

Female Objectification in African Culture: A Study of Selected Drama

By

Esther Frank Apejoye-Okezie

Department of Theatre and Media Studies, University of Calabar,
Cross River State, Nigeria.

Email: estheromo@unical.edu.ng; apejoyee@gmail.com

Abstract

Women are vital members of any society. However, female objectification has been a recurring theme in many African cultural experiences. Several scholars and playwrights who have written extensively on the issue link it to the patriarchal nature of most cultures in Africa. From plays such as *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka to *Hands that Crush Stones* by Theodora Adimora, female characters are often portrayed as objects to be controlled and dominated by male characters. This is evident in how their appearances, actions, and desires are all determined by the male gender, and how their worth is often tied to their physical appearance and ability to please men. Female objectification not only perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes but also reinforces askew patriarchal power dynamics within African societies. Borrowing insight from the humanist feminist theory, this paper critically interrogates the derogatory depictions of women in selected African drama. It adapts the content analysis methodology to connect the experiences of the women in the texts under study to real-life consequences for the treatment and representation of women in society.

Keywords: Objectification, Female, African Drama, Humanism, Culture, Patriarchy.

Introduction

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "*objectification*" is the demotion or degrading of a person or class of people especially women to the status of a mere object. According to this meaning, the phrase refers to the deliberate act of treating a person more like an object than a unique human being. It simply has to do with reducing a person to nothing more than a tool for a certain goal, ignoring their perspectives, crossing their boundaries, and treating them as if they were objects. Haslanger says that objectification is simple because it involves seeing something as an object to satiate a need (210).

According to Roberts, the process of objectification is frequently sexual and starts with the messages that the environment sends to its citizens through