

**WOMEN, THEIR OWN WORST ENEMIES: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TESS ONWUEME'S GO
TELL IT TO WOMEN AND THE REIGN OF WAZOBIA**

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Abstract

Mythologically, most critics see women and their relationship with their spouses and the entire society as a fair description of their status through the ages. Biblical account has it that it was the woman who first tasted the forbidden fruit and also made the man to taste. The woman is, therefore adjudged to be cursed by the creator Himself. While some feminist writers query this natural dichotomy between the man and the woman, some writers, especially within the African feminist group, are influenced by this mythological justification by the Bible. They seem to suggest too, that even the domestic division of labor practiced in African culture based on sex and gender was ordained by God and therefore to change this would be to antagonize the creator. This has been the major problem of African feminist activities. There has been a strong disagreement within this sphere, while some believe in the western approach toward solving the woman emancipation problem; others see the approach as not workable in the African region. Perhaps it is this disagreement among our feminist scholars as well as activist that has brought about the multifaceted approach to the women question in Africa and indeed Nigeria. Never mind that some feminist scholars have actually accused God of chauvinism, or even that He is a man. While in the Western world, there exists the agreement among feminist

scholars that women are subjugated, marginalized and therefore need to be liberated, our African scholars are still engaged in a battle of deciding whether our women are really deprived. As a matter of fact they argue that the strength of a woman lies in her womanhood and therefore should not be tampered with. To them, African women are only 'faithfully' attending to their naturally ordained responsibilities. As the battle rages it becomes more and more difficult to begin to tackle the women question in our society.

Introduction

Some measure of agreement seems to exist among Western feminist scholars that women are subjugated, marginalized and therefore need to be liberated but African scholars are still engaged in a battle of deciding whether African women are really deprived. As a matter of fact they argue that the strength of a woman lies in her womanhood and therefore should not be tampered with. To them, African women are only 'faithfully' attending to their naturally ordained responsibilities. As the battle rages it becomes more and more difficult to begin to tackle the women question in our society. For the western world, the different approaches all target one end; liberation of the woman. How can we make much progress here in Africa and Nigeria if we can not identify the subject of concern? Yet we continue to insist that women must be empowered. Can we really achieve anything in that direction if collectively we cannot identify the impediments to empowerment? This is the concern of this work. The two texts of Onwueme are examined to provide a backbone for this argument.

However, before venturing further, into this argument, it is conjectural to define the history of the women development

question or feminism. The early woman protested over some issues she considered unfair to her but was consistently reminded by some traditional constitutions that legalized what was coming to her and therefore, her protest was treasonable enough to make her retrace her steps to muteness.

According to Michael Haralambos and Robin Healed, the women liberation movement emerged during the late 1960s primarily in America. According to them militant feminist had been fighting for civil rights, that is, equality for all adults as citizens regardless of sex. In Britain, the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975. Haralambos said women increasingly realized that they needed a movement of their own, since as members of other radical movements, they were often treated in terms of their traditional stereotype. Haralambos says:

For example when Stokely Carmichael, then leader of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), . . . was asked about the role of women in the organization, he replied, "The only position for women in SNCC is prone." Barbara Deckard summarizes the result of Women's Participation in Civil Right Movements during the early 1960s she state that, "here, many young women learned both rhetoric and organization of protest." (403)

Haralambos further reports that as the women became more sensitive to the Blacks' second-class statues, they became more aware of their own subjugated and marginalized state of existence. This to them was the birth of women's liberation movement (403). Evwierhoma reports that Tess onwueme, in her attempt to trace the women emancipation question said that since emancipation

has to do with the issue of rights, it was not difficult to attract minority woman. The black minority woman, for instance redefined her goal inline with socio cultural realities. According to Tess, for the black woman, her caste was a two-faced oppression; from white cooperate West which marginalize her role and place and the black male to whom she must defer at home. This, according to Tess was the birth of the black feminist movement. Tess went further to say:

in 1985, with UN Declaration of the Decade for Women, global feminism scored a major point when women converged in Nairobi, Kenya to celebrate issues (73).

To further trace this evolution, she said that another African feminist group sprung from the Black Feminist Movement called the 'Elite African Feminist.' Tess as quoted by Evwierhoma asserts that this new Movement, the Elite African Feminist were found mostly in:

Sheltered precincts in Universities, Colleges and Corporate bodies operating in a region already bombarded with so many ideologies to provoke the chagrin of the male who see the feminist movement as invading the very core of culture (73).

