligently excel in whatsoever they do in order to earn respect.

Keywords: Gender-biased Literature, Phallocentric society, Self-representation, Womanist reading, African Literature.

Introduction

Classification of the society along social, economic, political and gender enclave brings about the phenomenon of power relations. Owing to the power relation between the dominant paradigm and the lower paradigm, there's always a struggle for prominence and survival that often results in dialogic discourses and counter discursive engagements. Before gender engagement in African Literature, there was colonial engagement of Literatures in Africa.

A Survey of Modern African Prose

As posited by Ogundipe-Leslie (2016), in the 1940s, Africa was opened up for colonialism and imperialism. At this period, Europe became the dominant paradigm that controlled the economic and political spheres on this continent using different administrative methods based on the polarities of the colonial countries and sub-region. In the Anglophone African

countries, indirect rule was adopted as a colonial system to administer political and economic affairs. In the Francophone African countries, direct rule (with the policy of assimilation) was adopted as the colonial administration. The common feature of colonial administration in Africa was that there was a power relation between the colonial government and the natives. To sustain their presence and continuous survival of colonialism in Africa, colonial governments used various means of propaganda in art and literature to justify the reasons for colonizing Africa. In prose fiction, there was subjective portrayal of African collective experience before and during colonialism. The subjectivity characterizing European novels of Africa put a question of credibility on their relevance to collective African experience. To this end, Echeruo (2017) is of the opinion that:

> Predictably, then, the European novelist of Africa, at his most serious level, tried to combine in himself the interests of the discoverer and the metaphysician. He recorded the lies of the land and described the patterns of its culture, at the same time he philosophized and moralized on the 'fundamental' meaning of the land and its peoples. Always at least by implication, he set out to present and explain (that is 'discover') Africa to his native reader; its mystery, its meaning, its essential distinctiveness (3– 4).

The intended vision of European writes (novelist, essayists, playwrights and poets) was to present Africa as a culture that had no literature and history before the colonial incursion on the continent. This form of power relation between Europe and Africa prevailed until the 1950s, when there was literary engagement by African writers (Ogundipe-Leslie, 2010).

African writers began to present African collective experience from Afrocentric perspective. For this reason, monologic presentation of Africa soon gave way to dialogic presentation of African experience. "Dialogisation" in the novel genre of Literature as given by Mikhail Bakhtin in his work (1981) is an outcome of "a diversity of individual voices". African writers (particularly, novelists) of the first generation began to debunk the Eurocentric subjective portraiture of African collective experience. The novels of the first generation in Africa were sorts of reactions against how Europe perceived and presented Africa in novels such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson*. Every artistic creation is therefore, an overt or a covert reaction against previous artistic creation. On this view, Emenyi (2015) is of the opinion that:

> This shows that every artistic creation is an utterance which is capable of producing other utterances in reaction to the initial discourse. The interaction between utterances (or voices) which Bakhtin calls "dialogization" re-lativises the utterance by engaging the different voices in a discursive struggle (12).

Afrocentricism of African Literature in thematic thrust and subject matter gives a new direction to African literacy expression and writer's vision. The writer's vision is to engage in literary creativity for sustainable cultural nationalism.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has been described and acknowledged by literary critics as a novel of true representation of African experience (through Igbo culture) in the pre–colonial context before the colonial penetration and domination of the continent. The novel discusses

the socio–political structure of the Igbo society before colonialism and the ruptured effect of colonialism on the Igbo socio–political system. Achebe treats similar idea in his other novel, *Arrow of Gods*. In *Arrow of Gods*, Achebe shows different attitudes of Igbo people to colonialism. In the character of Ezeulu, Achebe shows the positive inclination of the Igbo people towards colonialism.

With colonialism in place, there was power relation between the colonized and the colonizer. This power relation was shown within social contexts and in the gamut of literature. Many writers across the African continent began to raise questions about the credibility of colonialism through their various literatures. The struggle of the colony was intense during colonialism because the power relations were hierarchical, favouring the colonizer as dominant paradigm. Aime Cesaire (1959) shows the structure and power relation in the colonial societies. He writes:

> Under a colonial society, there is not merely a hierarch of master and servant. There is also, implicit, a hierarchy of creator and consumer. The creator of cultural values, under good colonization, is the colonizer. And everything goes well so long as nothing happens to disturb the hierarchy. There is one law of comfort in every colonization which is: 'Si prega di non disturb' meaning "Please do not disturb" (127).

