

AFRICANA-WOMANISM AND THE SEXIST
PARADOX IN EMEKA NWABUEZE'S
THE DRAGON'S FUNERAL

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Abstract

*In Nigeria, women lose certain legal rights during matrimony. The Feminist movement has challenged the established perception of women's rights and skills. Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral*, which examines the remote factors that triggered the Aba women's riot, sounds Africana-womanist largely because it adopts a moderate approach in reviewing the relationship between men and women in a male dominated society. Africana-womanism, isolates the black peculiarity of the female subject, and connects her philosophy to her unique cultural background. This approach which has elements of Jungian archetype references the mythological identity of the female gender as a potter's wheel that molds the Africana-woman's temperament and philosophy and interrogates the socially accepted idea of womanhood. Nwabueze's Africana-womanist disposition analyses the factors that cause gender friction and violence and focuses on family values. A noticed attitude in Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* is its contradictory textual sarcasm while appearing to edify the female characters. Nwabueze tactfully examines the right attitude African women should adopt in a patriarchal family unit, recommending total submissiveness for women using the character of Ikodie to teach women obeisance to natural and religious laws and acceptance of male authority and dominance. This stereotypical attitude adopts sexist*

dimensions and further reduces the woman's servitude state. The playwright suggests that women rebellion largely occurs in the absence of effective male leadership.

Introduction

Until the early part of the 20th century most Western countries' constitutions circumscribed marriage as a union or agreement which made a man and a woman a single entity before the law. The Encarta Encyclopedia expresses that marriage in this way reduces the self value or worth of the woman since her legal existence is deferred during matrimony. In Nigeria, both educated and illiterate women lose tangible legal rights in the course of matrimony. From the traditional to court marriages, the marital union is superintended by the husband, who administers the couple's joint property as well as the wife's private property. Aristotle, who essentially developed the principles of criticism in the Classical period, argued that women were inferior to men and of a necessity ought to be ruled by men. This precept also echoes in the scriptures from the old testament Israel where women were not included in the census to the new testament period where Christian wives were urged by St. Paul to obey their husbands and not to speak in church. Feminist advocacy has raised awareness about the woman's social condition and focused a spotlight on the discrepancies between women and men's rights and how the social structure sustains this discrimination. Feminism has challenged established perceptions of women's skills. It has influenced culture and diversified to take on emergent issues regarded by women as means by which men exert control over women's bodies.

According to Encarta Encyclopedia, there were examples of exceptional women who challenged patriarchal structures in

their lives and writings such as the German abbess, Hildegard of Bingen, who defied the authority of male church leaders and the English female writer, Mary Astell, who called for improvements in women's education. Encarta Encyclopedia delineates the feminist movement historically into two waves, viz.: the first wave, which began about 1800 and lasted until the 1930s, which was largely concerned with gaining equal rights between women and men. It describes the second wave, which began in the late 1960s, as not only continuing to fight for equality but having developed a range of theories and approaches that stress the difference between women and men while drawing attention to the specific needs of women. Patricia Mische states that:

The values that have been labeled “feminine” love, compassion, cooperation, patience are very badly needed in giving birth to and nurturing a new era of greater peace and justice in human society. It would be unfortunate if they were forsaken by women because they seem dysfunctional to competition in a “masculine” world. Now, more than ever, these are the values that need to be asserted by men and women in creating a new world order (n.p.).

Feminism refers generally to a critical movement that pays special attention to the feminine gender's rights and position in the social scheme of things. Bell Hooks defines it thus: “feminism defined in political terms that stress collective as well as individual experience challenges women to enter a new domain- to leave behind the apolitical stance sexism decrees is our lot and develop political consciousness.”(25)Feminism as a critical concept is synonymous with feminist advocacy and

emancipation. Its evolution as a conscious socio-political praxis started becoming evident in the early 19th century with its roots traversing the modern and postmodern literary period still seeking equality between women and men.

Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* traces the upheavals that led to the Aba women's riot in colonial South Eastern Nigeria. The remote disturbances that started the women rebellion spearheaded by Adaugo Nwanyeruwa are attributed to the greedy wiles of Warrant Chief Okeugo and the arrogant British administrators, Cook and Weir. The central conflict of the play revolves around the taxation of women's produce. The Ngwa women are rallied to action by Adaugo Nwanyereuwa the womanist mouthpiece of the playwright who defines the objectives of the women's struggle to discard aggressive feminism and concentrate exclusively on resisting the Whiteman and his stooges, Chief Okeugo and Emeruwa. The women set the townsmen aghast and on the run before proceeding to the colonial headquarters where they table their demands for pacification. The colonial authorities faced with a total breakdown of law acquiesce to the women's requests, sack Chief Okeugo and repeal the taxation on women. The play ends in a resounding victory for women with Mazi Ekwedike, the narrator through whose eyes we witnessed the story in flashback, remarking that women's affinity to robbers are quite close. Nwabueze's play sounds Africana-womanist largely because it doesn't adopt a combative approach in reviewing the relationship between men and women in a patriarchal society.

Clenora Hudson-Weems, the gender studies critic first described Africana-Womanism as a distinct form of feminism not to be confused as an addendum. According to her, even though African female scholars are in agreement with the basic principles of feminism most of these gender advocates do not

concur with the extreme features of feminism which is confrontational and examines women from the prejudiced viewpoint of the 'Other'. This propagandist attribute favours the middle class white women's interests. Hudson-Weems is of the opinion that the feminist movement is the White woman's movement because the Africana woman does not see the man as her primary enemy in the same manner as the White feminist who battles with her White male counterpart for subjugating her as his property. She submits that Africana men have never had the same institutionalized empowerment to suppress Africana women's rights in the way White men have oppressed White women.

Africana-womanism, isolates the black peculiarity of the female subject, and connects her philosophy to her unique cultural background. This approach which has elements of Jungian archetype references the mythological identity of the female gender as a potter's wheel that molds the Africana-woman's temperament and philosophy. This feminist approach interrogates the socially accepted idea of womanhood while locating the foundational ideology firmly on traditional African values and worldviews. In Nigeria, Buchi Emecheta, Tess Onwueme and Flora Nwapa are some well known female writers whose literary works focused on women as an oppressed 'Other.' These writers have told the female protagonists' stories of abuse and oppression combated with strength and determination to succeed which is rewarded with triumph, emancipation and empowerment.

Africana Womanism basically affirms that African women love their men and are comfortable with accepting their sexual classification. These advocates vehemently resist the qualification of victim, rather perceiving themselves as people who are actively involved in the social construction of

their identities. Africanba-womanism categorises women as essential caregivers and character development specialists in a child's nurture and social evolution. The primary concern of womanist is sustenance of life through the stability of family and communal commitment. Womanist heroes like Adaugo first identify the primary alienating factor before unifying the collective objective and setting the revolutionary process in motion thus:

ADAUGO: We're ready for them. There's one thing I want to make clear to you so you can tell the women of your neighbourhood. We're not fighting our men yet. Our confrontation is with the government. Every woman should discharge her duties in the usual manner. No woman should resist her normal chores. We don't want our men to think that we're trying to overthrow them(63).

While the western influenced feminism is totally female-centered and concerned with the dissolution of the male-dominated society and the enthronement of feminine rights, Africana-womanism doesn't agitate combatively for a redress of perceived imbalances. This type of womanism tilts toward the family. Most African women who are used to traditional values and culture have an affinity towards inherited ways of doing things and reject the hostile derogatory way feminists construct the male model as a slave driver. The feminist concept is largely western driven is sympathetic to the urbane lady's perspective of the male sex as a threat whereas the African-womanist approach is much more subdued and condescending in the intersexual debate. Though Western women have for long been abused by their male folks, African women have always had a more tolerating disposition to their

men because of certain integrated cultural values and nurture.

