

# **Feminist Vision and Societal Transformation in Femi Osofisan's Morountodun and Nwabueze's the Dragon's Funeral**

By

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## **Abstract**

With special reference to Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*, this paper examines the idea of feminism and the role of women in transforming the Nigerian society. It focuses on the need to surmount some cultural assumptions that have little or no tolerance for women's involvement in nation-building. Efforts made by women to free themselves from these conditions are seen as outrageous and even offensive to conventional norms. Through a critical analysis of Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*, the paper reveals that the playwright projects women and other male feminist apologists in the plays in a positive light, by giving them significant roles which justify them as agents of social change and instruments of honour in the African society. Therefore, the paper concludes that the Nigerian society can benefit from women's emancipation, since they have proven over time to be worthy tools of positive societal transformation.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Snail-Sense Feminism, Social Change, Societal Transformation, Women.

## **Introduction**

In spite of substantial progress recorded so far through feminist activism, women in Africa have continually been undermined and victimized sexually, physically, emotionally and otherwise by men. More troubling is the reality that African

traditions – which are patriarchal in nature – wholly place women under men’s control.

Under the heavy dictates of the patriarch therefore, the woman is coerced into certain traditional practices that are performed at different stages in her life. They include, though not limited to: rules on virginity, bridal fattening, post-natal practices, women’s veiling and seclusion, widowhood rites and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) (Amaefula “Constructing Femininity” 42).

Ohaeto defines patriarchy as “a system that extols male authority, domination and supremacy over the female, in all spheres of human endeavour” (146). It is commonplace in Nigeria that boys are excluded from trainings in domestic spaces, particularly in the kitchen. Emphasis is placed on a girl-child who is exposed to gendered roles such as sweeping, cleaning and cooking with a view to preparing her to be a good wife in the future; to respect her future husband and his family; and serve as a helper to him. These beliefs are designed to suit the hegemonic interests of African men to the detriment of women. Most of these practices are cloaked in the traditional religion, Christianity and Islamic teachings and practices, in the guise of lessons on morality. Ohaeto, recounting the teachings of Apostle Paul in 1st Corinthians, states that “...for the man is not of the woman but the woman of the man.” Neither was the woman created for the woman but the woman for the man” (qtd. in Oguejiofor O. and Oguejiofor N. 8).

These teachings have inspired ceaseless oppressions of women in Nigeria. The various forms of these oppressions include: subjugation, sex abuse, exploitation, sexism, chauvinism, political injustice, girl-child marriage, domestic violence against women, women trafficking and kidnapping, marital rape, deprivations of various rights and so on. It is based on this background that the paper examines the unsung roles of women in bringing social change in Nigeria, using Emeka Nwabueze’s *The Dragon’s Funeral* and Femi Osofisan’s *Morountodun*.

### **The Idea of Feminism**

Feminism is a branch of social theory, which symbolizes the struggle for the participation of women in a patriarchal world being dominated by men. In the African society, feminism suffers opposition in culture itself due to the belief that, female emancipation and empowerment would undermine the essence of manhood as well as liberate women from their traditional roles both at home and the society at large. Little wonder Ojo-Ade describes feminism as “an accidental phenomenon that is

gradually creeping into the forbidden land of Africa” (158).

Some female African writers prefer to be referred to as motherists or womanists, instead of feminists. This is because feminism is believed to have ruined many homes. Amaefula associates female writers’ denial of feminism with “the successful intimidation of African women by men over issues of women’s liberation and feminism” (44). In corroboration, Ogundipe-Leslie remarks that:

Male ridicule, aggression and backlash have resulted in making women apologetic and have given the term ‘feminist’ a bad name. Yet nothing could be more feminist than the writings of these women writers in their concern for and deep understanding of the experiences and fate of women in society (qtd. in Amaefula 46).