Regina Ode corroborated this view as she attests to the fact that the third quarter of the 20th century when the United Nation resolved to address the Women Development question was also the point where gender studies assumed a captivating area for various academic and development programmes (342).

Feminism in Nigeria has an equally long history. Most of

these movements, as discussed earlier were protest-based. They were resistance to destructive socio-political system of the periods. The Igbo women's war of 1929 in Aba, for instance was a demonstration against the prevailing socio-political problem designed against women. In the same vein, the Egba women of Yoruba demonstrated against the flat tax rate.

According to Afigbo, Women Political activists are highlighted through feminism during the pre colonial Nigeria. Examples he gave include Queen Amina of Zaria, Madam Tinubu of Lagos and Margaret Ekpo who participated prominently in the modern nationalist movement. (24)

Akoh also gave his confirmation of an existence of the women struggles in Nigeria. Akoh cited the formation of women bureau and women's clubs. He gave an example of 1944 when Mrs Fumilayo Ransom-kuti formed the Abeokuta Ladies club (ALC) which was primarily aimed at improving the standard of womanhood. It later changed into Abeokuta Women Union (AWU), Nigerian Women Union (NWU), Federation of Nigeria Women Societies (FNWS), and subsequently the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) (9).

Generally, feminism in Nigeria is formed on the position that women especially in developing regions are oppressed as they have been left out of development plans. Programmes like Better Life for Rural Women, Poverty Eradication Programmed etc were designed to salvage the ugly trend. As the activism was gaining ground, so also were the scholarly works opening up new horizons. For instance, the increasing interest in women development studies and movements gave rise to deferent scholarly perspectives. According to Regina Ode, there was the Welfarist Theory which cast women in the light of passive recipients of the benevolence of

men for their sustenance. She further says Esther Boserup in 1970 came up with a position that gave rise to Women in Development (WID). Also this widened and broadened to become Gender And Development (GAD). This metamorphosis she said was made possible by Kate Young in 1978. She argues that there is a mix-up of living conditions and positions of women in relation to men. Even young's position was influenced by an outcome of a conference titled "Conference 133: The Continuing Subordination of Women in the Development Process". This conference was said to have ushered in paper contribution from both the First and the Third Worlds participants thereby providing the platform for a comparative study of these two worlds. They concluded that there was a need to improve the social, political and economic positions of women.

Brief Review Of Types Of Feminist Theories

Feminism could be described as the organized movement which supports and promotes equality for men and women in political, economic and social issues. The feminists believe that women are oppressed simply because of their sex and they quickly cite the ideology of patriarchy as reason for their belief. Many descriptions are made about feminism and they all depend on a number of factors ranging from beliefs, history and culture. The theories advanced in feminism are as many as the feminists' scholars themselves. We will briefly go through some of them to help us identify the preoccupations of the feminists of the developed world.

Radical Feminism, Mary Daly is said to be the advocate of this group. It advocates a total change of the cultural structure, eliminating the domination by men completely. They seek to free

both the men and the women from rigid gender roles that society has imposed upon them. The radical feminism is sub- divided into two; radical liberation feminism- which emphasizes that the reproduction role of the woman limits her capacity to contribute to the society. This group prefers that the woman should essentially be androgynous. To achieve this they recommend artificial means of reproduction so that less time is devoted to pregnancy giving way for worthwhile things. They believe that abortion should be allowed and also promote the use of contraceptives. The Radical-Cultural feminists see sex and penetration by the male as male domination. They believe women should encompass their femininity. They see a link between sex, female subordination, rape and other abuses. They also believe men control production through a technical means

Another strand of this feminism is the **Liberal Feminism** of which Betty Freidan is the major advocate. This group is of the view that both men and women are created equal by God therefore, they deserve equal rights. They believe women have the same capacity as their male counterparts and should be given the same opportunities in political and economic spheres. As a matter of fact, this feminist group is responsible for the legislations that support women welfare, reforms, education and health.

There is also the **Socialist Feminism** theory championed by Alison Jaggar. They see a link between class structure and the oppression of women. They see that women production in the domestic sphere is not valued by the western society because women do not produce a tangible tradable commodity. This according to them gives the men the upper hand over the women. This group also totally condemns ideologies of capitalism and patriarchy.

We have the **Cultural Feminism** which has Carol Gilligan as he major advocate. This group believes in making the best of what is biologically endowed with women. To them, a woman is inherently more kind and gentle. They also believe that if women ruled the world would be a better place. While the men value independence, hierarchy competition and dominion, the women uphold interdependence, co operation, joy and trust.