The Feminist-Womanist Paradox

Feminists share the philosophy that society is structured in such a way that men have outstanding comparative advantages in socio-economic and political affairs to the disadvantage of women. Some feminists in frustration at the perceived gender imbalance have sought to tackle this malposition have adopted extreme measures to realign their noted concerns. One of such stances include radical feminism which Randall describes by:

Its insistence that sex is the fundamental division in society to which all other differences such as social class or race, are merely secondary. Radical feminists have argued that, apart perhaps from an ancient era of 'matriarchy', there has always been a sexual division of labour underpinning and reinforced by systematic male dominance or patriarchy (6).

Kroker furthers the feminist concern for change by asking women “not simply to leave the private realm but to struggle to transform and integrate public and private, and in doing so to transcend the alienation of one from the other, for this feminism the integration of women on equal terms into productive sources is a necessary but not sufficient condition of liberation”(26)

Feminism focuses on the relationship between women and the socio-political structure by highlighting those peculiarities delimiting women from participation in political power play and denying them influence in political action. Feminism is radical, hegemonic and anti-men infatuated and domineering. Feminist philosophy favours a liberal shift in women's sexual determinism, choice and candour. As a

western oriented concept, it is overly concerned about the marriage institution and individuated family system. On the contrary, feminism in Nigeria seems to agitate for social recognition and rights rather than political ascendancy.

Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* adopts a Marxist appearance by making the lower class women rise in arms to overthrow a bourgeois establishment. Adaugo's speech at the start of the revolution suggests this socialist attitude thus:

ADAUGO: ...women of Ngwa, shall we sit down and see a stranger poke his fingers into our eyes?

WOMEN: (in unison) no!!

ADAUGO: we shall not allow ourselves to be harassed unnecessarily. I have heard that in their own country, women are highly respected. But when they come here they treat us like ash (19).

Africana Womanist themes exploit the cultural themes of family dynamics, women heroism and inter-gender relationships etc. Womanism critically examines the historical experiences of the Black woman who has faced the harsh realities of racial inequality, colonialism, neo-colonialism, slavery and socio-political manipulation. The movement empowers women to unite and resist exploitation. This goal is realizable through a deliberate ideological rearmament which will reinforce women culturally, spiritually, religiously and academically and give the intellectual space.

Womanism evolved from the Black feminist experience of racial discrimination and lack of prominence in the main stream of the white dominated feminist agitation. This African type of womanism sought to confer a new identity on the black woman who had experienced double persecution at the hands

of colonialism and male chauvinism. Africana-womanism concedes that black women have experienced sexual oppression which were not acknowledged and tackled exhaustively by the white dominated feminist struggle. Africana-womanism sets up a standard of evaluating how African women have been treated by the racist white culture in order to better appreciate the black female's political and psychological predicament. The movement emphasizes the special needs of black women of color who have faced an abused socio-political history. This delineating philosophy is important to Africana-womanism since white women have never experienced the derogatory effects of racism neither have they been demoted to the sidelines of the gender studies roundtable. Nwabueze uses the heroic character, Adaugo Nwanyeruwa to state the specific goals of the struggle and the need for a united front to achieve these aims thus:

ADAUGO: my sisters, our strength lies in our determination to stay together, to fight together and to die together if the need arises. Our men have grown afraid of fighting. It is our duty to show them that a dog does not eat into the belly of a goat. We are simple people and we should not allow anyone to perceive us as simpletons. We know the pains of this subjugation (21).

A womanist is basically committed to promoting a cohesive family unit which includes a prominent position for men. Womanists like Alice Walker, Hudson-Weems etc., preach a collective struggle that includes men as partners and a comprehensive sisterhood that transcends the colour of one's skin and class status. This universal recognition of women rights seems to be what Nwabueze addresses marginally when

he reviews the British colonial administrators' biased attitude towards the rights of African women in the play:

WEIR: Wonders shall never end! Yes, it obtains in Europe, but this is Africa. Come on, man, the natives don't deserve such decent treatment. If I had my way, I would tax them for their wives.