Today, the feminist theories and movements advocate some patterns of lifestyles, activities and modes of living that a woman should imbibe. In traditional African societies, women were regarded as inferior, and treated as housewives (almost servants). They did all the domestic works and must always follow the dictates of their husbands, without asking questions. This status of women in Africa contributed immensely to the evolution of female feminist writers who are determined to reposition the portrait of women in literature.

Before the arrival of these female writers, their male counterparts had been presenting female characters as housewives, docile mothers, whores, and feeble characters who were entirely dependent on men. Such writers as Meja Nwangi’s in *Going down the River Road* and Chinua Achebe’s in his *Things Fall Apart*, champion the patriarchal presentation of women in literary texts. For instance, *Things Fall Apart* exalts Okonkwo as an ideal man who significantly differs from Unoko, his father to whom the novelist attributes weakness. In the novel, weakness is emphatically presented as an exclusive quality of women. It is therefore berated in the male characters of Unoko and Ikemefuna.

However, when female writers emerged, things started changing. Though not all the female writers are feminists, each writer shows different ways of portraying women as a being with a mind of her own. These writers face challenges, with all courage, bravery, and a daring heart. These positive portraits of women are in tandem with Lenin’s view that, “we cannot go forward without women” (qtd. in Anyachonkeya144). He emphasizes women as the backbone of any successful man. At this juncture, it is instructive to note that although women had existed in the world as long as men, they are regarded as inferior.

Again, in most cases, women are regarded as second class to men. They are not

even recognized in some cases. In the Christian religion for example, women are admonished to be submissive to their husbands; doing only that which their husbands approve of. They must be very obedient and submissive; they must obey their husbands at all times and never refuse them anything, even if it is not really convenient for them. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so should wives be to their own husbands, in everything (Ephesians 5. 24).

The feminist literary theory is aimed at lifting women out of the gender repression to which they have been conditioned by repressive social structures – patriarchy. According to Seldom and Widdowson, there are basically three waves in the development of the feminist theory: the first stage developed in the early 19th century. In this phase, women fought for equal contract and property rights. This period was dominated by writers like Olive Schureiner, Elizabeth Robins, Dorothy Richardson, Winifred Holtby, among others. However, paramount in this literary scene were writers like Jane Austen, George Eliot and, most especially, Virginia Woolf. Woolf's general contribution to feminism is her postulation that gender identity is socially constructed and can be challenged and transformed. She calls on women to be interested in themselves, and their environment and should write as women and for women. Woolf projects women, their fiction and works generally. She challenges women to take up writing, not just fiction, but also history, criticism and essays.

The second phase which emerged in the 1960s was flooded with radical writers whose thematic foci shifted to politics. This wave focused on the workplace, sexuality, family and reproductive rights. Marxist feminism was a powerful stand of the second stage in Britain, in particular. The writers of this period include Kate Millett, Cora Kaplan, Helene Cixous and Elaine Showalter, who outlines a literary history of women writers and promotes both a feminist critique and gynocriticism. The first category (feminist critics) presents the woman as a social critic. It is concerned with the woman as a reader that focuses mainly on interpreting male-authored literary works; questioning them and their ideological underpinnings. The female critics are equipped to investigate and interrogate the images of women projected by male writers, with a view to ascertaining its coherence with reality.

On the other hand, the third wave started in the 1990s till the present period. The period marks the serious struggle for the 'micro-politics' of gender equality. Feminism, as an ideology, found a fertile ground in Africa and provided the opportunity of re-evaluating attitudes about women in Africa. African Feminism is a

move away from Western feminism. It is “accommodationist” both men and women as partners in the society (Amaefula 291). Feminism in Africa has undergone a lot of metamorphoses and assumed variegated forms and nomenclatures such as feminism, womanism, motherism, femalism, sexism, stiwanism, etc. With regards to the womanist theory, Kolawole, states thus:

Womanism is not a solipsistic theory but one that recognizes and responds to the yearnings of many women who have problems with appropriating feminism in spite of the diversities. It increases black women’s options of self-conceptualization (42).