The colonizers saw themselves as superior to the colonized and thus viewed the colonized from the promethean height.

Adimora-Ezeigbo condemns the gullibility of our ancestral fathers who believed that whatever European, was superior to African. She condemns the rationalization of African minds about the superiority of the Christian God. Feminist ideology is also manifested in her condemnation of African indoctrination into the acceptance of the Christian God. In *House of Symbols*, Akachi-Ezeigbo presents the following:

> Then came the white people who converted our people to their religion. They and their followers called our ancestors pagans and heathens who have not knowledge of the Supreme creator - Chukwu or Chineke – the name that became increasingly used by converts. How far from the truth! What a distortion! Fabricated by people with deluded minds. They did not know that the Chukwu or Chineke the Christians worship is the same worshipped by our ancestors. There is no difference, except that Christians have imposed a single identity on the Supreme Creator: Male (*House of Symbols*, 47).

The colonizer did everything possible to change the ideological orientation of Africans. Ezeigbo also expresses feminist ideology that phallocentric colonial administrators and their midwives – Christian Missionaries inscribed it on the mind of Africans that the Supreme God is a male. This argument has been widely queried by feminist theologians. In the opinion of Ezeigbo, "By limiting the Creator to Father, they do great injustice to the Creator" (*House of Symbols*, 47).

In the late 1950s, African countries began to gain political independence and there was modification to the thematic thrust of African literature. Some of these themes focus on the hopes after colonization and later on the theme of disillusionment. As at this period literary writing was dominated by men. African culture favours the culture of silence for women. They are meant to be seen and not to be heard. In literature, men present women from their phallocentric perspective. In most African literatures of the first-generation, women were being presented as prostitutes, home breakers, jealous co-wives and husband snatchers. Since men control the public space, tradition has empowered them to define women (Emenyi, 2015:28).

In the 80s, women began to react against the tradition that pigeonholed them into the passive culture of docility. Women writers such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Zaynab Alkali, Mariama Ba, Tsitsi Dangaremgba, Ama Ata Aidoo, Zulu Sofola, Tess Onwueme, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Chimamanda Adichie, began to write to question the tradition that favours phallocentric structures. Women writers have recorded success in the representation of the status of women because: "The focus on the female body affords the female writer an opportunity to analyze the great parts women have had in the production and reproduction of meaning as they tend to relate her sex" (Evwierhoma, 2018:22).

As noted by Ogundipe-Leslie (2007), with the emergence of women writers, there is a shift from the colonizer–colonized power relations and paradigm to male–female power relations and paradigms. Literature, thus, becomes an ideological tool in the hands of writers with two different viewpoints.

Female writers present their female characters from different viewpoints depending on their cultural context and the prevailing sociological relationship between men and women in the society. Akorede (2011) is of the opinion that the portrayal of female characters in creative works by women writers fall into four categories. She writes thus:

> The portrayal of female characters in creative works by women writers falls into four categories. The first is seen in works where women are heroines. Examples are Efuru in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Adah in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. The second category presents women in subsumed roles. An example, is Awa; Lis sister in Zainab Alkali's*Skill Born.* The third presents female characters in what Acholonu (2015), describes as whole people in the process of finding other metaphors for existence. This portrays the female as a person in search of authentic identity for existence. An example is Rama-toulaye in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*, Adaku and Nnu-Ego in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*.
>
> Fourthly, there is the image of the female achiever. One who is determined to achieve, at least as much as men do" or even better than the male characters. Examples are in Alkali's *Still Born*, and Aissatou in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*, who goes ahead to forge a new life for herself. She becomes rich enough to give her friend a car as gift. (127-8).

The cultural context determines how the female characters are presented in women literatures. In the traditional Igbo society, (Maduka, 2011) claims that men occupied central

positions in the political administration of the society. The structure of Igbo society is phallocentric with no supreme head or paramount ruler. The administration of the Igbo society was done by the designated title holders. With this system in place, women had neither voice nor say in the political administration of the society. With the coming of colonialism, this political structure was destabilized and there was imposition of warrant chiefs.