COOK: (surprised) Their wives?

WEIR: Of course. (laughs) To these natives wives are not actually what they are in Europe.

To them a wife is a commodity, a property, which could be used and abused according to the necessity of the situation (31).

Nwabueze's Africana-womanist disposition reviews the factors that cause gender friction, sexual and domestic violence. His focus is on family values, male-dominance, and women education. Nwabueze tactfully examines the right attitude African women should adopt in a patriarchal family unit. He seems to recommend total submissiveness for women as can be adduced from his other creative works where his career minded female characters face certain calamity at the end of these plays. In his play, *Echoes of Madness*, Brenda, a sophisticated black American married to Obiora, the protagonist returnee of the play, has her marriage broken up after an altercation involving physical force with her newly assertive husband, Obiora. Brenda is assassinated by thugs sent by Akamonye, the play's antagonist on her way back to the U.S. Oyibo, the female character in *Spokesman For the Oracle*, written by Emeka Nwabueze, who is a career pharmacist, witnesses the collapse of her marriage and family life after the authorial voice of the playwright through the character of Chidi informs us that it is her overt infatuation with building her career at the expense of her familial

responsibilities that caused the destruction of their family. Nwabueze makes a pitch for female submissiveness in the play through the character of Ikodie to show that women should in obeisance to natural and religious laws accept male authority and dominance as normal and receive group oppression when they openly rebel as an appropriate measure. He suggests that women rebellion largely occurs in the absence of effective male leadership. The conversation between Ikodie, Dike and Kalu as the female protest movement begins is enlightening:

DIKE: Ikodie!

KALU: Leave her to finish so I can educate her.

IKODIE: Educate me? You men should go and educate yourselves. You say you married us because we're weak, because we need protection but now you're incapable of protecting us(55).

Africana Womanism is grounded in African culture, and evident in the sacred texts of ancient Egypt and Nigerian Yoruba. The African society practices a culture which is gender delineated with roles apportioned to different sexes according to their perceived strengths. These gender allocations require behavioural characteristics assumed to fit attributive expectation for each sex. The perceived gender qualities led to the formation of identities for each gender and ultimately, to stereotyping. Stereotyping is a major model which the feminist movement tries to destroy but which the Africana-womanist movement tolerates.

Stereotypes allot roles to each gender with men getting the favourable qualities of courage, intelligence, articulation, motivation and objectivity. Women generally get the opposite roles of weak, promiscuous, docile, stupid, confused etc. From childhood, parents form an integral process in this imprinting

allocation of self perceptive values. The girl-child is taught from infancy to be submissive, accept the physical assault from her brother or father when there's such incident and to be forgiving in case of error. This psychoanalytical approach which kick off the identity stage of a child's early development and eventual social evolution influences girls to align with their mothers who are already involved in domestic roles like cooking, doing laundry etc. while boys hang out with their fathers, exercise or indulge in competitive activities that increase aggressiveness and raise the penchant for violence which is later adopted for use against the female gender. Girls in this manner assume an Electra complex and assume that each sexual orientation comes with a specific role and behavior.

In the African continent, male children are more often desired than girls by married couples since they are seen as more stable and focused in life. This stereotypical process extends to adulthood where men become more socially valued and viewed as more competent than women at most tasks. According to Gloria Chukwukere,

In the traditional African society, the woman's major functions revolve around the family. These include her responsibilities as mother, wife and home administrator... in spite of these significant contributions, the status of the African woman remains considerably lower than that of her male counterpart. In Nigeria, men employ their major control of economic resources, particularly land, to wield extensive social control over women.”(2-3)

Men's images are presented so larger than life that it is assumed

their actions can reverse any bad situation for good. Nwabueze adopts this stance in *The Dragon's Funeral* by making it appear that the men's refusal to take action against taxation deteriorates the situation to its chaotic finale:

KALU; wait a minute, Dike, let me find out something from her. How do you determine a man?