Ecofeminism - Van Dana Shiva, the propagandist of this theory believes there is a link between the women and nature. Men look forward to conquering both women and the environment to have complete power. To them there is a deep connection that men cannot understand between the environment and women, hence terms like Mother Nature, Mother Earth.

It can be seen from the cursory look at these perspectives on feminism in the Western world that the arguments advanced by the western feminists group are all geared towards the issue of empowerment and the liberation of the women from oppression even though they use different approaches. They unanimously agree in the treatment of their objectives that really the western women need liberation from the men. It is only the approaches that differ and this is because they all target different issues but all working for liberation of women. Can this be said of our African feminist scholars?

The African Feminist Theories: An Overview

Most notable among the African feminism theories are **womanism** and **motherism**. The term womanism is said to have been coined by an African- American poet and novelist, Alice Walker who sees womanism as deeply rooted in black women's history, in racial

and gender oppression. According to Rosemary Asen (30), the term was taken from the southern black folk expression of 'you acting womanish' as a mother admonishes the female children. To Alice, womanish means mature, responsible, courageous and confident behaviors of adult females as opposed to frivolous behavior of girlish females. Womanism is thus summed up to be growing up and being in charge. H.F. Chidammadiz as cited by Rosemary states;

Womanism is not apprehensive of womanhood, wifehood or motherhood, the womanist appreciates the natural design of femininity (sic) as a given fact and aims to promote and preserve the pride of being a female human being (31).

Womanism is the result of the black African-American women's agitation to emancipate themselves from the double enslavement of both their white male owners and their black male spouses. The black African-American women initiated this movement to address their peculiar state of subordination. Sometimes the approach of this group is at variance with the core western feminism. It also has a touch of Africanness, hence its adoption in this work as an Afro-centric version of feminism. The theory of womanism is centered on the precincts that the biological attribute of the female necessitates her being apportioned some duties and roles in the society. It is however controversial in its acceptability. While selected womanist activists believe a woman is unjustly treated and subjugated because she is defenseless in a society which upholds arbitrary laws, others agree otherwise that men and women are not created the same, that nature has biologically defined roles for each sex and one sex certainly is more gifted in some areas than

another. Therefore to say a woman is dehumanized because she performs dutiful functions would be to refute the idea that men and women have different sex- anatomies. It can be readily seen that the African womanist theorists have disagreed among themselves. While one group see discrimination of women, the other sees only the performance of legally, religiously and socially assigned roles of women.

Motherism as an African feminist theory sees the relationship of a woman in terms of reproduction and child-care. The relationship in the family and duties of mother in the home is the main focus of this theory.

Most Africans see the child's up-bringing as the sole responsibility of the woman (no matter how highly or lowly positioned she could be). The man is not, or must not be charged with changing the babies' napkin or even simply baby-sitting the child for a few minutes as the woman is already attending to some womanish chores. Here, too, involves two different schools of thought. The first believes that women should not be solely charged, with the responsibility of child care, that the men should equally be involved since they too are parents. Moreover they do not see any biological inhibitions in bringing up and caring for the child. The second group sees no part a man can play since women are biologically endowed with certain characteristic such as breast milk. They see the women having an edge over the men by virtue of carrying the child in their womb for nine months. This alone, according to them brings and strengthens the ties between mother and child closeness.

Acholonu who is the loudest voice of the Afro-centric feminism called motherism believes that women are not marginalized by

men as claimed by western writers and some African feminists. According to her, western writers often fail to recognize that the African society is made up of diverse cultures within its diverse regions. What is practiced by one region could be the opposite in another. To buttress this she says:

It is difficult if not impossible to make generalizations about the woman's place in Africa. This is because African ethnic groups or cultural groups are indeed nations unto themselves, each possessing its own traditions and customs which set it apart from the rest (2).

Sudarkasa underscores Acholonu's point when he asserts that:

I have not heard of any indigenous African society in which differential value was attached to the labour of women and men working in the same line or in which women and men were differentially rewarded for the products of their labour (42).

Acholonu argues strongly that what affects development in African society is not gender related but economic power. She sums up that a rich and educated woman who is outspoken, hardworking and fearless can hardly be looked down upon by any member of the society. The question is what is the population of the group so described by Acholonu? Again how much influence do they exert on their societies and does the existence of this group change the fact of the marginalization of women? The answer is obvious.