However, according to Alice Walker, Womanism means mature, responsible, courageous Africa today, especially Nigeria, women have gone into professions that were once regarded as exclusive for men, unlike the earlier period when the literary scene was dominated for decades by male writers such as Amos Tutola, Chinua Achebe and many others. Until Flora Nwapa made a sudden feminist breakthrough in Nigerian fiction, feminism was viewed from various angles. For example, when examined from the view of religion, it preaches gender equality which is considered to be unnatural, judging from the fact that God pronounced man as head over his wife – women are expected to be subservient to men. It is therefore expedient to state here that feminist advocacy for all the rights of women was earlier focused on the middle class white women from Western Europe and North America until Sojourner Truth’s speech to American feminists altered and prompted other women of other races to propose an “alternative” feminism – the Womanist theory.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Akachi Ezeigbo’s feminist model – Snail Sense Feminism – is employed in the analyses of the strategies adopted by women in their collective struggle for liberation and equality. According to Ezeigbo, Snail Sense Feminism is a research-based feminist model that seeks to enhance “the condition of the Nigerian women”, examine “their reactions and responses to socio-cultural and political forces that impacted and are still impacting on their lives in the past and contemporary times” (25). The theory proposes Nigerian women’s application of certain qualities they share with the snail to overcome obstacles militating against their progress. To Ezeigbo, the snail is: “resilient, sensitive and dogged and is able to successfully climb over boulders and dangerous objects while carrying its house (the shell) on its back” (27). Ezeigbo’s indigenous model of women liberation justifies Sofola’s

opinion that “there are enough paradigms within Nigeria and African culture, capable of emancipating Nigerian Women” (14). What feminist criticism and theory in Nigeria have thus established and exposed is what is regarded as men’s construction of woman as well as the concretization of the effort women writers and intellectuals to reconstruct this misconception.

### **The Synopsis of Femi Osofisan’s Morountodun**

Morountodun is a play written by Femi Osofisan which reflects the 1965 Agbekoya uprising when the poor peasants revolted against the oppressive government. The playwright, through a flashback, brought past events into the present. He evaluates the contribution of women in nation-building and peace keeping. The playwright adopted the style of play-within-play in advancing the plot. For instance, the play started with the presentation of theatrical performance, but in the course of the presentation, there is an interruption by Titubi and her group, representing the rich class, which then unfolds the rest of the action.

The play having a historical background is structured in a way that, events of the past shuffle into the present to create a fantastic whole. As Titubi and her group come to disrupt the performance, which is their strategy to stop the protesters (because they expect the protesters to sell out their ideas to the masses who, after watching the performance, will support them). She discovers another way of achieving this after her interaction with the Deputy Superintendent who is fishing out their leader. To achieve this, Titubi volunteers to disguise herself a prisoner so that when Marshal’s men will storm the prison house, she would be rescued as one of the prisoners. The overall aim of this is to find her way to the camp of the revolutionaries, so as to know their secret, and consequently weaken them, just as Moremi did to the Igbo.

Unfortunately, when Titubi makes her way to the camp of the peasants, disguised as a prisoner, she discovers that the prisoners are fighting a just cause. Though she succeeds in arresting their leader (Marshal), she rather requests for negotiation between the two parties to the surprise of the Deputy Superintendent and her own mother, AlhajaKabirat. Having stayed with the peasants, Titubi witnesses their suffering and identifies with their quest for fair play. For her, Moremi, her role model, fought a just cause, but in her own case, she finds out that the state is not always right as evident in the case of the exploitation of the poor farmers who pay more tax than they earn.

## **Women as Agents of Change in Femi Osofisan's Morountodun**

Through this play, the playwright ascribes women with the heroic quality traditionally reserved for men. Unlike most African and Nigerian playwrights, Osofisan projects some good and heroic qualities and attributes of the African women in drama. The women of Osofisan's *Morountodun* in the adventure and the quest for social change could be likened to the zealous and brave character of Ogwoma of Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*. On the other hand, the sensitivity and influence of Alhaja Kabirat can also be likened to that of Liza, the American-trained medical doctor in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. The influence and power of the women to surmount any obstacle confronting them is the bottom line of the playwright's focus on the women. For example, Alhaja Kabirat is not portrayed as a docile woman but as an all-powerful and influential modern-day woman who can stop at nothing to achieve what she wants.