IKODIE: Look at the whole town. There is no peace, there's fear everywhere, and you men do nothing about it. And you call yourselves men(55)

Imprinting and Genderisation

Stereotype refers to the set of knowledge or beliefs we have in our head about an individual who represents a group. They sometimes provide us with misleading information because our most common attitudes are our values which help us judge the appropriateness of an action. The hero's values usually work on the operational level of tying events to established models in his mind. a stereotype is a representation of a cultural group that emphasizes a trait or group of traits that may or may not communicate an accurate representation of the group. A social identity is a resultant presence of elements commonly noticeable in people's daily lives, symbols, language, dress, history, myths, music, blood ties etc. There are fixed stereotypes of women throughout the work and the playwright through the character of Ikodie attempts to correct any perceived notion of dissention thus:

DIKE: Are you betting with me?

IKODIE: I'm not. I just can't understand your fears. Have I not been doing my duties effectively as wife and mother? In fact I was the person who questioned the action of the women during the meeting(53).

A stereotypical attitude can seriously affect a woman's self worth and value as her awareness of the social expectation of her cognitive skills weighs her down. Her ability to improve her status is impeded as her assertiveness is questioned, mocked and dismissed by an opinionated male chauvinist society. The stereotypical attitude adopts sexist dimensions which further reduces the woman's servitude state. Feminism and by extension, Africana-womanism as Hooks points out, "is the struggle to end sexist oppression" (26). The female characters in his work like Adaugo and Ikodie have depth of character and seem to be united in their revolutionary activities. They have courage and are ready to take the full blame for their actions. Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* and Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* seem to advocate moderate womanism by seeking a permissive social space for women.

Women need space and an identity not shaped by patriarchal concerns. Sexism as a patriarchal system is informally institutionalized in the society. An overt paradoxical stance is evident in Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral*. His paradoxical disposition emanates from his linguistic conviction that the committed writer without the paradox is like the lover without passion. This philosophical stance adopts a prescription that a good speaker should be versed in proverbs, riddles, idioms etc., which can be used for enigmatic purposes reflective of the absurdist world we live in. A paradox, according to the *Encarta Dictionary*, is a self contradictory statement; a logic that produces an inconsistency which connotes irony. Paradoxes usually manifest in the form of images or ideas embedded in language.

A noticed attitude in Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* and some other supposedly womanist sympathetic plays is

their contradictory textual sarcasm while appearing to edify their feminine characters. Despite appearing to eulogize these heroines and their followership they appear to be ridiculing them in the same breath. The women who are victimised by sexism in these Nigerian dramas are the stubborn, confrontational ones. This type of measure is also noticeable in *Wives Revolt* by J.P. Clark and Barclays Ayakroma's *The Land Must Sacrifice*. Sexism is an unconsciously practiced oppressive tool of dominance which is presented as acceptable by male writers telling women's stories from a man's perspective. There seems to be a deliberate effort to create an image that any woman that can do a heroic or outstanding deed is either extraordinary or from the moon. Ekwedike's lines before starting Adaugo's story reveal that women are seen as ineffectual, weak and indecisive. Consider the statement below:

EKWEDIKE: ...the questions you ask are good, daughters of my beautiful land. But you will ask no questions after you've heard the incidents that led to the incarceration of the Dragon. Then you will know that great women are no more, that what we have now are mere girls masquerading as women

OLAEDO: Mind how you talk about women in our presence. I may not be the legendary

ADAUGO: but I can also spit fire (16-17).