A Survey of Feminist Movement

The voicelessness of women within the gamut of literature has been questioned by different feminist moments. Many feminist theories that are indigenous to Africa have evolved. Among these feminist theories are womanism, motherism and stiwanism-all these theories reflect the peculiar problems and nature of African women. It is on this note that this study embarks upon a womanist reading of Adimora Ezeigbo's *House of Symbols*.

The wave of feminism blew in the West as a reaction against how women were being treated in the 18th century Europe. Before the feminist movement in Europe, women were not seen as independent human beings, rather, they were seen as nonentities that will perpetually depend on men for economic and social survival. In Europe, one of the important figures in feminist movement was Virginia Wolf who wrote a collection of essays about the socio-economic conditions of women under the title, *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Before Virginia Wolf, Mary Wollstonecraft has written a book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. This book discusses various means adopted by the phallocentric society to undermine the rights of women. Later, feminist tempo finds its entry into the literary discourses of Africa. Ever since then, there have been the traits of feminism in imaginative literatures and literary criticisms in Africa.

Before the 18th century Europe and America, women were denigrated and subjected to dehumanization by the phallocentric social structures. During this period, women were not allowed to own property, to vote and be voted for, to engage in profitable economic activities. They were also denied access to education. Women were thus seen as voiceless, helpless and hapless. They were also at the mercy of mercy of men who determined their actions. By the 15th century, there was increased awareness among the women as regards their status. This awareness gave birth to thinkers, philosophers and who began purposeful campaigns in writing and speaking against male hegemonic view about women in society.

Owing to the fact that feminism began at different times in Europe and America-United Kingdom (1894/1895) and the Netherlands (1872), it has not been easy to define feminism with a voice. What is however central to feminism and feminist movements was a positive change to the economic, social and political status of women in a phallocentric society. In the tenets of feminism, it is expressed (implicitly or explicitly) that women should be treated with some humanity. In this view, Dove (2018:68) is of the opinion that:

> It is the freedom to decide her own destiny, freedom from sex determined roles, freedom from society's oppressive restrictions; freedom to express her thought fully and to convert them freely into action. Feminism demands the acceptance of women's right to individual conscience and judgment. It

> postulates that women's essential worth stems from her common humanity and does not depend on another relationship of her life.

From the above, it can be said that feminism is more than a struggle to put an end to sexist oppression. It is a movement aimed at promoting dignity and personality of women.

The feminist thinker, philosophers and critics were of the view that women should be respected and honored in society irrespective of her class, political affiliations and economic strength. A woman should be able to actualize her political rights and engage in profitable economic activities. A woman should be seen as a human, a person and an individual with capabilities to achieve, like a man. In the view of the feminists, a woman should no longer be presented as a demonic order in contrast to a man the –exotic order. Though feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism putting an end to male chauvinism is one of the goals of feminism.

In Europe and America, feminist movements began with suffragist movements. According to Hooks (2013), "this was the movement designed by women to query the phallic political structure of exclusion". In the period before 18th century, women were disenfranchised; they were not allowed to vote and be voted for. This infuriated women because they saw this as debasement of their personality and character. This was so because in the pre-15th century Europe and America, male and female slaves were not allowed to vote and be voted for. Thus, suffragist movement became united to fight for their political rights (Janeway, 2009).

In her study, Sheila (2018:4) gave a wider scope of what feminism entails from social, political, sociological and economic viewpoints. Some of the points she raised are that:

> …..Feminists point the denial of their rights as humans for centuries. These are rights to vote, earn a substantive living commensurate with their work, freedom to determine whether to bear children etc. Feminists argue that these denials constitute the concrete instances of oppression. Feminists recognize women's persistent strength in the face of such oppression and are optimistic about the possibilities of a change.

Considering Sheila's view, it can thus be said that feminism has a wider scope in theory, tenet and practice. With enlightenment and self–effort, woman began writing. Mary Woolstonecraft's (1792) *A vindication of Rights of Women* was historical in this instance.