Beyond being ambitious and active in the play, the character of Alhaja Kabirat stood out from the beginning to the end. She is all-powerful, influential, endearing and believes that money solves all problems. She is more of a catalyst as she prides herself with her worth and personality without actively involving herself in the struggle and fight. Osofisan presents her as a female character whose name commands respect. In her conversation with the Deputy Superintendent, the audience notice how authoritative and commanding she is with even the government representatives, thus:

Superintendent: You amuse me. I come in and what do I see? An infiltration into a maximum security prison. At a moment like this! Madam, I don't care how you got here, but I'm certainly going to keep you at least till the operation has taken off. After that, we may talk.

Alhaja: You don't mean it, young man. Even if you are a dozen Salamis together, you wouldn't thrust your fingers in fire.

Superintendent: My mission is what you believed when you volunteered?

Alhaja: Does he ... Does he know who I am at all? (Osofisan 23).

The dialogue above is designed to register her personality and importance in the play. Osofisan presents the attributes of the old and influential women of substance in the character of Alhaja, while he presents the adventurous and fame-seeking syndrome of the new generation in the character of Titubi. Titubi assumes the personality of Queen Amina of Zaria, the legendary symbol of Moremi of Ife and attributes of the late Mrs Fumilayo Ramsome Kuti. The confidence and courage

being exerted by both mother and daughter cannot be overemphasized so far as women empowerment in social and political matters is concerned.

Interestingly, Osofisan also created a very strong, determined and courageous male character in the personality of Marshal who masterminds all the attacks of the peasants as the head of the revolting farmers. However, in spite his strong will, determination and the burning desire to fight even in the face of death, the playwright empowers a female character to permeate, soften and consequently lure him to the government. The male characters are designed with different flaws or foibles. Men who are supposed to be respected in the society were decked with fickle and corrupt minds. The character of Alhaji Braimoh and Lawyer Isaac were used to portray the weakness of men, when it comes to material things. Even though Baba is strategic, wise and patient, his character is also shown to be a naïve and easily convinced individual who easily agrees for negotiation without knowing the ability of the opposition group.

The symbol of Moremi was Titubi's driving force. Having been inspired by the legendary story of Moremi, she decides to create her own history and fame. This fact is clearly evident in her conversation with Superintendent:

Titubi: (Turning sharply) Tell me, Salami. You don't really believe it. Do you? You don't believe she existed.

Superintendent: who?

Titubi: Moremi (26).

In a traditional African society, a woman's worth is mostly measured in the bedroom and kitchen. She is an individual who is always around the house to care for children, prepare meals and take care of the house. Women are not known to be adventurous or to engage in wars and other social activities, socially perceived as masculine. They are rather considered subordinates and there are hardly situations where women are on top of the management of economic affairs. However, Osofisan projects women that are capable of engaging in dangerous adventures and achieving social change. The playwright presents women as the ruling force in the play, thus:

Titubi: Go on, what are you waiting for? Snap them on (laughs strutting) how many markets do you know in this town, You who call yourself Salami. Ehn, or are you too busy salaaming to look around you? This town is one long chain of market, a roaring world of tough fearless women. And do you know whose name, all alone, rules over those women? Do you know or shall I tell you? If I open my mouth and



utter one single any of pain, one call for help, now, the entire city will be in cinders this time tomorrow. You hear? You understand; salamund mouth? Hurry up and snap your handcuffs (Osofisan 12).