The issue of violence and physical dominance is a major preoccupation in the play. Sexism is a tendency to discriminate against women as cultural stereotypes of their gender. This attitude quickly gives rise to other stereotypical opinions that conclude that women are inferior; that a human being

belonging to one sex is intrinsically superior to the other. Domestic violence which occurs in the male domineering effort to enforce his superiority assumes diverse forms ranging from, physical to psychological abuse. Misandry, which denotes the hatred of the male gender as a societal group or as individuals, is an attitude often attributed to radical feminists. Such notion is rejected by the women in Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral*. This male tolerant attitude best reflects Nwabueze's Africana-womanist sympathies. Nwabueze seems to suggest that women's oppression is rooted in biology. There is a suggestion that women should seize control of the means of reproduction and destroy not only male dominance but sex distinction which is restrictive.

DIKE: Where are you going to dressed like this?

IKODIE: My husband, shall we go through this again this morning? I thought we've already discussed it.

DIKE: Discussed what?

IKODIE: The women's meeting. We have a meeting today at the Orie market.

DIKE: Yes. That's the new image of women of this land. That is the result of your meetings. You now know how to throw words at me.

IKODIE: I am not throwing words at you. I just want you to understand that the meeting has nothing to do with seeking equality with men. It is concerned with empowering women to take care of their own affairs in a world that is not prepared to protect them(51-52)

Sexist claims are based on both real and alleged differences between men and women. Sexist claims stem from traditional categorizations and allotment of gender roles. The

institutionalization of sexism as a concept is not an overnight phenomenon but a product of historical evolution. Some instances of sexism in the ancient world included women not being included in the census in biblical Israel and Rome. In Rome, especially, there were laws that sidelined women from contesting or participating in the political process. According to Vicky Randall,

Sexism in political science, as in other social sciences, has mainly taken the following forms: first, omission of women as subject matter, although they may be subsumed under such generalities as 'humanity', 'mankind' or 'man'; second, discussion of women when they are mentioned, in terms of their significance for men rather than in their own right; finally, the assumption that the male and female nature differ and that male nature is superior, or at least 'normal'(2).

Although sexism occurs mainly against women it can sometimes as well apply to men in the form of sexual harassment designed to arouse men. This sort of victimisation by sexist oppression leads the victim to acceptance of fate without interrogation. Sexism presents subjection as politically correct and autocratic patriarchy as a necessary evil. In *The Dragon's Funeral*, violence, the erstwhile weapon of men, is converted by the women for political purposes viz.:

NWUGO: We deny them the thing that gives them joy. Women are the givers of joy, the managers of the body of men. And when their manhood awakens it behaves as if it would penetrate a wall, sending

their senses in a state of anomie. If we join together let me see the man that will withstand us for one market week. That man is dead between his thighs (21).

Erotica is subtly handled in the womanist material so as not to precipitate a war of attrition between both sexes. The pornographic angle in womanism unlike in feminism reinforces sexual myths. Although sexist philosophy portrays women as readily available and amenable to copulation at will Africana-womanists like Nwabueze adjust the sexist claim by giving the female character an enlightened mind that does not resist sex but requires gratification in material or psychological kind. Certain types of sexual discrimination are inadmissible in some cultures while other cultures and societies indirectly approve their practice under different guises. For example, in Nigeria, the practice of paying bride price or dowry to a woman's parents is a sexist custom.

Sexist jokes reduce the woman, who is the object of the joke to an intangible entity. These sex jokes which have formed the daily staple of men's talks are most times used in a derogatory manner to qualify a man's weak resolve, fear stupidity and emotional attitude. It operates by veiling sexual bigotry with a cloak of humour. Such words like 'pussy' or 'cunt' used to describe a man who messed up in a particular situation suggest a disappointing quality to the character, a sexist idea about women. This sexist language serves to intimidate and denigrate a person owing to the sexual orientation of such a person. It can also occur through such profane swear words like: 'fuck' or 'suck it' which denote the uncaring arrogant attitude of the male gender to criticism or allegations of sexism. Abundant examples are readily

available online.