One issue that is clear from the foregoing is that there is no common approach to the women question in our immediate society. Unlike the picture painted through the various theories of

feminism as conceived in the western world where the focus is on liberation but methods differ, our scholars here are yet to agree on one focus. The general outcry is that feminism as conceived by the western world is alien hence the reluctance to embrace it. Even though similarities can be found between the cultural feminism concept and the prominent African theories, African feminist scholars are very reluctant to project these similarities.

Perhaps it is this issue of disagreement on a singular focus that Tess Onwueme identified as the causal agent. It would seem like Onwueme has attributed this disagreement to some misconceptions. In her plays, *Go Tell It To Women* and *The Reign of Wazobia*, the problem militating against the emancipation of women is discovered among women themselves. While some chose to earnestly fight for their right, others were ready to betray the effort and pitch camp with the "enemy." The paper shall go further to show how women have plotted their own downfall because of their inner dichotomies. Of course, this may explain why African feminist writers are yet to curb this disagreement and focus on one development theory in a bid to liberate and emancipate women. We say this because we believe that the ranglings may truly have arisen out of the lack of understanding of the individuals of the concept of the women question in Africa and Nigeria.

Tess Onwueme's Worldview As Shown In Her Plays.

Commenting on the position of female writers, Mabel Evwierhoma posits that:

the female dramatist as a member of the society, then, has the choice of portraying her women to suit her authorial goals. She has also the prerogative of making her women conform to the active radical

group or present her as docile and submissive (2)

Because Tess sympathizes with the women, she presents them in her works as been more forceful than their male counterpart and self-actualizing even though we find out that in reality there is no sex that can claim utmost total superiority over another. It is typical of writers who identify with a particular sect. Mabel quoting Home says:

A close look at the various image of African womanhood...recalls that to considerable extent depictions of African women in literature by African women writers differ from the images presented by their male counterparts (26).

Tess Onwueme's line of discourse in most of her plays has always been the battle engaged by women in their bid to actualize empowerment. They are consistently faced with the antagonistic element either in form of the ever militant males or females who simply antagonize the struggling female groups and rather pledge allegiance to the male-friendly dictates. This they do either not out of pure hatred among themselves but more out of limited understanding, sheer stubbornness or out of underserved trust more for the men than the women.

It is widely known in Nigerian that prior to the era of the diffusion of western ideas to Africa some African women were known for their gallant escapades in economic, political, social and religions fronts. They featured as decision makers and that meant they were consulted before important decisions were taken. Such women were Queen Amina of Zaria, the Omu of western Nigeria, Iyaloja of the Yoruba regions etc. We also have the legends of Moremi, Inikpi and the Queen of Zauzau. These women

changed the histories of their people in different ways. It is interesting to know that these women operated successfully before the Europeans set their foot on African soil.

Tess Onwueme in the two plays under analysis seems to be supportive of these cultural women who are seen and perceived as not "educated enough to understand true empowerment. That is not to say that Tess detests the western idea of feminism, No! Rather she advocates a better architectural design to suit the cultural woman and not that total dependence on the western approach. This ideology is strongly felt in, *Go Tell It to Women*, The play is about two different classes of women; the modern and the traditional woman. The modern woman is represented in the play by Ruth and Daisy who have other females around them who equally pledge fellowship to their struggle. The traditional woman is represented by the women of Idu, championed by Adaku, Yemoja and Sherifat who in turn represent the opposing force of the rural woman.

In the play, some city women visit Idu, a rural community to incorporate the rural women into the Better Life Programme they have planned for them (rural women). Initially, the urban women faced a stiff opposition but are later accepted by the rural folks. To strengthen their acceptance of the project between the Idu women and their city counterparts, the urban women asked the rural women to send some representatives to accompany them to the city for further logistics. Yemoja is chosen to follow the urban leaders who are Ruth and Daisy. In the city, Yemoja is joined by Sherifat; Daisy's mother-in-law. To their own dismay, both rural women are ill-treated. They realize that the progressive ideas which the urban women preached in the village with so much reverence, the issues of ideal matrimony, respect for culture and tradition

and motherhood were all false. The two rural women discover that the rural women's obsession and preaching about feminism and emancipation are all without substance as they themselves do not have normal domestic lives. For example, Daisy is having a lesbian relationship with Ruth, which according to the rural woman's perception is an abuse to womanity at large. Again, Daisy also refuses to take proper care of her daughter, Bose (also seen as anti-motherism). She behaves unruly to Okei, who is her husband. The rural woman sees no honour in unruly behaviour as being a characteristic of emancipation. Consequently, the Better life programme becomes threatened as the rural women come to realize that their urban counterparts do not really have their interests at heart. They demand for a life of their own since their experiences with the urban folk in the city made them understand what true empowerment is. The result is that the rural women insist on negotiating their own development themselves, believing in themselves as capable beings who will bring change to their region.