This clearly shows that women are the pioneers of events in the environment of the play. Thus, Titubi's engagements bring to an end the war between the government and the farmers. This thereby makes it clear that women can do more than what the African society traditionally expects of them. Osofisan, through the character of Titubi, showcases that women are potent tools for nation-building. He portrays women as the ruling force of a society. Using the historical story of Moremi, Osofisan presents women as bold, fearless entities who can stand their grounds, even when the goods and men had trembled.

Through the symbol of Moremi which Titubi represents, Osofisan presents a female character through whose efforts and commitments change is brought to the people and society at large. Other female characters in different plays who champion the cause of social change in their society include: Ogwoma in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*; Ebiere in J.P. Clark's *Song of a Goat* and Edewede Julie Okoh's *Edewede*. These women, like Titubi, challenge the age-long traditional practices of their contemporary society by championing the cause of women and sensitizing other women on the need to rise to face and fight the challenges that obstruct their progress in particular and the growth of the society in general.

Having explored female activism in the national development of any society through the efforts and roles played by female characters in plays, this paper has been centered on select women whose efforts and courage brought about a societal change. Significantly, in the play under study, the playwright tries to balance male and female co-existence in the society. Without destroying traditions, the playwright reconstructs our view of women as always weak or obedient by presenting determined, strong-willing and courageous women.

### **Synopsis of Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral***

*The Dragon's Funeral* is Emeka Nwabueze's second attempt in dramatizing aspects of Igbo colonial experience. The first is his: *When the Arrow Rebounds*, which is a dramatic recreation of Achebe's *Arrow of God* – a novel of the Igbo colonial experience and reality. *The Dragon's Funeral* is event-specific, unlike *When the Arrow Rebounds* which seems to gauge the Igbo man's feeling about the effect of colonialism generally. *The Dragon's Funeral* is built around the popular Aba women's

riot of 1929. It depicts how the idea of women taxation was violently rebuffed by the Aba women hitherto regarded by the colonial authority as weak and harmless. In retelling the story dramatically, Nwabueze seems to take principally the bone of the event, leaving behind the flesh. He emphasizes the economic imperative of colonialism that necessitated the notion of women's taxation as well as the usage of one of the imperial tools, the Warrant Chief.

### **Women as Agents of Social Change in Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral***

In the first movement, the playwright dramatizes the trial of Chief Okeugo by the colonial court for purportedly fueling the Aba women's riot.

Judge: Chief Ahamefula Okeugo, you been given a fair trial and found guilty. Having clearly examined the wealth of evidence before it, this court is satisfied that your action was the fuel needed by those recalcitrant women of Aba to ignite the crisis. Your ultimate aim was to embarrass the British administration. (Pause). The evidence before this court reveals that you are a strong advocate of the views of Chief Etuk Eto, the recalcitrant village head of Ukam in Opobo Division who, in 1921, told a visiting British officer, in voice ladden with conviction and lachrymose...

Voice: in plain words we are dissatisfied with British rule and we want the government to leave us alone. Let these visitors leave us to govern the country as we deem fit, so that such groups like Ekpo will resume their status among our people (Nwabueze 11).

In the second movement, the women leader, Adaugo Nwayeruwa mobilizes the women to challenge and resist women taxation in Osisioma land.

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 hat must be dissipated for the next meal to come. Shall we allow ourselves to be treated like ash?

Women: No!! (Nwabueze 19).

The women's insistence on protest is fuelled by the pathetic economic, political and social status of the Nigerian woman. In Nigeria, women lose certain rights during matrimony. This is because the norm positions women in the kitchen and other domestic spaces. Many writers and playwrights present the character of women in their works as they are perceived by the society. The likes of Chinua

Achebe, John-pepper Clark, Amos Tutuola and many others would always portray women as weak, only good in the kitchen, dancers, gossips and other feminine attributes which patriarchy has imposed on African femininity. They never present women who are enterprising, endearing, adventurous and self-willed. They rather portray women who only go to farm, cook in the kitchen and stay around the home to take care of their children. This is seen from the point of view of Okonkwo's wives in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and Ezeulu's in *Arrow of God*. Women in both novels are meant to stay and listen to the dictates of their husbands, who rather see them as a commodity to be acquired.