Conclusion

It is not a new phenomenon that male African writers can adopt a womanist centred approach while applying the basic elements of characterization, heroism and thematic structure in recounting legendary tales. Emeka Nwabueze's humorous approach in examining the war between the sexes while appearing to focus on the tragedy of Chief Okeugo is not a singular creative impetus. Indeed the above statement seems to be the approach adopted by certain Nigerian playwrights in their works. For instance, Femi Osofisan in his play, *Morountodun*, adopts this approach to tell the story of Moremi, the legendary Yoruba character who helped the peasants to gain freedom from the oligarchs. The same tendency is also evident in Ola Rotimi's play, *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* and Emeka Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral*. Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* adopts as his heroine the character, Adaugo, to chronicle the historical Aba women's riot yet the play has certain sexist echoes in its parts. This suggests that the author's agitation for women's rights is partial and suspicious. Politics is a process by which members of a society decide on issues of mutual concern. Women are not powerless because they have exceeding influence over the children who they nurture from birth to childhood. They can cause outstanding pain in the polity by producing unruly children who will contribute to a rebellious citizenry.

Nwabueze's praise of the collective will of African women while chronicling the colonial past of Nigeria is commendable and timely. At a time when continued acts of rape and other subtle forms of sexual harassment and exploitation are regular mass media items, it is important that such balancing accounts written by men, the so called

oppressors, that raise the female gender beyond the status of object to subject, be encouraged in order to engender mutual respect for both sexes. The acknowledgement of female sexual power subtly hinted at in the play under review is necessary because as much as women are vessels of sensuousness and erotic satisfaction, they are also biological partners in proper family building. Nwabueze's womanist approach conjoins class, ethnic and gender cleavage smoothly with his emphasis on shared family values and egalitarian socio-political system which honour each gender's past experiences. The play makes a pitch in favour of women who negotiate their oppression and suppression in the face of seeming surmountable challenges.

The solution proffered in the play is a passive resistance directed at specific objectives, one at a time. Nwabueze's play centres on the need for mutual understanding between men and women and preaches a concept of womanism which is more acceptable to the African audience than the more provocative feminist approach since womanism is centred on peculiar needs of African women. The conflicting philosophy in *The Dragon's Funeral* however is the idea that women want certain equal rights yet want to pay less tax than men or no tax at all. It remains to be seen how the selective application of the rule of law can be the main goal of these womanist advocates whilst they desire equal privileges in the same society that will exclude them from taxation. The play poses an artistic recognition that public policy helps to maintain women's oppression and as far as women's interests are not directly affected, for instance in the produce tax case, the status quo can last even while other silent oppressions go on. The conclusion drawn from *The Dragon's Funeral* is that women's complex need to be understood as they can be docile submissive creatures who don't mind their subordinate place in the social

scheme of things. When the exploiter takes this docility and humility for granted however, the result can be volatile because as Ekwedike, the griot, confesses at the play's end, the affinity between a woman and a robber is a very close one indeed.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE MANY FACES OF MINORITY: A STUDY OF ESIABA IROBI'S *HANGMEN ALSO DIE*, JP CLARK'S *THE WIVES* *REVOLT* AND AHMED YERIMAS *HARD GROUND*

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Abstract

The condition of minority groups in a country is a test of democracy in that country. In this democratic dispensation, minority problems have received the greatest attention in history. But, whereas countries grapple with minority matters, and the so called minority groups agitate for recognition and justice, it remains even more unclear who these minorities really are. Existing definitions of the word leaves one with the impression that anybody and any group of people can be minority at different places and at different times, depending on the basis racial, political, gender, economic, religious, social class and age. In the absence of an encompassing definition of minority, we are going to examine three plays that deal with the minority problems with a view to understanding what defines a minority group; what it feels like to be in minority. The paper will attempt to address some burning questions such as; is minority status an immutable existential law? What can be done to turn things around for the better for the minority groups? How far has Affirmative Action gone in providing the needed solution to minority problems? How can Minority Rights be achieved through dialogue or violent confrontation?. These plays portray many faces of minority. The paper will, also, critically appraise the various