In *The Reign of Wazobia*, a female regent exercises her political power and control and in the course decanters her male subjects in the land's affairs thereby making them observers and not participants in the government of the land. Traditionally a regent, who is usually a female, is expected to rule only for three seasons in between the passing-on of a preceding King and the enthronement of a new one. However, after the three seasons, Wazobia, (the regent in the play) refuses to quit the throne. The blatant 'abuse' of power of course does not go down well with all the men of the land and even some of the women. This sets the background for the conflict that ensues.

In her reign, Wazobia also attempts to change those aspects

of the Ilaa tradition that oppress the woman. Among them are the widowhood rights, arbitrary beating of wives by husbands and the strictly outlined domestic chores reserved exclusively for women. Traditionally, the feeding of the king by his wives is on rotational bases. She would rather have a situation where the women cook separately and such meals be shared among all women who eat freely. According to Wazobia change should be encouraged and not be fought for. In as much as Wazobia seeks for the equality of both sexes, she also demands for the co-operation among these sexes.

Her exercise of this power arouse fear in the men but Wazobia remains indifferent to their fears. In spite of the opposition she faces, she stands firm partly because of the support her fellow women accord her and partly because she believes in her course. Finally when the men decided to dethrone her through force, they were met and defeated by her female supporters.

The African Version Of The Feminist Struggle

Most people mistake emancipation programmes for rebellious activities. To them a woman who struggles to free herself from the claws of slavery is actually initiating a rebellion. They believe the woman intends to sabotage the government of the male ruling class. It is possible to affirm that such impressions created on their minds is actually created by some so-called feminists like the characters of Ruth and Daisy in Tess Onwueme's *Go Tell It To Women*, who seek earnestly to replace the African values with European structures and tradition. This hurried endorsement of foreign values adapted by these two city women seriously conflicts with African culture. For instance, in African tradition, members of the same sex are not even envisaged or imagined to have a

sexual relationship with each other. The two women's mode of operation in the feminist movement is actually called to question. The two characters in the fictional world of *Go Tell It to Women* are the main impediments to their development project.

Another point which can be observed is the fact that feminist writers in Africa are yet to come to terms and agree that the woman is truly oppressed and therefore needs empowerment and liberation. This lack of belief is made manifest in the portrayal of the city women who display unacceptable attitudes towards their husbands to their rural counterpart's horror. The rural women also condemn the attitude of the urban women claiming that they too, without the city women and their foreign ideas, can be agents of change in their own regions thereby setting the women of Idu against each other. It is a case of a house divided among itself. Again as seen in the reign of Wazobia the men interpret emancipation of women differently. For example Idehen, a male respecter of patriarchal culture asks; . . . "Emancipation from lying below to lying on top!!!" (27)

Judging from this statement, it is clear that the men feel the women simply want to cease being wives who should be submissive to become dominant in affairs that hitherto were the responsibilities of the men. The statement above suggests a change in the control of sexual behavior from the men by the women.

In the two texts given as references, Tess is addressing the conflict between indigenous culture and foreign culture on African soil. Feminism in Africa is contradicted by writers and activists who are yet to ascertain the reality of the standard for judging the disempowerment of the African woman. Until the question is unanimously answered the African feminism issue will remain multifocal. For example, in identifying with these different

standards of judgment Mabel quoting Philomena C. steady says:

The most important factors with regard to the woman traditional society is her role as mother and the centrality of this role as a whole ... the importance of motherhood and the evaluation of the child bearing capacity by African women is probably the most fundamental difference between the African women and her western counterpart in their common struggle to end discrimination against women (25)

Women; Their Own Worst Enemies- The Reign of Wazobia, Wazobia, the heroine, ascends the throne as the regent king and the women are the first to complain. One of them, Bia expresses doubt in the capacity of women to rule the society. She sees the woman as a weak vessel and stresses the fact that a woman needs a man to function properly She says; "A woman without a husband is like piddling without wrap which feast the eyes but which no one longs to have" (17).