Woolstonecraft's was a self-educated France woman who hated "domestic tyranny of men. The book has been referred to as the "foundation stone of modern feminism" (Watkins, 1994:15). The book with its about three hundred pages condemns the dehumanization of woman in the phallocentric society. The book advocates for the respect of the right of woman. Another important female writer in the 1960s was Virginia Woolf with her publication of A Room of One's Own. In this publication, Woolf is of the opinion that woman would have been great writers like William Shakespeare, if they had been given the opportunity to education and utilize their potentials. She therefore, concluded that phallic structure undermined the potentials of women.

Elaine Showalter (1977) made a landmark contribution in the feminist writing by describing the history of female writings. In her study, history of female writings was put into three phases of development: the feminine phase (1840-1880); the feminist phase (1880-1920), and the female phase (1920- till present). In the first phases, female writers imitated the style of male writers and some even went to the extent of using men's names Examples are Curer Bell for Charllote Bronte and George Eliot for Marry Ann Evans. This was an attempt to hide their identity as female writers. In the second phase, women began to present themselves from their own perspectives. Showalter used gynocriticism to describe this third phase. In gnyocriticism, women are seen beyond readers of a text but rather they are presented as active interpreters of a text. Abrams (2009: 112) describes the goals of gynocriticism as:

> A number of feminists have concentrated, not on the woman as readers, buton what Elaine showalter named gynocriticism that is, a criticism which concerns itself with developing a specifically female framework for dealing with works written by women, in all aspects of their production, motivation, analysis, and interpretation, and in all literary forms, including journals and letters. Notable books in this mode include Patricia Mayer Speck's. The Female Imagination (1975), on English and American novels of the past three hundred years, Ellen Moers' Literary Women (1976), on a major women novelists and poets in England, America, and France; Elaine Showaltar's *A Literature Of Their Own*:British Women Novelists From Bronte to Lessing (1977); and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979, rev.2000). This last book stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century.

Since the popularity of the concept of gynocriticism, women writers have been presenting their stories from their own point of view. From the nineteenth century, there has been inscription of self in literary texts.

In African-America and Africa, there were new dimensions to feminism. Black women and women of African descents are of the opinion that white feminism did not reflect African peculiar experiences of slavery and colonialism. Among the African dimensions to feminism are womanism, motherism, and STIWAMISM. The difference in the experiences of the black woman and her white counterpart fostered distrust and tension (Akorede, 2011:41).

Motherism is Catherine Acholonu's (1995) Afro-centric theory of feminism. She is of the opinion that motherism is a multi-dimensional theory that involves ordering at all levels of human endeavour. Acholoonu is of the view that:

> Africa's alternative to Western feminism is MOTHERISM and motherism denotes motherhood, nature and nurture. Motherism is a multidimensional theory, which involves the dynamics of ordering, creating structures, building and rebuilding in cooperation with Mother Nature at all levels of human endeavour (Pp 110-111).

The above points to the fact that African dimension to feminism is accommodationist as it supports cooperation and interaction between women and men through marriage. One cannot be a mother without having a husband for the purpose of pro-creation.

Womanism is another or African dimension to feminism. It is critically discussed in this study under the sub-heading of theoretical framework. Different critics such as Alice Walker, Mary Kolawole and Okonjo-Ogunyemi have all made contributions to womanism.

STIWAMISM is taking from the expression STIWA, an acronym for 'Social Transformation Including Women in Africa'. This theory has Marxist orientation. It is in the opinion of the theory that no meaningful transformation can take place without collaboration of men and women.

This study, therefore shares the view of Boyce-Davis (1990:10) that African and Western feminism have some points of intersection. He writes: "The obvious connection between African and Western Feminism is [that] both identify gender-specific issues and recognize women's position internationally as one of second class and 'otherness' and seek to correct that". It can thus be said that the goal of feminism (African or Western) is to redress the gender inequality in society. It is believed that with this, there will be an improvement in the status of women.

The understanding of the differences in the status of men and women in a phallocentric society makes gender-based themes common in the literary texts produced in Nigeria and Africa in general. Ezeigbo points to this understanding in *House of Symbols* henceforth referred to as House. For instance, Ezenwanyi in House says that the society is bipolarized into masculine and feminine symbols and that the understanding of this militates against sustainable gender relationship in the society. Ezenwanyi's House of symbols is described as: "A house crammed with spiritual symbols, feminine and masculine symbols. Old and new symbols, jostling for survival and, it seems, succeeding to do so in peace and harmony" (*House*, 50).

