

Feminist revisionism and restitution as solution to female problems in selected Igbo plays.

Abstract

The study is on “Feminist Revisionism and Restitution as solution to female problems in selected Igbo plays”. Male and female make up the society so none can be discussed in isolation of the other. The study aims at using feminist revisionism and restitution as solution to female problems in our patriarchal society. This is done using drama as an analytic genre. The study looks at drama as performance and literature. Survey design and purposive sampling technique were used for data collection which includes three drama texts. Two is from a female playwright and one from a male playwright. The study discovered that the female characters suffer maltreatment and subjugation from the male characters. It also discovered that the male characters suffer restitution for their evil deeds.

Keywords: drama, feminist, Igbo plays, maltreatment, patriarchal, restitution, revisionism

Introduction

In the olden days, females in African society are viewed as sex to be seen and not heard, whose sphere of operation is in the home and not outside the home like the males. They are subjected under the male control. The males use them for all forms of dehumanizing labour and maltreatment. In the advent of civilization, the males see it as a colossal waste to educate the female child and strive to continue to keep them in bondage. Females are never allowed to participate in politics even in the village setting. In the era of the growth of literature, females are not given laudable empirical studies. Female characters as well as female writers suffer what is known in literary studies as “female predicament” This sums up the female social limitations that have unfortunately placed her in a lowly position. Nwankwo (2002) Says that males and females differ with respect to biological, psychological or social orders and therefore roles played by them should be different but complementary for peaceful coexistence. Feminist revisionism is feminist literature informed by feminist literary criticism, or by politics of feminism. Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that share a common goal to define, establish and achieve the political economic, personal and social equality of both sexes (Wikipedia). It is a political ideology that contends for the equality of both sexes. In all ramifications. From the point of view of literature, revisionism denotes that retelling of an established narrative with significant variations which deliberately “revise” the view shown in the original work. The aim is to find out how the female characters in the works are maltreated and the culprits punished. Restitution is the price paid by offenders on the order of a court or instituted authority, or in cosmological setting by the gods.

Literature review

Anderson (1983) says that the female is an individual of sex that bears young or that produces ova or eggs while the male is the sex that produces small typically mobile gamete especially spermatozoa, which a female may be fertilized with. Sparks(1976) in his contribution says that the word “female” comes from the Latin word “femele” which by semantic extension is the familiar from of femina meaning “woman”.

According to Marx and Engel(1977:21) “sometime in pre-history, women and men were equals. Engle (1972) assumes that division of labour between men (as bread winner) and women (as domesticated wives and mothers) had always existed. But in recent times, females have shown growing restiveness against the way they are being treated and this gives rise to feminist movement. This movement emerge to reform such issues as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women’s suffrage, sexual harassment and sexual violence. All of these fall under feminism and feminist movement portfolios. Feminist revisionism according to Tuttle (1986) is feminist literature informed by feminist literary criticism or by the politics of feminism. This school employs the principles and ideology of feminism to analyze the language of literature in describing ways in which literature portrays the narratives of male domination. They do this by exploring the economic, political, social and psychological forces embedded within literature. The literary texts are reviewed and studied using the above way of thinking and criticizing works of literature can be said to have changed from the former ways. Feminist literary criticism sought to examine old texts with new lens. Their goals in using this method is to develop and discover female writing tradition, rediscover old texts, as well as interpreting what women’s writing symbolizes so that it will not be lost or ignored by the males’ point of view. This feminist literary criticism also sought to analyze women writers and their writings from a female perspective and increase awareness of language and style of sexual politics. Feminist literary criticism was concerned with women’s authorship and the representation of the condition of women within literature particularly female fictional characters. Feminist critics according to Elain Showalter (2001) is an ideological, righteous, angry and admonitory search for sin and errors of the past and for these sins and errors, there are restitutions.

Restitution may be said to be the restoration of something lost or stolen to its proper owner. It can also be said to be the recompense for injury or loss. According to Offen (1988), he says that the principle of justice holds that because individuals are thinking causal agents, they are morally responsible for the social consequences of their actions and must be treated accordingly. He advocates moral retribution to reflect those negative consequences of harm and injury back onto the criminal, but propounds prison as punitive measure for more serious offenses. Rothbard (1999) in his own argument said that at least the initial part of the punishment to restitution. Restitution as recompense for wrong doing to either the land, society or fellow human being abound in the Igbo selected drama texts for analysis for this study.

I. Female problems and restitution as solution to the problems

In analyzing the female problems in the texts for illustration under study feminist revisionism and restitution are used as solution the problems. In the Igbo cosmology, spilling of human blood consciously is sacrilegious and the consequence is death of the culprit no matter how far he runs or how long it takes. In Nwaozuzu (1998), for Ezenwata to punish Obiageli, his wife for unfounded allegation of

infidelity, planned and killed himself. He did this in a manner that will implicate Onyema, his best friend and business associated and his wife so that the law court will find them guilty and kill them because he thought they were having an affair.

Of course the suspects paid no restitution because they are innocent. But the accuser paid restitution by killing himself for planning the death of innocent people, although he did not succeed. His death solved his wife's problem of being accused and punished for infidelity. In Nwaozuzu (2005) Eze Onyekwere and his sister kept maltreating and one beaten up Ugochi, his wife for attending the Whiteman's church despite his warnings. Ugochi started attending the Whiteman's church on their promise that God will answer her prayer and give her a male child there. Ugochi has the problem of lack of a male child and has performed all the necessary sacrifice to solve this problem but to no avail. Eze Onyekwere being the king and chief custodian of the culture of his land, Umueleme, sees Ugochi's action as taboo, tries stopping her necessitating his action on Ugochi. For beating his wife for being baptized and chasing her out of his house, he is arrested, detained for a short time, warned not to disturb his wife, attending the Whiteman's church and released. Solution to Ugochi's problem is from the constituted authority from whose hands Eze Onyekwere paid his restitution in form of his arrest, detention, and warning never to disturb his wife again. Feminist revisionism of delivering woman from subjugation from male domination using literature is realized as Ugochi is free from Eze Onyekwere her husband's maltreatment. Onyekaonwu (1980) showcases Obioma's maltreatment from Aworo, her husband who feels forced to marry her, for she runs to him to marry her and his parents told him to do so. Again, Obioma gives birth to a female child first. To get rid of Obioma, Aworo faked her poisoning his food to kill him so that she will be sent home. He shouted, calling his people and they gather, seat and pass judgement finding Obioma guilty for a crime she did not commit. She is sent home to her people from where Aworo not yet satisfied with his evil deeds kidnaps and sells her into slavery with her daughter. His restitution is double barreled for her marries his daughter in error later, thereby, committing the sin of incest. When he finds this out, he takes his own life. Cosmologically, he receives his restitution from the gods for his sacrilegious act against his wife and daughter Obioma's problem is solved.

Summary and Conclusion

In the study plays, the work shows that themes like subjugation and maltreatment of the female characters by the males abound. In the texts under study, the females are always being maltreated for one reason or the other, either for false accusation or for a want. Obiageli, Ezenwata's wife in Nwaozuzu (1998) and Obioma in Onyekaonwu (1980) are falsely accused and maltreated for that. Ugochi in Nwaozuzu (2005) is maltreated and subjugated for her lack of having a male child. The antagonists Ezenwata, Eze Onyekwere and Aworo received their restitution. In conclusion, it is clearly shown in this study that the Igbo literary artists and their works especially the Igbo playwrights and their plays can effectively compete with their counterparts elsewhere in the world in the sphere of feminist revisionism and restitution as solution to female problems X-raying the way of life obtainable in their area.

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