

LES TENDANCES WOMANISTES
DANS LES OEUVRES DES ROMANCIERES
DE L'AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the position of black women in relation to feminist theory, identified and discussed the varieties of womanism as an African version of feminism. It also analysed Francophone African women's novels from the womanist perspective. This was done with a view to exploring the thematic of Francophone African women's novelistic works.

A review of Francophone African women's novels and of their criticism was carried out in relation to African literature in general. The works of several Francophone African women novelists were studied in depth within the womanist framework. Major themes of womanism such as motherhood, the family, African women's self-definition, the racial question and socio-political issues were analysed in the novels, using the womanist literary theory.

The study revealed that although Francophone women novelists did not deliberately or consciously cultivate womanism, certain womanist trends could be identified in their works, such as radical explorations of motherhood, celebration of womanhood, self-definition, affirmation of family values, representation of the principle of gender complementarity and engagement with socio-political and race issues. The theoretical position of Anglophone women on the goals of women's writing thus found its manifestation in the works of Francophone women novelists. Black female writers considered feminism inadequate in giving full expression to the experience of black women who, in addition to being victims of racial discrimination, suffered a double yoke at the hands of black and white male chauvinists. Varieties of womanism were identified, namely the orthodox womanism of Alice Walker which accommodated lesbianism;

Clenora Hudson-Weems' *Africana Womanism* which was basically concerned with the experience of black women in the diaspora; and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's and M.E.M. Kolawole's *African Womanisms* which focused on the peculiar circumstances of African women on the African continent itself. Analysed from the womanist perspective, Francophone African female novels, it was shown, redefined motherhood as something that could be biological and also voluntary. They also foregrounded the notion of self- definition and emphasised the primacy of race.

It was concluded that womanist trends were prevalent in the Francophone women's novels studied.