The implication of the *House* given by Ezenwanyi is confusion as a result of conflicts emanating from variables of gender interests between men and women. The intention of Ezenwanyi is not to create a chasm between the socio-cultural interactions of men and women. Rather, the agenda set by Ezenwanyi are to create balance between men and women interactions in the phallocentric social order without upsetting the socio-cultural codes.

In the *House*, Ezeigbo's ideological stance on the gender perception is such that advocates for women rights in marriage. In her opinion, a woman should not be an object of wife battery and dehumanization. Men should always respect the rights and opportunities of every woman in marriage. In the opinion of Ezeigbo, a woman should be free from externally-imposed and self-imposed limitations. As given in the House, for instance, "at sixteen, Eaglewoman felt grown up and independent, resentful of anybody who had power over her or told her to and what not to do" (*House*, 12). The Eaglewoman is assertive and lives above any form of phallocentric intimidation. Though she respects her husband, she never succumbs to any form of intimidation from him. When her husband struck her in the face, Eaglewoman, retaliates. It is reported in the story that:

> Before he realized what he was doing he had struck her in the face. For a moment she sat motionless, her face expressionless from shock. As he was turning away, raving about her evil and unwholesome habit of entertaining strange men, she leapt at him like a leopardess on a hunt and hit his shoulder blade with the stone she was grinding tobacco with. The blow echoed with a thud, sent him pitching forward as the pain almost knocked him senseless. (*House*, 178)

The action of Eaglewoman is an implication that men and women have equal rights in marriage. Men do not have any cultural, religious and spiritual rights to beat their wives. Eaglewoman, thus demonstrates assertiveness against dehumanization of women in marriage.

Womanist ideology is shown in the novel through the action of Ossai, the husband of Eaglewoman, instead of reacting against his wife's action, Ossai demonstrates love and understanding to let the matter have natural death. The reaction of Ossai after being hit by his wife is given in the novel:

> He did not go after her to pummel her with blows, to teach her the place of a wife as a voice inside him insisted. He did not rush after her to show her that he owned her, that he was the one that married her and not the other way round. And he did none of these not because he was too incapacitated by the blow from the grinding stone to do anything, not because he did not feel outraged that his own wife had struck him with such venom, but because he loved her too much to hit her deliberatively, consciously, with all his sense about him (*House*,178).

The situation above shows the position of womanist that men and women should demonstrate equal love. In our contemporary society, most marriages hit the rock because men and women do not demonstrate equal love and understanding in marriage. Ossai demonstrates moral virtuosity by not hitting his wife back. After this incident, there was nothing of the baseless accusation and peace and harmony exists between Ossai and Eagewoman.

Theoretical Framework: Womanism

The theoretical frame work for this study is womanism. This is one of the African Variations of feminism. This concept was initially proposed by Alice Walker (1983), An African-American Woman who described womanism as non-radical approach to the fight for the rights of women and the defense of these rights. She sees a womanist as a person who loves other women and sometimes loves other individual men. Apart from womanism, efforts will also be made to utilize the literary theories of deconstruction and postcolonialism. Much emphasis will however be on womanism.

Kolawole (1997) modified the concept of womanism. She does not see the concept from the global perspective. In her opinion, African womanism is the one that takes care of the rights of women of African descents alone. In the opinion of Emezue (2020:41), It is a holistic ideology which accentuates the empowerment of all black people and which lays emphasis on the female sphere. Alice Walker's position about womanism, in the opinion of critics has

some resemblance with white feminism, particularly the ideology that encourages, homosexuality. In her opinion, Alice Walker describes a womanist as:

> A black feminist or feminist of colour… who loves other women, sexually and /or sometimes, love individual non, in non-sexuality. Committed to survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female. Womanism is to feminism as purpose to lavender(Walker, 1983, P. xiii).