This declaration is culturally triggered based on the motherist oriented theory as practiced in Africa. To further confirm the assertion, the regent king Wazobia soon after her ascension to the throne; "can no longer dress as a woman when she is to appear in public places" (17)

Perhaps this is to acknowledge that womanity or femininity is considered docile and submissive and that masculinity is best identified with rulership. Again to show that women betray themselves, Anehe, a female character in the play strongly opposes the governance of the community by a female. Ironically, she is the first to dramatize or rather feign submission when Wazobia

enters. This act is considered betrayal. Another character that is equally female is the Omu. She represent old " upholders" of the rigid traditional laws (even though she is an old female). She vehemently refuses "to be party to the death of tradition"(17). Just because Wazobia questions why widows must be subjected to the torture of incessant funeral rites that men are free of? This is informed by the fact that the Omu demanded that the women leave the palace to go and prepare for the rituals that mourn the dead king.

It is also very significant to note that Anehe who is also a female character in the play is willing to be used to bring Wazobia, a fellow woman, down. She was to be used as the means by the men. As a dramatic irony, Iyase, a male, who wants to use Anehe cautions, "be careful. You know, your fellow women can easily betray you (46). He is about to send her to go and poison the food meant for Wazobia. In *Go Tell it To Women* Ruth and Daisy, instead of using the bottom-up strategy in communicating development they used top - bottom (27). That is to say they had planned the programme for the rural women in the city only to come and intimate the rural women into the better life programme. This singular act is interpreted as saying that the rural women, being mostly illiterates, are incapable of reasoning, so development plan should be fashioned for them. Instead of being active participants, Ruth and Daisy prefer the rural women to remain passive. Their vision for the women in the play is tantamount to bringing a serious decay and decadence in the hitherto, culturally controlled environment. At the end of the play the two city women fail, the rural women prefer to communicate development by herself

The Way Forward

It will be relevant at this juncture to make reference to western theories and their approaches as compared to the incoherent nature of their African counterpart. The radical liberal, socialist, cultural and ecumenism theories of the West have a common focal point'

- " That the woman is disempowered and oppressed.
- " That the woman needs empowerment and emancipation.
- " And that the support for equality for men and women in politics, economics, religions and socio- cultural sphere is absolutely necessary

The western feminist theories all agree that women are oppressed simply because of their sex and this is based on the dominant ideology of patriarchy. This unanimous agreement is not countered or challenged by any theory that doubts the oppression of women in advanced western society.

Unlike the African feminist group who have not yet identified a uniform focus on the issue of the women question. Africans have not yet identified the fact that the African woman needs liberation. They seem to resign to fate and the biological element that create an illusion on the mind of the people; why the division of sex by God in the first place? The cohesiveness of the western approaches is the reason they are advanced in the promotion of a better life for their women. Recently a group of British women protested the sign post that reads "slow, men at work" they considered the term "men" as used to represent humanity as sexually-biased. They preferred, 'people at work'; because there is a common agreement in western feminism that the men & women are first prone and should be so treated.

This paper strongly suggests that our African feminist scholars

necessarily have to develop a theory or theories that would not generate argument within the cycle, that when a one focal approach is accepted, the cause would be better achieved and collectively too. After all it is only when a problem is identified that a solution proffered for it becomes workable. It is this problem that has put African feminism at a stand still. In their present states, motherism and womanism can not be separated from the traditional practices that promote subjugation of women. The danger inherent in our Afrocentric feminism is that it may bring us round a full circle where we started questioning culture and tradition in respect to women.

Conclusion

The idea that African feminism has not been vibrant is a problem that really has to be looked into. The nature of African society is undisputably that of a multiethnic setting where people have different beliefs and cultures. Nevertheless the need for a unifocal struggle for the emancipation of women cannot be overemphasized. The motherist however argues that the greatest power of the woman is her reproductive power and that any attempt to reduce from it would indeed amount to disempowerment. This is a position that is clearly against one of the theories of feminism in the developed world. The African feminist activists and scholars can salvage the situation through a refined intra-cultural projection of the woman question, not necessarily assimilating the western idea of these concepts on African soil like Ajie in the play said:

...Our women have always had freedom...freedom to do anything within the norms and values of our world; I do to see anything in this inventing modern

ways to run the family in a world they have already set adrift (381).

The 'norms and values' referred to in Ajie's speech have been the greatest undoing of the African woman as they are all embedded in the tradition.

The African feminists therefore should fashion out programmes and direct their theories toward lifting up the woman from her already pitiable position. The opposite can however be encouraged if they truly believe that our theories of motherism and womanism can best achieve it. To my mind as things are now, it appears like we are tacitly supporting the cultural practices that hold women in bondage.

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