Prior to this time, the Nigerian literary world had been dominated by male chauvinist writers, until the likes of Tess Onwueme, Julie Okoh, Zulu Sofola, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Akachi Ezeigbo, Femi Osofisan, Emeka Nwabueze and the likes. The emergence of these writers and playwrights spotlighted women's roles in the development of any society, which must be transformed from some of its archaic practices and negative views of the Nigerian women.

Emeka Nwabueze in his play text presents the character of women whose feminist struggle is Africana-womamist-centred. This play which examines the remote factors that triggered the Aba woman's Riot in 1929 is used to x-ray and re-construct the societal view of the Nigerian women in matters of social, economic, and political influence of some notable Nigerian women or groups. Nwabueze tactfully examines the right approach and attitudes African women should adopt in a patriarchal family unit, recommending total submissiveness for women, using the character of Ikodie to teach the obeisance of women to cultural and religious laws, thus:

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 (Nwabueze 51).

The character of Ikodie aligns with Ezeigbo's model, Snail Sense Feminism. The men in Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* are not at home with the women's meetings, but because the meeting has not stopped any of the village women in the discharge of their primary duties as wives and mothers, the men do not stop them. More so, Adaugo, the women's leader, makes it clear to them that their real enemy is not the men but unfair taxation imposed on them:

Adaugo: Now, I want to make one thing clear to all of you. Once we start, there is no going back. Our aim is not to fight our husbands. Our aim is not

to confront men unnecessarily, even if they are strangers, our aim is not to show that we are indispensable to men. In executing our action, we should ensure that we don't fail in our duties as wives, as daughters, mothers, as the epitome of peace in our community. Our aim is to fight injustice, to fight for our right, to fight for our children. As women, we have to do what we feel is right, even if men try to stop us (Nwabueze 24).

Adaugo's statement forms the manifesto and the guiding principle of the women, if they must succeed: they coordinate protests with traditional duties of wives and mothers, even in the face of confrontation by their husbands:

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. I even swore not to be part of it. But after listening to the women who know better than me, my foolishness began to stare me in the face (53).

It is instructive to note that Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* adopts some elements of Marxism by making the lower class women rise in arms to overthrow a bourgeois establishment. This is seen from Adaugo's speech at the start of the revolution, thus:

Adaugo: Women of Ngwaland, shall we sit down and see a stranger poke his fingers in our eyes?

Women: (In unison) No!!

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

With this speech, Adaugo succeeds in igniting in the women the requisite revolutionary flame to fight for their rights. The co-operation and determination of the women to surmount their obstacles culminate in the transformation of the society of the play-text. These actions could be likened to Julie Okoh's *Edewede*, where women embarked on sex strike until they achieve their goals. Finally, it is imperative to note that the women led by Adaugo Nwayeruwa are agents of social change within the context of the text, *The Dragon's Funeral*, even though their rebellion is borne out of the absence of effective male leadership.

## **The Feminist Vision in Osofisan's Morountodun and Nwabueze's The Dragon's Funeral**

The evolution of human society has seen the birth and growth of many ideologies. These include: the Bourgeois, Marxist, Totalitarian and Feminist ideologies. Feminism is a phenomenon of the 20th century, although its roots could be traced to 18th century Europe. Feminism, as an ideology, insists that the human society should recognize women as equals of men. The movement emerged as a response to oppression and unjust laws and attitudes towards women. Those laws ensure that women remain in subservient, dependent and marginalized positions, permanently relegating them to the background. With regard to the feminist vision in the play under study, this researcher concentrates on the different modes and the approaches the dramatist adopts to portray female characters in their plays. Osofisan, in his *Morountodun*, portrays women as individuals who are empowered socially, economically and politically. Alhaja Kabirat is seen as an all-important, powerful and famous woman in the society. Her fame among the market women knows no bounds. She is also politically-inclined; hence, her involvement in the war between the peasant farmers and government. Alhaja's economic, political and social power empowered her to dictate what happens with the superintendent, thus:

Alhaja: My own daughter!