From Walker's point of view, womanism is in support of homosexuality between females and heterosexuality between males and females. This is one of the basic problems with womanism. The theory does not actually capture the tenet of African culture. African cultural practices are not in support of homosexuality. The tenets of womanism, as given by Alice Walker really capture the historical and sociological experiences of African-American. Unlike white feminism that has separatist stance, womanism isacommodationist in orientation.

In a follow-up study, Ogunyemi (2014) is of the opinion that the goal of womanism is to see to it that men begin to change from their sexist stance. She writes that womanism is:

> A black outgrowth from feminism. Womanism is black centered. It is accommodationist. It believes in the freedom and independence of women like feminism. Unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black women and black men and black children and will see to it that men begin to change from their sexiest stance (P.65).

Ogunyemi's position about womanism has African peculiarity. It really shows that African women want peaceful co-existence between men and women. This is against the radical approach of the white feminism that is Separatist in ideology. A womanist is concerned with the preservation of culture and Sheshows respect for material and immaterial aspects of culture.

Despite the difference of ideology from how Alice Walker and Ogunyemi describe womanism, Kohrs-Amissar (2015) is of the view that Walker and Ogunyemi present womanism as the coming of age of a young woman. She wrote that Ogunyemi and Walker:

> Define womanism within a black context as the coming of age of a young woman which brings about the emergence of femaleness. Additionally, Ogunyemi (2017) believes that the 'ultimate aim of womanism is the unity of blacks everywhere under the enlightened control of men and women'. She lays stress on womanism as a black global ideology which encompasses issues of racism, imperialism and sexism (p.27).

From the position of kohrs-Amissah (2015), it can be said that Alice Walker and Ogunyemi see womanism as a global movement of black women to fight against male domination and subjugation.

Kolawole (1997), in her own study, situates womanism within African context. In her study, she refers to womanism as Africana Womanism in line with the view of Hudon-Weems (2016)

on the assumption that African women have different experiences from their white counterparts. Africana-Womanism, as an ideology is designed to cater for the needs and yearnings of all women of African descents. This ideology is grounded in African culture and cosmology. The conclusion is that Africana Womanism and its agenda are unique and separate from both white feminism and Black feminism, and moreover, to the extent of naming in particular, Africana Womanism differs from Africa feminism (Alenxander-floyd & Simien, 2019:67). The difference in cultural practices marks the difference in white feminism and Africana womanism. Kolawole is of the opinion that Africana womanism is not a new discourse in feminist theory but that it is quite unfortunate that the concept has long been overlooked. She notes:

> African woman's mobilization and struggle is older than many scholars' acknowledgement. History, sociology and oral literature confirm the long – standing nature of these people's rejection of subjugation and dynamic self-assertion and empowerment that have remained largely unnoticed in modern academia.

The above position shows that Africana womanism is not "an addendum to western feminism". It is an independent ideology and movement that reflects peculiar African experience of women on the continent and Diaspora.

Since the concept has been theorized in Africa, many female writers of African descents have been appropriating its tenets in the subject matter and thematic orientations of their creative texts. Notable among these writers is Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, particularly in her trilogy - the *Last of the Strong Ones, House of Symbols and Children of the Eagle*.

Through the symbolic representation of the character of Eaglewoman, Ezeigbo is of the positive opinion that every woman can attain success and laudable achievements if she believesshe can. For instance, Eaglewoman records success in the private domains of home as a wife and mother. She also records success in the public domains of politics and economic activities. She is a successful baker, a politician and a proactive women leader.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the womanist principles in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *House of Symbols*. The paper traces African Literature from the colonial presentation of African cosmology from the Eurocentric perspective to the African phallocentric perspective to the Africana Womanism perspective. The theoretical orientation for this paper is womanism. This theoretical background is chosen because it advocates collaboration between men and women. From our textual analysis of the novel, it can be said that Adimora-Ezeigbo achieves her womanist ideology through the characterization of Eaglewoman- a quintessential woman of outstanding achievements. Women should not be seen as objects desired and to be possessed by men. Rather women should be seen as partners in marriage and progress. Eaglewoman has demonstrated the new image and status of women sustainable development through her person, character and characterization.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following suggestions were made:

Men should see women as partners in progress and not objects to be desired and possessed.
Men need to collaborate with women to achieve home/national development.
Women should strive to diligently excel in whatsoever they do in order to earn respect.

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