Superintendent: I'm willing to believe you, AlhajaKabirat.

Alhaja: What is she doing here?

Superintendent: I'm more interested in what you are doing here, Madam.

Alhaja: You are going to pay for this, Salami, you are going to pay so much that you will regret the day you joined the Force (Osofisan 79).

On the other hand, Nwabueze, in his play *The Dragon's Funeral*, presents the character of rural women who are undermined and marginalized in the patriarchal society. These women fight for social recognition and revolt against the idea of being taxed by the colonial masters. The protagonists of the two plays under focus are women. While Osofisan presents his protagonist as a fearless adventurer, Nwabueze presents his protagonist – Adaugo Nwanyeruwa – as a fearless but dutiful mouth-piece of the revolting women in Osisioma land. She encourages the women to fight to finish:

Adaugo: My sisters, our strength lies in our determination to fight together and to die together if the need arises. Our men have grown afraid of fighting. It is our duty to show (the colonial masters) 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 (Nwabueze 21).

Regardless of Osisioma women's resolve to fight injustice, they still obey and respect their husbands as well as carry out their duties as wives and mothers. This researcher classifies the vision as Africana-Womanist.

On the other hand, the feminist view in Osofian's *Morountodun* is more liberal than Africana-womanist. The two female characters in Osofisan's *Morountodun* are either a divorcee or a single mother, and her daughter who is yet to marry. In contrast, the female characters in Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral* are of a reverse order. The women in the play are all married with children, and are seen as obedient and submissive wives. The character of Ikodie is used to justify this assertion, thus:

Ikodie: I don't mean to annoy you my husband. I want you to understand me (Thinks) but come to think of it, don't you think that women have a right to hold meetings, a right to decide on how to handle certain issues? (Nwabueze 52).

The Africana-womanist vision which Nwabueze employs to portray the feminist struggle of the women, coheres with Akachi Ezeigbo's feminist model, Snail-Sense Feminism. This is because the women believe in their husband's authority and supremacy but only want to be socially recognized and given certain rights. They achieve this through negotiation with the men and revolt against taxation.

More so, it is obvious that Nwabueze tries to create a society where mutual understanding between men and women exists. The conflicting philosophy in *The Dragon's Funeral*, however, is the idea that women want certain equal rights yet do not want to pay tax as men. Women in Osofisan's *Morountodun* are independent and free from oppression, both from the society and their husbands while in Nwabueze's *The Dragon's Funeral*, women fight for equal rights and societal recognition under the protection of their husbands. This is because, in a typical African and Nigerian society, married women are more respected than the unmarried or single mothers. Beyond the varying feminist ideologies in both plays, the two dramatists paint the picture of endearing, adventurous, determined, brave and courageous women who pursue their desire to a logical conclusion. In the joy of reconciliation, it is therefore pertinent to note that the feminist visions in the two plays project the desire to initiate and execute programs that would motivate

women's self-reliance and economic independence. By so doing, women are justified as agents of positive social change in the society.

### **Conclusion**

Many female writers and male feminists have continually enhanced the status of women in their works. Women have been presented above the societal limitations, and seen as protagonists and heroines, in a male-dominated and hegemonic society, which has little or no recognition for them. Consequently, this paper has emphasized the need for women to emulate Titubi and Adaugo by rising above their limitations in marriage and refuse to be held back by certain atavistic African belief systems which prohibit them from achieving their potentials in the society. The plays under study serve as a clarion call on women to know their limitless potentials in championing causes that benefit the society at large. The two playwrights apparently pre-occupies the play with positive portraits for women – women who are socially, politically, culturally, and psychologically independent and those who have attained full societal recognition in all spheres of life. These images of women in the two plays resonate the possibilities of Nigerian women to contribute to the transformation of the country.

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